

Another point is that the rhetorical and poetic elements brought to light for Barocci's art are very slippery. The main problem is that Barocci's style did not modulate terribly from work to work, most notoriously in the unique secular *Flight of Aeneas from Troy* (Villa Borghese, Rome). Gillgren affirms that the just-mentioned Genoa *Crucifixion* 'has a still-life, lyric character that departs considerably from the earlier large compositions, such as the *Deposition* in Perugia' (185). Yet the latter was painted twenty-seven years earlier. A brief discussion of Gillgren's rewarding account of the *Flight of Aeneas from Troy* can serve as a conclusion.

This unusual painting has always been slightly challenging to interpret. It shows Trojan hero Aeneas with his father (Anchises), son (Julius, or more commonly Ascanius) and wife (Creusa) fleeing a burning Troy. Naturally, it references the foundation of Rome and as a gift to the Holy Roman emperor would have tied him to a complementary lineage going well into antiquity. But beyond that, what more was Barocci trying to say? Clues may be found in the Tempietto-like building and column in the background. Gillgren does a good job of laying out some new interpretive possibilities. The Tempietto is not only a generic antique temple but also recognizable as a Roman monument. In the syncretistic mind of the Renaissance viewer, it can be both the temple from which Aeneas has rescued the idols in an act of piety, and a foreshadowing of his future home. Both also give a hint of the Christian dispensation, however, because even the column was Christianized when erected by Pope Sixtus V at the time Barocci made the painting. Some of Gillgren's details are either stretched slightly or difficult to prove, as when the Ascanius figure is made a type for St Peter, who was martyred on the site of St Peter's crucifixion. Gillgren would like to suggest that the figure, with its half-melancholic and half-despairing expression echoes a painting of Sebastiano del Piombo in the church adjoining the Tempietto, San Pietro in Montorio, and that little Ascanius's foot is stuck, making a reference to Peter, the 'rock'. More intriguing is the idea that Creusa's pose is one of bowing out, as in Virgil's version of the story in the *Aeneid*. This

story, where a vision of his wife informs him that he will find a new wife in his new home, was known in Barocci's hometown of Urbino and represents a true insight. The problem, as the reader may sense, is that this viewpoint was provided by simply good art-historical research and did not require any contribution from constructs of viewership or performativity. The present reviewer has every sympathy for Gillgren's endeavour as it is one close to his own heart, but the structure of the book continually frustrates it and doesn't show the author's insights in the best light.

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Art Forgery: The History of a Modern Obsession

THIERRY LENAIN

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Thierry Lenain's *Art Forgery: The History of a Modern Obsession* is, to my knowledge, the first book-length investigation into philosophical issues of art forgery since Denis Dutton's 1983 edited volume, *The Forger's Art*. And Lenain's text, it must be said, presents in fascinating detail, not only historical accounts of forgery and its cousins—from ancient Rome up to the dubiously celebrated twentieth-century forgers—but also the history of religious relic veneration, which he argues forms the historical basis to today's obsession over art authenticity. In his text, Lenain argues for three central points: (1) that art forgery, as we know it, did not exist as a practice in the ancient world; (2) that art forgery instead evolves out of medieval relic fetishism; and (3) that the perfect fake decentres the conceptual notion at the heart of contemporary art connoisseurship—the 'trace paradigm'.

Lenain's first chapter sets up the conceptual groundwork for what follows. Today, when a work is discovered to be a forgery, it is usually hidden away

from view, or else destroyed outright. Art forgery is typically seen as a blight on the art historical landscape—a disease, Lenain suggests, that threatens the very notion of art. Art history and connoisseurship, he argues, have for quite some time rested upon what he calls the trace paradigm, the view that any artwork displays traces of its historical origin. In particular, the trace paradigm holds that the style in which a work is created invariably embodies its creator's personality. Art forgery is something of an artistic changeling, then, devoid of value of its own and meant to usurp the place of real art. Once discovered, the forgery is seen for what it is: a monstrous *doppelgänger*. A true work of art forgery, Lenain suggests, imitates the appearance of an artwork with a different origin in order to steal its place in the system of art, and is susceptible to harming someone's interests. Forgery, as such, plays a unique role in the artworld, a role not played by benign copies, harmless pastiches, or mere replicas. Lenain further distinguishes true forgeries from what he calls 'artistic mystifications', which, while identical in method with forgeries and intended initially to deceive, are also intended from the start to be ultimately revealed by their makers, and so not harmful.

On this understanding, Lenain sets out in his second chapter to dissolve the pervasive notion that the practice of art forgery 'is as old as mankind itself'—that it stretches back as far as the Roman Empire or earlier—what Lenain calls the 'always-been' fallacy. Certainly, the Roman period had no shortage of art copies and replicas, but, contrary to the claims of other scholars, Lenain argues that textual evidence from the period does not support a practice of art forgery as we understand it today. One such text often referred to by scholars comes from Phaedrus' *Aesopic Fables*:

As certain artists do in our day, who obtain a much greater price for their productions if they inscribe the name of Praxiteles on their scraped marbles, Myron on their polished silver and Zeuxis on their panels ... Carping envy more readily favours works of false antiquity than those of the present day. (65)

Though many have taken this and similar passages as clear evidence of a practice of Roman art forgery, sculptures bearing the signatures of artists other than their makers, Lenain suggests, were not deceptive copies but rather overt homages, their values enhanced by association with their more prestigious forerunners through a sort of 'symbolic enhancement'.

Perhaps Lenain's scepticism appears hyperbolic as he knocks down case after case by suggesting entirely unknown cultural practices rather than accepting them as precursors to contemporary art forgery, but this much appears sound: even if there was an occasional artisan or merchant who lied about the origin of a work for the sake of jacking up the price, without a practice of art collection, there would have been little reason for a practice of art forgery, and so any such individual act would not have had the cultural relevance that it has today.

Instead, Lenain argues, the historical origins of today's 'religion' of art connoisseurship are to be found in medieval relic fetishism, and its reasonable concerns over authenticity. Relics were, after all, literal pieces of saints, or of objects closely associated with them, and were believed to embody the very powers of those individuals. So whether a claimed relic was authentic was of critical importance, and great lengths were taken not only to authenticate, but also to protect, preserve, and showcase these relics. Lenain's hypothesis is, admittedly, a fascinating suggestion, and he outlines the complex and intriguing history of religious relics in equally fascinating detail. But when he turns to making the connection with art forgery, the implacable incredulity which he brought to bear on purported forgery in the ancient world seems to have been shelved.

Looking to texts by Pietro Summonte, Marcantonio Michiel, and Giorgio Vasari, Lenain argues in his third chapter that there began in the late medieval period a veneration of artists as divine and their works as analogous to religious relics. And, just as relics could be duplicated through a sort of divine osmosis without any dampening of their religious powers, so too, Lenain suggests, were artistic duplicates seen as equivalent to their originals. However,

where Lenain was willing to accept nothing short of absolute proof of forgery in the ancient world, here he takes a *lack* of contradictory evidence as proof of his hypothesis. For example, Lenain recounts Summonte's anecdotes of the painter Colantonio, who produced amazing copies of existing Flemish paintings. Summonte's short account contains no discussion of the means by which Colantonio managed to create his indistinguishable duplicates, and no moral condemnation of his acts. As such, Lenain contends:

[t]he fact that Summonte's discourse offers nothing of that sort indicates that nothing was really at stake in the anecdote except the demonstration of Colantonio's glorious mastery and the artistic nobility of perfect copying. (175)

The lack of moral condemnation, Lenain contends, can be explained by a belief that the copy was taken as authentically equivalent to the original, just as a religious relic could mystically produce authentic copies of itself. Those painters in the Renaissance and early modern period who were capable of producing amazing duplicates were not condemned, Lenain notes, but venerated. And, Lenain suggests, although Vasari and others did not hold to the trace paradigm, this did not prevent artworks as coming to be seen as authorial 'relics'.

Against this backdrop, Lenain returns in his final chapter to the trace paradigm in contemporary connoisseurship, and works to show how the paradigm is at odds with the 'perfect fake' (or, as Lenain prefers, the 'perfect stylistic duplicate'). The possibility of a perfect fake has long been denounced by art historians and philosophers alike. Historians have suggested that any forgery carries with it traces of its historical origins, and that while these are not always apparent at the time of creation, they begin to stand out as time passes to the point when we wonder how these fakes could ever have passed as originals (the exemplar here being Han van Meegeren's atrocious and yet largely effective Vermeer forgeries). Nelson Goodman suggests that knowing one of two visually indistinguishable paintings is a fake constitutes an

aesthetic difference between the works, a view echoed by Mark Sagoff, Jerrold Levinson, and others. Working against these notions, Eric Hebborn, the twentieth-century forger of works of antiquity, contended that he adopted the very styles of past artists by adopting their idiosyncratic 'languages' and worked directly on this basis, rather than attempting to copy any existing work. Another contemporary forger, Tom Keating, professed to having channelled long-dead artists, whose spirits would literally guide his hands. Both Hebborn and Keating in their own ways were claiming to have made *originals*, not fakes. Forgery, the forgers suggest, comes down to a matter of labelling only. But, of course, this labelling is critical, and by labelling their works as works of others, forgers explode the link between the surface of the work and the work's origin.

Lenain writes:

The perfect fake destroys the absolute significance of the trace paradigm both in scientific and experiential terms – not only as far as particular objects are concerned but also with respect to artworks in general, fake or not. Even though that paradigm is still functional in a majority of cases, it will never be possible to consider it as absolutely applicable in any single case: since *some* artworks have been subjected to perfect stylistic simulation, *no* artwork can be regarded as the absolute (that is, bi-univocal) manifestation of its origin. (273)

Now, it is worth noting that Lenain has not provided us with any criteria for being a 'perfect fake', but it is clear that he does not have in mind what, say, Goodman does: something *in all ways* aesthetically indistinguishable from the original. Rather, it seems, Lenain is thinking of a perfect fake as a perfectly convincing one, or (in the case of a copy of an existing work) one visually indiscernible from the original, and this is, at least in principle, a much less difficult pill to swallow. The artworld has certainly been hoodwinked before, and it would be arrogant to assume there are not at this moment dozens of forgeries hanging in the world's most respected

museums. Now, I am sympathetic to the view that the perfect fake is a real possibility—a possibility, I suspect, largely unaccomplished only because of our current technological limitations—but I question whether the typical connoisseur, historian, or philosopher today buys into the Romantic notion that an artist's style embodies his personality in the way that the trace paradigm says it does. Rather, I would suggest, the Romantic model at the core of the paradigm has been steadily dwindling since the late nineteenth century, and Lenain admits as much. So it seems that Lenain is suggesting that the existence of the perfect fake (which itself is questionable) destroys the significance of a conceptual framework that few adhere to.

In his conclusion, Lenain ultimately suggests that the practice of forgery cannot comfortably be positioned either within or outside of the artworld: a fake—perfect or not—is not a normal artwork, but plays something of a perverse cultural role, and to submit the fake to ordinary aesthetic analysis is to ignore its role *as* a fake. An interpretation of a forgery, Lenain contends, must not focus centrally on its surface features, but on its cultural role—and this, he notes, is not all that different from how we interpret much contemporary art. While contemporary artists have toyed with our notions of authorship and originality, Lenain notes, this is not the forger's concern. Unlike contemporary art, the forgery can function as such only as long as the identity of its maker remains hidden—so long as it remains authorless. On this basis, Lenain suggests, '[i]f we decide that fakes are artworks, it means that we have to accept the idea of an authorless artwork' (316). But the cultural nature of such fakes makes it essentially impossible to interpret them *as* artworks while at the same time recognizing their nature *as* forgeries. The clash arises from competing conceptions: any interpretation of art requires a concept of authorship, but recognition of forgeries as forgeries requires conceiving of them as authorless. Nevertheless, despite their non-art status, art forgeries are fully relevant to both the history and theory of art. Philosophically speaking, this discussion

makes up the most intriguing part of the entire book, and deserves much more discussion than I can devote to it here.

For those with a philosophic interest in the nature of forgery and authenticity in art, Lenain's book would be worth picking up for the final fourteen pages alone. This is not to suggest that the preceding pages are not worth reading, however. Indeed, while Lenain's underlying philosophical methodology is at times deeply flawed and uneven, his historical accounts are laid out in such rich, engrossing detail that one is willing to look past the framework Lenain has constructed for the sake of some compelling stories, absorbingly told.

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Sounds: A Philosophical Theory

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Sounds and Perception: New Philosophical Essays

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(EDITORS)

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A great deal of effort has been expended within both of these excellent books in order to contribute to the transformation of the philosophical study of sound and auditory perception. A particular concern motivating these and other recent studies has been to shift the weight of emphasis both conceptually and methodologically away from vision. One only need cast an eye along a library shelf for thirty seconds in order to see that studies of perception have long been dominated by assumptions and arguments originating in the visual domain, and that work on the other senses has been