Made up earlier

H. R. WOUDHUYSEN

Arthur Freeman

BIBLIOTHECA FICTIVA
A collection of books and manuscripts relating to literary forgery, 400 BC–AD 2000
423pp. Bernard Quaritch. £60.
978 0 9563012 8 4

Preaching at Whitehall in the presence of Charles I on April 1, 1627, John Donne quoted Luke 2: 52, "Jesus grew in stature", qualifying the words by saying "But he grew not to his lifes end", and then adding "we know to how many feet he grew". David Colclough, the learned editor of the third volume of the magnificent *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne*, provides the reader with a note that goes far to answer a question that has probably never bothered most people. He refers to the early fourteenth-century Greek historian Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopulus, who reported that Christ's "body's stature was altogether seven *palmos*"; if a palm is nine inches, then by this reckoning Jesus was five foot three inches tall. For scholars still curious about Christ's appearance, Publius Lentulus supplies a few more details (cited by Colclough); Lentulus says that he was "Homo quidem statura procerus, mediocris et spectabilis", or, as it was translated in a single-sheet broadside edition of the letter published at London a couple of years before Donne preached his sermon, "a man of stature somewhat tall and comely". Lentulus was said to have been Pontius Pilate's predecessor as Governor of Judaea and author of a letter to the Roman Senate containing this account of Jesus. However, as Colclough points out, Lentulus's letter is essentially a forgery that "circulated widely in the early modern period". The question is, if Donne knew this description, did he also know that it was spurious?

The running battle between forgers and those who would seek to expose them and their works dates back to ancient times. Forgers, or at least reasonably good and successful ones, need to have knowledge and some expertise – historical, textual, linguistic and sometimes technical – to pass their products off. They also often need to know how to draw attention to their work, although some may prefer to lay down what Arthur Freeman, in his engrossing book on the subject, *Bibliotheca Fictiva*, calls "unmarked landmines . . . laid in expectation of future victims". A literary forgery sets a genuine scholar a test, one in which the distinction between the methods and thinking of the hunter and the hunted may be uncertain. Forgers supply the gullible world with what it wants to believe in; they satisfy people's appetites for religious, political, polemical or literary works. Their opponents come to inhabit the world of their quarry and may themselves be tempted to fall. In the course of exposing Thomas Chatterton's Rowley poems as modern, rather than belonging to the fifteenth century, the great Shakespearean scholar Edmond Malone forged "an entire Chatterton text in the course of his argument . . . betraying himself by *revising* it, to better effect, between versions". The forger corrupts the literary record and infects the scholar who seeks to expose the fraud.

Freeman published the details of this discovery (*TLS*, September 19, 2008) in the course of his long-standing investigation of "this fascinating if inglorious field". The exposure of forgeries does more than show what is untrustworthy – it promotes new scholarship and techniques of investigation, and reveals something of the psychology of its perpetrators and the times and places in which they worked. Freeman and his wife, Janet Ing Freeman, have already served the scholarly world beyond the call of duty with their huge and wonderfully absorbing account of the sinister scholar and forger John Payne Collier (2004). *Bibliotheca Fictiva* is a major contribution to the study of the subject of which there is as yet "no satisfactory general history". What was originally intended as "a comprehensive history of literary and historical forgery, as a genre or tradition from antiquity to the near-present", has become a catalogue of the Freemans' collection of books on and about the subject, almost all of which is now in the Sheridan Libraries of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. The book consists of a long "Overview" of the subject and an annotated catalogue of 1,676 titles, followed by a selective index of names in both parts of the volume.

If forgery is generally taken to constitute an intent or design to deceive or to defraud, then Freeman's choice of terms for what he sets out to describe and to catalogue rightly shows that the boundaries of the practice are often hard to define. Literary forgery can embrace pastiche, spoof, hoax, fantasy – a fabricated gospel text, *Das Evangelium des Apollonios* (Vienna, 1919) is "perhaps more a fantasy than a forgery" – wishful thinking and what are labelled "'medieval' inventions". Like the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, "literary forgery, and its cousins plagiarism, pseudepigraphy, and pseudonymity" stalk the shelves of libraries, spreading half-truths, errors and conspiracy theories, many derived from the internet, "that last resort of the credulous in all aspects of forgery". What drives people to fabricate these falsehoods is equally hard to pin down. In a well-known essay on the subject, published in 1883, Andrew Lang argued that "The motives of the literary forger are curiously mixed; but they may, perhaps, be analysed roughly into piety, greed, 'push', and 'love of fun'" – "push" being characterized as the work of authors "who hope to get a reading for poems which, if put forth as new, would be neglected".

Lang's categories are elastic: piety might extend from religion – the French doctor Symphorien Champier's invention of letters from the Virgin Mary, Christ and St Anthony, published in 1516 – to late sixteenth-century interpolations in Asser's Life of King Alfred, published by William Camden in 1603, "proving that Oxford's university pre-dated Cambridge's". Greed and "push" are perhaps not so far apart. Prosper Mérimée notoriously launched his public literary career with forgeries: an edition of six plays attributed to Clara Gazul, a Spanish actress of Moorish descent to which three further plays were added in a second edition of 1830. The first edition of 1825 has a lithographed frontispiece of the supposed author bearing an uncanny resemblance to Mérimée himself. He followed this imposture two years later with a collection, *La Guzla*, of Serbo-Croat songs translated by "Hyacinthe Maglanović". Although the poems were his own invention, they took in Goethe, who reprinted most of them as genuine; Pushkin, who translated them into Russian; Lermontov and Adam Mickievič.

In his essay "The History and Motives of Literary Forgery", which won the Chancellor's English Essay prize at Oxford in 1891 (it bears, one might say, a suggestive relationship to Lang's earlier piece), the twenty-five-year-old E. K. Chambers, in later years a Shakespeare scholar of heroic seriousness, touched on Mérimée, suggesting that "the borderland of fact and fiction" might also encompass Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850). The cloak covering the established author is rather different from the thin veil of Mérimée's amusing hoax. The "love of fun" can produce Queen Jeanne of Naples's edict of 1347, establishing brothels approved by royal licence in Avignon; this took in Jean Astruc, a professor of medicine and scholar of sexual diseases, who published it in "the 'original' Occitan, with facing Latin translation" in 1736; it was not exposed as a forgery for over a century. Such hoaxes ("the work of facetious local students") present what Chambers characterized as "a vision of the seamy side of things, but yet one touched with that charm of novelty which never fails to attract the modern mind".

This attraction to "the seamy side of things" can also be combined with a sense of smugness that we would never have been taken in by, say, *Eikon Basilike*, *Vortigern*, or the Hitler diaries. The suspicious will know that nationalism encourages the modern production of ancient literature; that travel writing, not least the imaginary voyage, is a genre made for liars; that continuations of novels are not always authentic; that genealogies tend to the optimistic; that pornographers are no more on oath than writers of lapidary inscriptions, and that, by their very knowledge of a subject, scholars initially may be tempted to devise material that they think should exist and end up believing in it. Yet the unsuspecting can hardly be blamed for feeling bemused that *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (1887–9) has about 200 invented lives in it, or that modern scholarly editions of Byron's and of Sir Walter Ralegh's letters should reprint forged items as genuine ones – an error, with the first, on Leslie Marchand's part, something less clear-cut in the case of the second: Joyce Youings included a spurious Ralegh letter found among her late co-editor Agnes Latham's papers.

The forger's cunning extends to mixing the genuine and the false, for example by "discovering" additional parts of a known work, as the history of Petronius's *Satyricon* demonstrates, or by publishing "imaginary texts with real discoveries", something that Melchior Goldast did in 1606, drawing on material at the obligingly remote Abbey of St Gall. A variant on that practice is the insertion of fake material in genuine archives; in the nineteenth century, John Payne Collier left his mark on various documentary records in institutions. The biographer Lee Israel, who died last year, stole modern literary and show-business letters from libraries in the US and sold them, forged others for sale, and also replaced genuine letters in collections with her forgeries and then sold the originals; her autobiography was published in 2008 under the

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"...an impressive first novel...Keery has his antennae sensitively turned to James Joyce's Dublin...but the transposition into Irish northernness is triumphantly complete. His combination of the imagined and the documentary is already formidable and the promise for his future work immense."
The Observer

"An excellent first novel"
New Statesman

"Keery subtly registers the inner tremors of a clever, sensitive boy... His growth from child to young man is coolly and marvellously observed...An accomplished debut that must herald even better things to come."
Sunday Independent

"Sam Keery's approach...makes for subtlety and vividness"
Times Literary Supplement

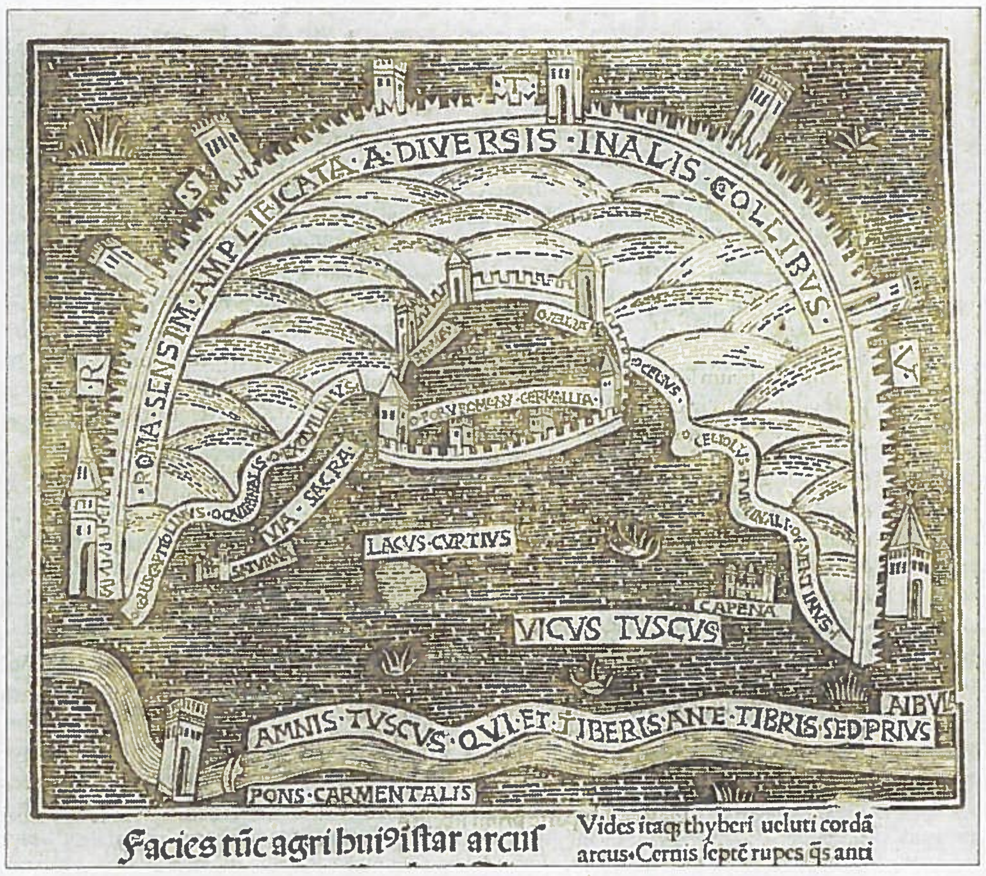
Book Guild Publishing
The Werks, 45 Church Road, Hove, BN3 2BE.

title of *Can you Ever Forgive Me?* – to which the answer is probably "No".

Lee Israel is a rare woman in the largely male world of forgers and their adversaries. Olivia Wilmot Serres, who used documents she had manufactured to support her arguments about the identity of Junius, "may be the earliest English female forger of any distinction". The international palm appears to go to France. Serres was anticipated (by only a few years) by Jeanne de Valois-Saint-Rémy, "Comtesse de la Motte", who escaped to London following her role in the affair of the diamond necklace in which she had forged letters from Marie Antoinette to the Cardinal de Rohan; La Motte "may be the earliest significant female literary forger we can identify".

Israel and La Motte were both arrested and punished for their crimes of deception, but most literary forgers get away without arrest and confinement. The Maltese cleric Giuseppe Vella, who forged versions of medieval Arabic and Kufic documents in his *Codice diplomatico di Sicilia* (1789–92), was sentenced to fifteen years in jail (Chambers judged this to be "satisfactory"), but his punishment was commuted to house arrest, during which he forged an Arabic manuscript of the purported correspondence between some Norman rulers of Sicily and a Fatímid caliph of Egypt. W. H. Ireland, who went on forging "Shakespearean" documents on demand after he had been exposed, recorded his outrage in his none too reliable *Confessions* (1805), writing that Joseph Ritson "has stated, with usual acrimony, that every literary impostor deserves hanging as much as a common felon".

It is the protean nature of forgery that makes it such a huge subject and so difficult to tie down. *Bibliotheca Fictiva* resolves this problem by describing the original appearances in print of these "conscious fabrications", as Chambers called them. The Freemans did not seek to collect what they call "merely physical forgeries", although there are excellent examples of those in the catalogue. Among them are an early Elizabethan manuscript copy of the laws of Ine, with interpolated, spurious laws "contrived to suggest an ancient precedent for politically sensitive mid-C16 legislation"; a charter bearing Thomas Beckett's sign-manual written after his death; forged manuscripts of Ben Jonson and letters of Byron (the creations of George de Gibler, otherwise known as "Major Byron"); and a copy of Bartholomaeus Mercator's *Breves in sphaeram meditatiunculae* (Cologne, 1563) to which Vrain-Denis Lucas generously added Johannes Kepler's signature. Not surprisingly, some of the richest material in the catalogue relates to John Payne Collier – at times, it expands and supplements details in the Freemans' biography – and to William Henry Ireland.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Annius of Viterbo, *Commentaria* (Rome, 1498); from *Bibliotheca Fictiva*

In addition to the collection's breadth and depth, there is much in it that is new and pleasing: unique and rare items, new attributions of authorship, presentation and association copies of books, original and fine bindings. Who would not want to own the copy of the enlarged edition of Richard Bentley's *A Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris* (1699) that John Locke inscribed, recording that it was a gift from the author (the copy was later Lytton Strachey's)? Who would decline the chance to have Edward Gibbon's copy of a book by C. J. Bertram (1757) that introduced the learned world to the fourteenth-century monk "Richard of Cirencester" whose extraordinary knowledge of Roman Britain deceived the great historian? What literary scholar would not want to possess the poet Michael Drayton's annotated copy of Spenser's works acquired in 1613, even if the signature and date on the verso of the title-page and the corrections to the text in red pencil are by Collier? The catalogue is worth reading in full for its lucid and scholarly descriptions of the individual copies, as well as of the books and their histories.

There is a lifetime's – or two lifetimes', since Freeman fully acknowledges his wife's contribution – knowledge and critical sense in this elegantly produced and well-illustrated book. "In the whole amusing history of impostures", Lang wrote, "there is no more diverting chapter than that which deals with literary frauds." There is much to dwell on in *Bibliotheca Fictiva* – not all of it of a wholesome or diverting kind. Even if Donne accepted Publius Lentulus's description of Jesus, he is not in bad company: Rabelais, Johnson, Gibbon, Boswell, Goethe, Scott, Pushkin, Carlyle, Browning, among many others, have all been taken in by forgeries. In 1990, Arthur and Janet Ing Freeman published an excellent account of the workings of the "ring" in *Anatomy of an Auction: Rare books at Ruxley Lodge, 1919*; if this latest book is not quite "The Anatomy of Forgery" – only a Robert Burton could have contemplated that, and over many volumes – it provides an essential and splendidly detailed atlas of the subject.

Right gowne

ARNOLD HUNT

Zachary Lesser

HAMLET AFTER Q1
An uncanny history of the Shakespearian text
304pp. University of Pennsylvania Press.
£39 (US $59.95).
978 0 8122 4661 2

On January 22, 1825, the *Literary Gazette* had an astonishing discovery to announce to its readers: a previously unknown edition of *Hamlet*, dated 1603, containing "new readings of infinite interest". The existence of such an edition had already been inferred from the blurb on the title page of the 1604 quarto: "newly imprinted and enlarged to almost as much againe as it was, according to the true and perfect Coppie". The great Shakespearean scholar Edmond Malone predicted in 1805 that "some day or other the original edition of Hamlet may be found". But Malone never lived to see a copy: he died in 1812, thirteen years before the long-lost edition, known to modern scholars as the First Quarto (Q1), finally emerged from a country house library in Suffolk.

Controversy has raged ever since over the nature of Q1 and how it came into being. This is *Hamlet*, but not as we know it. It is as though the play has been fed into an automatic translating machine and come out slightly mangled, with characters named Ofelia, Gertred, Rossencraft and Gilderstone. To twentieth-century bibliographers such as A. W. Pollard and W. W. Greg, who established the modern ground rules for the editing of Shakespeare's plays, Q1 was a "bad quarto" based not on Shakespeare's own manuscript but on the faulty memory of one of the actors. Yet there were some features of Q1 which this theory could not explain. Polonius, for example, appears as "Corambis", leading some scholars to speculate that Q1 may preserve echoes of an earlier version of the play: Shakespeare's first draft, in fact.

In *Hamlet after Q1*, Zachary Lesser joins a growing number of scholars who have challenged the traditional dichotomy between "good" and "bad" quartos. But he is less interested in the origins of Q1 than in its reception history. He argues that Q1 cannot be fully understood without taking into account the paradox that, despite being the earliest printed text of *Hamlet*, it was the last to be discovered. As the *Literary Gazette* remarked in 1825, it was a "new (old) play". Its dramatic return from the past (the comparison with Hamlet's father's ghost is irresistible) gave it a disruptive impact that it would not have had if it had emerged, say, a century earlier.

In Lesser's telling, the history of Q1 therefore becomes the history of *Hamlet*'s interpretation from 1825 to the present day. Each chapter of his book focuses on one of the "new readings of infinite interest" that overturned settled assumptions about the play, such as "Enter the ghost in his night gowne", one of several stage directions in Q1 (along with Ofelia's entrance "playing on a Lute, and her haire downe singing") that offer a precious insight into early performance practice. To nineteenth-century readers, accustomed to seeing the Ghost on stage in full armour, the nightgown seemed ridiculous. But Lesser shows how it gradually gained acceptance: from Goethe's pioneering critical analysis of Q1 which singled out the nightgown as a quintessentially Shakespearean touch, through Henry Irving's controversial production of *Hamlet* in 1874 which emphasized the domestic setting of the play, to the full-blown Freudian productions of the twentieth century, which offered an Oedipal reading of Hamlet's relations with his mother.

Lesser is on weaker ground when he goes back to the seventeenth century to discuss the publication of Q1. He argues that the two early quartos were marketed alongside each other, so that early readers could choose between two alternative versions of *Hamlet*. This seems a strained interpretation of the blurb on the 1604 quarto, which does after all claim to be offering a "true and perfect" text: not merely an alternative *Hamlet* but a better one. Tiffany Stern has recently revived the hypothesis of Q1 as a reported text, but with a new twist on the old theory, suggesting that it could have been reconstructed not from an actor's memory but from audience notes. If Stern is right, then there may still be something to be said for the traditional view of Q1 as a "bad" or at least a defective text. Certainly, most readers encountering Q1 for the first time are likely to feel that the signal-to-noise ratio is fairly low.

Lesser's great achievement, however, is to show why textual bibliography matters. Compared to the philosopher-kings of Shakespeare studies – the Harold Blooms and Stephen Greenblatts – the bibliographers and editors who have worked on establishing the text of the plays can seem a little like Prufrock, "deferential, glad to be of use, / Polite, cautious, and meticulous". Zachary Lesser gives them a starring role. This highly original book thrusts bibliography up from the footnotes and into the footlights, by showing in fascinating detail how the bibliographical algebra of Q1, Q2 and F has made a crucial contribution to the interpretation and performance of *Hamlet*.