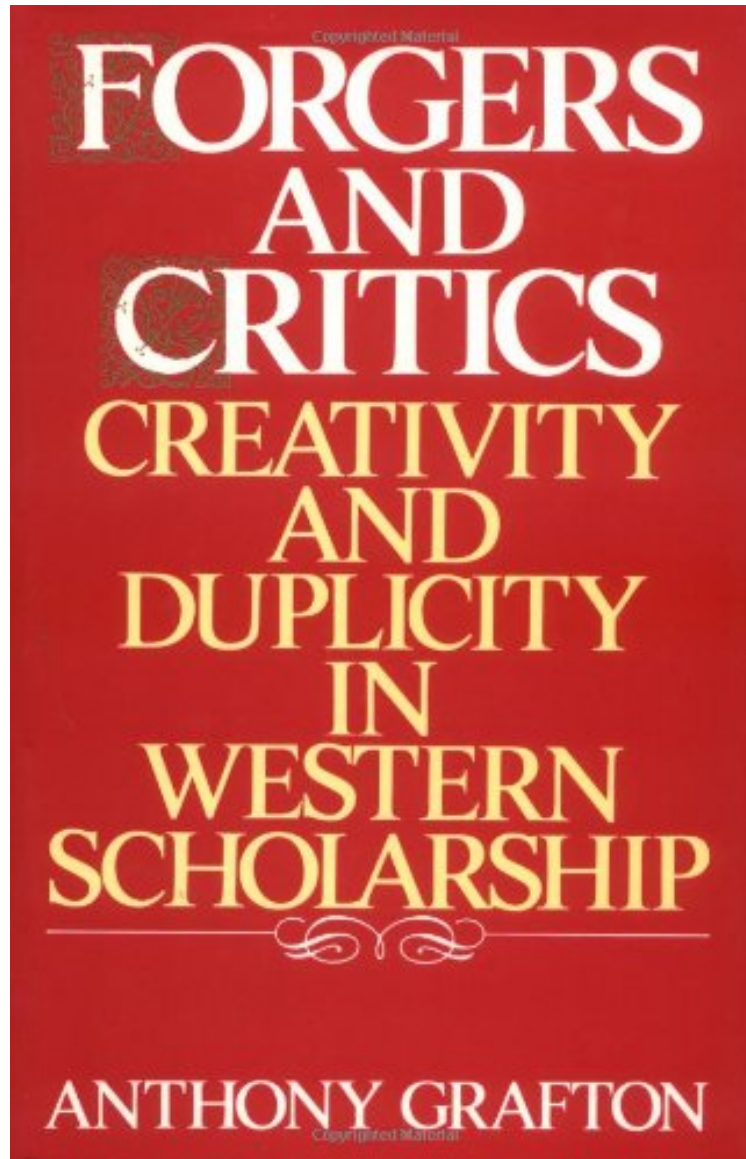


[Download] Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship

Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship

Anthony Grafton

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Anthony Grafton : Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship:

9 of 11 people found the following review helpful. anecdotalBy A CustomerA short book on the history of forged

historical documents, and efforts to detect them, from ancient to modern times. It skips around too much, without giving enough context for most of its anecdotes. Part of its larger message is that both practices are age-old, and that the higher criticism of 19c Germany was not as new as it seemed. Also, forgery was always considered wrong; epistemological concepts haven't changed that much. Another message is that the two are intertwined, and even some of the "gravest" opponents and critics of forgery, such as Erasmus, at times were forgers themselves.

Just as it "takes a thief to catch a thief," so the forger greatly aids the search for historical truth, maintains Anthony Grafton in this wide-ranging exploration of the links between forgery and scholarship. Labeling forgery the "criminal sibling" of criticism, he describes a panorama of remarkable individuals--forgers, from classical Greece through the recent past, who produced a variety of splendid triumphs of learning and style, and scholarly detectives, who honed the tools of scholarship in attempts to unmask these skillful fakers. In the process he discloses the extent, the coherence, and the historical interest of two significant and tightly intertwined strands in the Western intellectual tradition. "The desire to forge," writes the author, "can bite and infect almost anyone: . . . the honest as well as the rogue." Forgers are inspired not only by ambition or greed but also by impulses to play jokes, exuberant desires to see the past made whole again, or serious wishes to invoke divine or distantly historical authority for particular spiritual or national traditions. Whatever their goals, forgers in classical antiquity as well as in the modern era have often been well ahead of critics in the pursuit of methods of authenticating documents, and Grafton shows that many techniques normally considered the invention of scholars in early modern Europe were already employed in classical times. This accessible work discusses forgers as different from each other as Dionysus the "Renegade," Erasmus, Carlo Sigonio, James Macpherson ("Ossian"), Thomas Chatterton, and the great sixteenth-century Dominican scholar Giovanni Nanni (Annius) of Viterbo, whose forged histories by Berosus, Manetho, and other ancient authors drove the real histories of the ancient world from the literary marketplace for almost a hundred years. One chapter is devoted to comparing three scholars--Porphyry (third century), Isaac Casaubon (1559-1614), and Richard Reitzenstein (1861-1931)--whose efforts to deal with the same body of forged material, the *Hermetica*, reveal both continuity and change in critical method. What emerges from *Forgers and Critics* is a new appreciation for a strange literary genre that has flourished for over 2500 years--amusing its uninvolved observers, enraging its humiliated victims, and, most importantly, contributing to a richer sense of what the past was really like.

"Grafton makes clear that the master forger must also be ... a scholar ... as knowledgeable as those whom he is trying to fool.... This elegant monograph ranges from Porphyry through Isaac Casaubon ... on to Scaliger, Chatterton and others, though its focus remains the transmission of classical texts. Or, rather, pseudo-classical texts."--Washington Post