The Problem of Perfect Fakes[1]

M.W. ROWE

Fakes fall into two categories: copies and pastiches. The first is exemplified when someone paints a reproduction of Manet's *The Fifer* with the intention of selling it to you as the original. The second is exemplified when someone paints a picture in the *style* of Manet – although not a reproduction of one of his actual works – with the intention of selling it to you as a picture *by* Manet.

However, not all – or even most – copies and pastiches are fakes. There can be many reasons for painting a copy (you might want a token of this type on your wall); and the same applies to painting a pastiche (you might want to explore the original artist's technique). Of course, both kinds of painting can be pressed into service as part of a fraud or hoax, but I shall assume that a painting is only a fake or forgery (two words I use interchangeably) if it is was created in order to deceive. There can be a number of motives for such deceptions: for fame, for revenge, to make money, to demonstrate the virtuosity of the faker, and so on.[2]

A copy or pastiche is not necessary of inferior aesthetic or monetary value to the original. Rembrandt's copies of Pieter Lastman are more valuable in both senses than the works he copied; and Chatterton's pastiches of fifteenth-century poetry are often of greater artistic interest than his stylistic models. It's also quite common for an artist to paint a number of different copies of the same painting

[1] This paper was originally written as a popular lecture, and I have not tried to remove all stylistic traces of its origin.

[2] There can also be more complicated cases. For example, someone can deliberately misattribute an existing work to Rubens, or he can also touch it up to make it look more like a Rubens' painting. In addition, a forger can exploit a work's close causal connection with Rubens: he can claim, for example, that a picture is by Rubens when he knows it to be entirely the work of Rubens' school; or he can claim it is by Rubens when the master himself added only a few details to the face. But, as in the case of most copies and pastiches, the majority of touched-up paintings and misattributions are not intended to deceive. A painting can be touched up as part of a restoration process or in order to make an older picture look more fashionable; and most misattributions are the results of ignorance.

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(Leonardo's copies, for example, of the *Mona Lisa*) and these can often be of similar aesthetic and monetary value.

Forging is often a dubious moral practice, but I don't intend to say anything further about its ethical aspects here. My interest is rather in the aesthetic value of copies and pastiches, and these pose a more delicate theoretical problem for the aesthetician than fakes and forgeries do for the moralist. The only reason I am focusing on fakes is that they raise the issue of the aesthetic value of copies and pastiches in a particularly dramatic, public and emphatic form. Moreover, I am largely interested in the aesthetic values of copies and pastiches, not for their own sakes, but because they illuminate some profound issues in the metaphysics of normal art: about the nature of art's ontology; and the roles genre, originality and intention legitimately play in our aesthetic responses.

My debts to previous aestheticians who have thought about these and related topics – Walton, Danto, Currie and Lamarque amongst others – will be obvious throughout.[3]

I

Let me begin with three examples. The first is reported by the *Daily Telegraph*:

> A half-man, half-goat sculpture, which was attributed to Post-Impressionist artist Paul Gauguin and took pride of place at the Art Institute of Chicago for a decade, has been declared to be a forgery created by a British family. The Museum admitted that the Faun sculpture is not by the nineteenth-century French artist but is the work of the Greenhalgh family who swindled an estimated £1.5 million from museums, galleries and auction houses. A private dealer bought the sculpture at Southeby's London, for £270,000 in 1994. The Art Institute purchased it from the dealer three years later. Eric Hogan, the director of public affairs at the Institute said: 'Everyone who bought and sold the work did so in good faith.' Shaun Greenhalgh, 47, who was jailed earlier this month on fraud

[3] Kendall L.Walton, 'Categories of Art,' *Philosophical Review* **79** (1970), 334–67; Arthur C.Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); Gregory Currie, *An Ontology of Art* (London: Macmillan, 1989); Peter Lamarque, *Work and Object: Explorations in the Metaphysics of Art* (Oxford: OUP, 2010).

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charges, created it at his parents' home in Bolton, Greater Manchester.[4]

The second example is taken from the *Guardian*.[5] David Lassman, the director of the Jane Austen Festival in Bath, had had his own novel, entitled *Freedom's Temple*, rejected by a number of publishers. Feeling somewhat aggrieved, he openly speculated with friends about whether Jane Austen herself would have trouble finding an agent or publisher today, and decided to put matters to the test. He typed up the first three chapters of *Northanger Abbey*, changing the book's name to *Susan*, and the heroine's name from Catherine Moreland to Susan Maldorn. Then, signing himself Alison Laydee,[6] he sent off the chapters to a number of leading publishers and agents. None spotted the hoax; all recipients rejected the manuscript, and Bloomsbury reported that, although they had read the chapters 'with interest,' the book would 'not be suited to their list.'

He then performed a similar operation with *Persuasion*. Again, none spotted the hoax; all recipients rejected the manuscript, and J.K. Rowling's agent, Christopher Little, said this was because he was 'not confident' of being able to place it. Finally, Lassman doctored *Pride and Prejudice* – changing the title to *First Impressions*, the central family's name from Bennet to Barnet, and so on – and sent it off in his normal manner. One publisher did spot the hoax this time – the opening sentence provided a helpful clue – but otherwise Lassman received the usual flood of rejections. Penguin consoled him by saying that his work 'seemed like a really interesting and original read.'

This is a rather unusual example of forgery; perhaps it is better described as a hoax. In the usual kind of case, a forger claims that his own modern work is an older work by an acknowledged genius. In the Lassman case, a hoaxer claims that an older work by an acknowledged genius is a modern work of his own.

A number of people found different reasons for being disheartened by the Lassman story. One reason was that so many publishers simply rejected work without looking at it; another was that, when the work was read, so many publishers' readers failed to recognise some of the most famous novels in English. But the really interesting case, and the one relevant to this article, is when an intelligent publisher's reader

[4] *The Daily Telegraph*, 13/12/2007, 2.

[5] *The Guardian*, 19/7/2007, 9.

[6] Lassman's modifications of Austen's texts usually make some allusion to her life or art. For example, *Susan* was a title for an early draft of *Northanger Abbey*, and 'Alison Laydee' is a play on Austen's *nom de plume* (if it can be called that) 'A Lady.'

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fails to recognise the work, reads the manuscript conscientiously, and then decides the work is not of sufficient quality to publish.

My third example is older and better known. Fritz Kreisler was one of the greatest violinists of the twentieth century. When he was in his twenties, he began to write a series of encore pieces in various antique styles, announcing them in his programmes as free arrangements of works by a number of obscure composers – Pugnani, Popora, Dittersdorf, Francoeur, etc. – whose names he had found in reference books. His motive for the deception, he said, was to avoid his own name appearing immodestly often in the programme notes for his concerts.

The ruse allowed Kreisler a certain amount of private amusement. On one occasion, he gave a recital in Berlin which included a group of three of his own compositions: the *Caprice veinnois* announced in his own name, and his *Liebesfreud* and *Liebesleid* described as transcriptions of posthumous waltzes by the nineteenth-century Austrian composer, Joseph Lanner. For this, he received a verbal reprimand from Dr Leopold Schmidt, the critic of the *Berliner Tageblatt* for daring to include his own 'insignificant' composition in the same group as some Lanner 'gems'. Schmidt expanded his criticisms in print: 'A feeling slightly akin to bad taste was engendered by the somewhat daring juxtaposition of Kreisler's 'Caprice veinnois' – to be sure a charming offering – and the dances of Lanner, these delightful genre creations filled with Schubertian melos and reflecting the good old Vienna days, for which encores were enthusiastically demanded.'[7] Similarly, after a recital including Kreisler's own *Praeludium and Allegro* (billed as being by Pugnani), the violinist was approached in his dressing room by the French composer Vincent D'Indy, who pointed an accusing finger and said: 'Pugnani would not have played the Allegro in that tempo[!]'[8]

Kreisler did not guard the secret terribly closely, and finally, in 1935, he instructed his publisher to remove the pseudonyms and advertise the pieces as his own compositions. Before the new catalogue was published, however, his secret was discovered and made public by the chief music critic of the *New York Times*, Olin Downes, who had made a diligent and unsuccessful search for Pugnani's original *Praeludium and Allegro* while researching a lecture-recital. Kreisler was thoroughly amused, remarking: 'The name changes, the value remains.'[9]

[7] Louis P. Lochner, *Fritz Kreisler* (London: Rockliff, 1951), 292.
[8] Lochner, *Kreisler*, 293.
[9] Lochner, *Kreisler*, 298.

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II

There is something very enjoyable about such cases, largely because we feel that someone with pretensions to knowledge has been shown up. In the Greenhalgh case, the most obvious candidates are the experts at Southeby's and the Chicago Institute of Art; in the Lassman case, the publishers' readers; in the Kreisler case, the music critics. Some feel, however, that the people shown up are the artists whose names have been attached to such frauds. Gauguin can't be much good if even the greatest experts can't tell the difference between a Gauguin sculpture and something Shaun Greenhalgh, 47, knocks up in Bolton; Jane Austen's reputation can't rest on more than one literary type telling another that she's wonderful, if an educated reader, presented with a manuscript he takes for just another romantic novelette, cannot spot the difference. Of course, the interpretation which suggests that artists are shown up in such cases also tars the experts and professional readers, because they too must either lack discernment, or have played along with – and thereby helped sustain – a groundless reputation.

Most critics shared Kreisler's amusement when his hoax was revealed, but Ernest Newman, music critic of *The Times* and distinguished Wagnerian, was furious. 'In the case of paintings,' he wrote, 'a purchaser can proceed at law against anyone who sells him a picture which is not by the artist to whom it is attributed. […] It would be interesting to see what would happen if someone were to claim damages from Kreisler and his publishers on the ground that he had been induced to purchase a score of a certain concerto on the representation that it was by Vivaldi, whereas Vivaldi on Kreisler's own admission had nothing whatever to do with it. […].[10] He was also in no doubt as to what Kreisler's hoax had shown up:

> The average concert-goer no doubt feels that those hateful fellows the critics have had their ignorance shown up and been made to look foolish. On the contrary, what is shown up is the falsity of current judgments upon certain types of old music and the absence of any real critical standard where music in general is concerned.
>
> The simple truth is that a vast amount of seventeenth and eighteenth century music was merely the exploitation of formulae, the effective handling of which is within the scope of an ordinarily intelligent musician to-day. From one point of view Kreisler

[10] Lochner, *Kreisler*, 297.

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> has not gone nearly far enough in the excellent work of clearing up the world's muddled thinking on these points: for my part I wish he had "discovered" some Bach and Handel manuscripts as well. In so far as Bach and Handel merely sat down in perfectly cold blood and ground out their morning's ration of music according-to–the-recipe […].[11]

He excepts Bach's *Aria*, Handel's *Largo*, and the first movement of Mozart's G minor symphony[12] from his strictures, but one can only be impressed, even so, at the level of theoretical destruction he feels Kreisler's hoax ought to bring about.

In this article, I want to argue that neither the critics, nor the publishers' readers, nor the artists whose names are attached to fraudulent works, nor their entire eras, are shown up by these kinds of hoaxes. In fact, the only people shown up by fakes, are people who think that anyone is shown up by fakes.[13]

III

Wollheim[14] argues that works of art are either physical objects or types: Strawson[15] counters that the distinction is only contingent and depends on our currently primitive reproductive techniques. If we had a machine that could produce molecule-for-molecule reproductions of Leonardo's *Lady with an Ermine* as easily as a printing press can run off Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*, then we would soon start to think of your copy of Leonardo's picture as just as authentic as your copy of the *Moonlight Sonata*. I accept Strawson's amendment: all works of art are necessarily manifest types, patterns, designs that are potentially infinitely reproducible.

[11] Ernest Newman, 'The Kreisler Revelations – Debit and Credit', in *The Sunday Times*, February 24th 1935. Quoted in Lochner, *Kreisler*, 295–6.

[12] He probably means the second movement, 'Air,' from Bach's Orchestral Suite No.3, in D minor, BWV 1068; the aria, 'Ombra mai fui' ('Never was shade') from Handel's 1738 opera *Serse*; and Mozart's symphony number 40 in G minor, K.550.

[13] I am referring only to excellent fakes; clearly, an expert can be held accountable for overlooking a *crude* forgery.

[14] Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects* (Harmondsworth: Peregrine Books, 1975), 17–28, 90–100.

[15] P.F. Strawson, 'Aesthetic Appraisal and Works of Art' in his *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (London: Methuen, 1974), 178–188, esp.183–4.

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However, the reason most people think that fakes show up experts and artists is because they implicitly believe in what I shall call the 'manifest type-theory'.[16] This says that if two works of art share a manifest type – where a manifest type is defined in terms of a work's perceptible and potentially perceptible features – then they will actually be two *copies* of the *same* work of art; and they will have the same aesthetic qualities, and the same aesthetic value. To put it another way, if a work of art and its manifest type are one and the same, sameness of manifest features is both necessary *and sufficient* for sameness of work. On this view, the identity of a work of art has nothing to do with either history or evaluation.

It follows from the manifest type-theory, that if you want to say that an original is aesthetically much more valuable than a perfect copy, then this can only because you are – perhaps through snobbery and pretentiousness – hallucinating certain aesthetic virtues or vices, or confusing aesthetic with historic interest, or valuing the associations of the object not the object. These are exactly the kinds of errors and attitudes which people believe are shown up so satisfyingly when what was once taken to be a masterpiece is revealed as a forgery.

In fact, the manifest type-theory is wildly at variance with the way everyone – literary critics, musicians, dance historians, auction houses, the general public – treats and responds to works of art. For example, even wonderful copies of important paintings and sculptures command only a fraction of the price – often 1% or less – of the original, and they tend to be removed from gallery walls once discovered; despite being repeatedly reminded that there's a

[16] For me, all works of art are types which are identified by their physical properties and the history of their production. But a type is different from what I here call a 'manifest type', which is just the actual or potential appearance of a work or several works. The phrase 'potential appearance' is designed to show my opposition to Goodman's theory as a complete account of fakes. He thinks that if an original and a fake look exactly alike, but we know that the copy is in some way different physically from the original, then this could lead to our eventually *seeing* that the original and the fake are not identical. This is why, according to Goodman, it is important to distinguish between originals and fakes, even though they currently look identical. (See Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), 99–123). He does not consider a case where the original and the copy are molecule-for-molecule identical because this, for him, would mean that they actually *are* the same work of art. By contrast, I argue that there need be no actual or potential perceptual difference between two paintings for them to be different works; they need only have different histories.

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significant difference between the man who suffers and the mind which creates, the public still feels that light is shed on literature by reading biographies of the people who wrote it; and literary critics will keep talking about intention and historical context despite theorists telling them that only *the words on the page*[17] should be the object of their studies.

I want to argue that the practices of experts and the general public are correct; and that it is the manifest type-theory which needs to be abandoned. Sharing a manifest type is certainly necessary for two works to have exactly the same aesthetic properties, or to be the same work, but it is by no means sufficient.[18] Two or more works can share the same manifest type, and yet have wildly dissimilar aesthetic properties and be of completely different aesthetic values. To begin my demonstration of this, I want to consider our attitudes towards human languages and gestures.

IV

How much can you learn about a word, phrase or sentence by looking at it very carefully? To show that the answer is 'not much', consider the following example. You are standing outside a seminar room where group of literary critics have just finished discussing Milton. When you go into the now deserted room, you find the following words written on the blackboard:

PAIN FORMIDABLE

The word order and sense are slightly puzzling, but it might be reasonable to assume that a critic has been discussing how Milton is inclined to place his adjectives after nouns ('curses deep') and that this particular example refers to terrible pain. However, when you mention these thoughts to the next person who enters the room, he smiles and tells you that in fact all the Milton critics were next door; the last group in this room was a small convention of French bakers … which makes the inscription on the board suddenly look very different.

[17] See Wimsatt and Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy,' the *Sewanee Review*, Vol.**54** (1946), 468–88.

[18] It would be misleading to describe two such works of art as 'copies' – they might not be copied from originals, other works, or each other. 'Counterparts,' or Danto's term, 'indiscernibles,' might be better.

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In the same way, a woman who has parked in a Scandinavian shopping precinct might be upset and alarmed to discover, on returning to her car, that a piece of paper has been placed under her windscreen wiper containing – in large letters – the words:

TOTAL SLUT

But it should not take long to discover that the paper is a flier for a closing-down sale, and that the inscription above, in Swedish, means 'completely closed'.[19]

To discover the meaning of these phrases, we have to find out who wrote them and in what context. However, it is clearly not enough to know about the native language of the person who wrote the two inscriptions described above. The Milton critic may have been trying out his French; the French baker may have been experimenting with Miltonic English; the Swedish shopkeeper may have intended to convey an insult in English. Intention is all important, and it is strange how intentionality can imbue an inscription so deeply that it can never be removed. If there are two inscriptions of PAIN FORMIDABLE, one meaning *terrible pain* the other meaning *wonderful bread*, and they are muddled up so no one can tell which is which, they would both retain their original meanings whether anyone knows which is which or not.

In the case described immediately above, each inscription has a meaning although we cannot tell what it is. But in some cases, exactly the same inscription will have no meaning at all. Let us suppose that there is no God, and no intentional purpose in nature, and yet one day, a stream deposits some pebbles in the pattern PAIN FORMIDABLE on a small sandbank.[20] Usually, the reason we have difficulty in determining what an inscription means is because we have difficulty recovering the intention with which it was written. But in this case, the difficulty is not that we cannot know what was originally intended, is that there was no original intention to discover: the pattern is entirely accidental and meaningless.

[19] I would like to thank Karin Moses for bringing this example to my attention, and to Elisabeth Schellekens for confirming the translation.

[20] I base this example on the famous seashore case in Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels, 'Against Theory,' in W.J.T.Mitchell (ed.), *Against Theory: Literary Studies in the New Pragmatism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 11–30.

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Of course, we can entertain ourselves by projecting various meanings on to it – an Englishman will be inclined to suppose it means *terrible pain*, a Frenchman *wonderful bread* – and we soon realize it could have an infinite number of possible meanings in an infinite number of possible languages. But projecting a meaning – usually of a phrase the pattern reminds you of in your own language – is not a reliable way of establishing what ordinary written languages mean (translation would be an easy business if it were), and it is no more effective for establishing the meaning or meaninglessness of natural objects. In the pebble example, every projected meaning – including every contradictory meaning – is as good as any other, and where everything is the correct answer, nothing is the correct answer.

Gesture is another useful object of comparison for works of art. How much can we learn about a gesture from looking at the position or movement of a body part? The 'V'-sign made with the first two fingers of the hand can either be a gesture of abuse or it can symbolize victory. Which is which depends again entirely on the context and intention with which it is used. Showing the feet in Thailand is thought to be deeply offensive, but in Western Europe the gesture is without particular significance. Whether it is offensive or not depends once again entirely on context and intention. The same considerations apply to less formalized actions. Going clubbing is just a normal activity in youth; it causes comment and alarm in the middle-aged. Wearing a twinset and pearls expresses perhaps good taste and conservatism in the older woman; the outfit would have a different meaning if I were wearing it now.

The moral of these considerations is that you cannot begin to understand a segment of language or a gesture when you do not know its origin and context. If someone is shown a picture of a hand, foot or inscription, and is asked to assess the meaning and significance of what is shown, then it would not be at all surprising if he made errors. In addition, if the person showing the pictures found these errors wildly funny, it would be him – rather than the person trying to interpret the pictures – who'd be thought foolish.

I am not claiming that works of art are gestures or form part of a language, but I am claiming that both comparisons can help loosen the grip of the analogy between works of art and natural objects. However, I think it's true to say that both words and works of art possess what Searle calls 'secondary intentionality', where objects in the world become imbued by, and become natural extensions of, thought.[21]

[21] See his *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983), 160–79.

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V

Let me move closer to the issue of fakes by saying something about the role of conventions in art and art appreciation.

In the Zion and Bryce canyons in Utah, there is a rock which, through millions of years of weathering and erosion, has come to look like the elderly Queen Victoria. Let us suppose, for the sake of example, that the rock in Zion-Bryce is molecule-for-molecule identical to an undistinguished statue of Queen Victoria, erected towards the end of her reign in some remote corner of London. Can we ascribe the same aesthetic properties to the rock that we can to the statue? Clearly not.

One thing which I can say about the statue which I cannot say about the rock is that it depicts Queen Victoria. The rock may resemble Queen Victoria, it's true, but resemblance isn't enough for depiction. To begin with, resemblance is a symmetrical relation whereas depiction isn't. If the statue resembles Victoria then Victoria resembles the statue; but if the statue depicts Victoria then it does not follow that Victoria depicts her statue.

Similarly, many things resemble one another which do not depict one another. One identical twin resembles the other identical twin, but one twin does not depict the other. There may also be many people who resemble the statue more than Victoria does, but this does not entail that the statue depicts them rather than Victoria. And it's probably true that every statue of Victoria more closely resembles every other statue of Victoria more than any of them do the Queen, but the fact remains that each depicts the Queen rather than all the other statues. For depiction – as opposed to straightforward representation – some degree of resemblance is necessary, but it is by no means sufficient.[22]

Even more obviously, we can ascribe many more particular properties to the statue which we cannot ascribe to the rock. For example: the statue is staid, conventional, smug, naturalistic, conservative, old fashioned, flattering, sentimental, influenced by Donatello, unironic, ineptly posed, cluttered, High Victorian, unimaginative, grovelling, boldly realized, skilfully modelled, and a tribute to Millais. In addition, we might say it expresses the confidence of Empire, captures her ordinariness, is a virtuoso exercise, or shows no understanding of its medium. None of these things can be truly predicated of the rock.

[22] Most of these arguments are found in Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 1–43.

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The rock and the statue are identical *objects* because they share a manifest type; but only one of them is also a *work*.[23]

VI

Given the example above, it is not difficult to see that there can be a difference between two *works* even though they share a manifest type and have identical objects.

Art is heavily convention-governed, and unless you understand the conventions in play, you do not understand the work you are contemplating. Let me elaborate on one of Kendall Walton's examples.[24] Imagine, on your left, a very large marble portrait bust of a Roman senator the nose of which has been damaged in the course of time. Now imagine, on your right, another work, made by a ludic, post-modern artist, perhaps to highlight and make fun of the conventions of portrait busts. Both objects, needless to say, are molecule-for-molecule identical; if their positions were reversed over night, then it would not be possible to discover, just from examining the objects themselves, which is which. And yet these objects could be vehicles for, could realize, utterly different works.

The statue on your left is a larger-than-life depiction of a normal sized man; a normally coloured man; a living man who can move; a man with a normal nose. Perhaps it has a title: *Valarius Maximus*. The one on your right is a life-sized depiction of a giant; a mottled albino; severed below the shoulders, dead and immobile, with a mutilated nose, impaled on an ornate spike. It too has a title: *Dead Mutilated Albino Giant Severed Below the Shoulders and Impaled on an Ornate Spike*. Because each work has different representational qualities, they have different aesthetic qualities including those which contain an evaluation. The work on your left is conventional, staid, solemn, and straightforward. The one on your right is original, grotesque, witty, cruel, irreverent, ironic, self-conscious and allusive. As works they are very different; and yet no two objects could be more alike.

This example is clearly drawn from the realm of theory, but mistakes about artistic conventions occur in real life, and sometimes they can vitiate a judgement. I remember once attending a concert whose second half ended with a very crisply executed performance

[23] I take this terminology from Peter Lamarque, 'Work and Object' in his *Work and Object*, 56–77.

[24] Walton, 'Categories of Art', 147.

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of a *concerto grosso* by Handel. As we were leaving, a man behind me said to his companion that he thought the performance had been pretty poor: 'The sound kept coming and going', he said, 'and the orchestra wasn't together.' The only possible explanation for this was that he didn't realize that much of the interest of a *concerto grosso* depends on the contrast between the agility and lightness of a small group of soloists, and the weightier sound of the full body of strings. The man behind me, it would seem, had heard (in some sense of 'heard') a scrappy account of a string serenade or something similar, where most of the players weren't up to the technical demands of their parts.

What determines which conventions apply to a particular object? It is quite clear that they are determined not by those who see, hear or otherwise perceive it, but by the person who made or adapted the object. Indeed, the title an artist gives his work can have an enormous impact on our response. We can see this if we imagine a post-modern artist who decides to re-make and re-title some acknowledged masterpieces. Suppose Rodin's *The Kiss* were re-made as *Incest*; suppose Cézanne's *Still Life* were re-painted as *Poisoned Fruit*; suppose Goya's *Shootings of the 3rd May* were re-painted as *A Night at the Opera*. Wouldn't our responses change out of all recognition, despite the fact that the earlier and later work in each case share a manifest type?

VII

In choosing the examples described above, I have clearly tried to pick cases where discovering that an object has one origin rather than another, or conforms to one set of conventions rather than another, has a decisive and obvious effect on our understanding. Clearly a fake is a case where the forger tries to preserve the conventions governing the genre he fakes, but I shall argue, nonetheless, that exposing something as a fake has a legitimate effect on our approach and attitude.

Consider again Lassman's Jane Austen hoax. How did Austen's original readers respond to her work? One thing stuck all of them: her novels contained virtually nothing that readers had come to expect in a novel. For example in May 1813, Annabella Milbanke (later Lady Byron) wrote:

> I have finished the Novel called *Pride and Prejudice*, which I think a very superior piece of work. It depends not on any of

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> the common resources of novel writers, no drownings, no conflagrations, nor runaway horses, nor lapdogs and parrots, no chambermaids and milliners, nor rencontres [duels] and disguises. I really think it is the most *probable* I have ever read. It is not a crying book, but the interest is very strong, especially for Mr Darcy. The characters which are not amiable are diverting, and all of them are consistently supported.[25]

This set of observations was endorsed by William Gifford two years later:

> I have for the first time looked into *P. and P.* and it is really a pretty thing. No dark passages; no secret chambers; no windhowlings or long galleries; no drops of blood upon a rusty dagger – things that should now be left to ladies' maids and sentimental washerwomen.[26]

Equally absent, are depictions of the upper ranks of the nobility, plots turning on mistaken identities, hidden then rediscovered wills, virtuous maids fighting off male sexual predators, abductions and rapes, protracted and pathetic scenes of illness, extended declarations of passionate love, violence of any kind, plots based on mistaken parentage, politics, foreign intrigues and travel.[27] Sir Walter Scott summarizes the revolution in the novel Austen largely brought about in his review of *Emma*:

> [*Emma*] belongs to a class of fictions which has arisen almost in our own times, and which draws the characters and incidents introduced more immediately from the current of ordinary life than was permitted by the former rules of the novel [...] copying nature as she really exists in the common walks of life, and presenting to the reader, instead of splendid scenes of the imaginary world, a correct and striking representation of that which is taking place around him.[28]

[25] Annabella Milbanke, letter, 1st May 1813, to her mother, in *Lord Byron's Wife*, Malcolm Edwin, 159. Quoted in B.C. Southam, *Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage*, vol.**1**, 1811–1870 (London: Routledge, 1968, 2 vols), 8.

[26] William Gifford, letter September (?) 1815, in *A Publisher and his Friends*, ed., Samuel Smiles, vol.**1**, 282. Quoted in Southam, *Jane Austen*, 8.

[27] See http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/janeart.html accessed 25/10/2010

[28] Sir Walter Scott, unsigned review of *Emma*, *Quarterly Review*, dated October 1815, issued March 1816, XIV, 188–201. Reprinted in Southam, *Jane Austen*, 59 and 73.

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Early readers were so dazzled by this accomplishment, that they tended to overlook equally revolutionary aspects of Austen's art: the development of an ironic narrative voice, the extended use of free indirect discourse, and depictions of conversations where characters talk over and ignore one another.

Now suppose you are an intelligent and well informed publisher's reader who is suddenly presented with three chapters and a synopsis of *Northanger Abbey* disguised as a new novel. If you do not recognize the typescript, what would your reaction be, and how would this differ from that of the original readers?

To begin with, I imagine you would realize that what you are being presented with is a *pastiche*: a fiction purporting to be written in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. This of course did not strike Austen's original readers, who found the style utterly up to date and contemporary. In addition, the modern reader is more than familiar with novels that deal with the common affairs of daily life – they have themselves become absolutely commonplace - whereas early readers, as we've seen, were dazzled and occasionally baffled by anything so startling and original.[29]

Secondly, I imagine you would soon realize that the book has a satirical target – the late eighteenth-century Gothic Romance, such as Mrs Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. A comment Austen makes just before Catherine Moreland's journey to Bath would alert you to this: '[…] The parting took place and the journey began. It was performed with suitable quietness and uneventful safety. Neither robbers nor tempests befriended them, nor one lucky overturn [of the coach] to introduce them to the hero.'[30]

On reading this passage, the modern reader may well ask why, of all the things the writer could have satirised, he has lighted on the eighteenth century Gothic romance. Certainly, many clichés of that genre have been absorbed by modern romantic films and fiction, but these

[29] The question of how two physically indistinguishable texts can embody completely different aesthetic qualities was, of course, first raised and explored in Jorge Luis Borges, 'Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote,' in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*, eds, Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby, trans., James E. Irby (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 2000), 62–7.

[30] Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Persuasion*, ed., John Davie, textual notes and bibliography by James Kinsley (Oxford: OUP, 1975), 16. In my quotations, I have left the names of Austen's heroine untouched. Readers who want completely to recreate the experience of Lassman's publishers' readers will need to substitute 'Susan' and 'the Maldorns' for 'Catherine' and 'the Morelands'.

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commonplaces have been satirised many times before (not least by Jane Austen); and is the eighteenth-century Gothic romance so prominent in our culture as to require novel-length satire? Why choose this dusty object when so many other and more necessary targets offer themselves? Again, this reaction would not be shared by the original readers: the Gothic Romance, as the reactions of Milbanke and Gifford show, was omnipresent and oppressive, and corrective satire both appropriate and necessary. In writing a novel early in her career attacking its conventions, Austen is self-consciously and explicitly clearing a space for herself and her art.

Other aspects of the typescript's satire will be harder to understand. Just before the journey to Bath, Catherine takes leave of her sister Sally:

> It is remarkable, however, that she neither insisted on Catherine's writing by every post, nor extracted her promise of transmitting the character of every new acquaintance, nor a detail of every interesting conversation that Bath might produce. Every thing indeed relative to this important journey was done, on the part of the Morelands, with a degree of moderation and composure, which seemed rather consistent with the common feelings of life, than with the refined sensibilities, the tender emotions which the first separation of a heroine from her family ought always to excite.[31]

If the target here is the behaviour of heroines in modern film and prose romances, then it's difficult to see the point of this passage; after all, most modern romantic heroines don't seem to spend long periods of time writing letters. You will have to assume that the target is the kind of exaggerated closeness between sisters sometimes found in romantic novelettes; or perhaps romantic *professions* of closeness and undying love. But to Jane Austen's first readers, the main target of the satire was obvious. Many eighteenth-century novels were in epistolary form, and one artificiality of the genre is that the heroine, as well as surviving shipwrecks and fighting off male predators, has to spend an inordinate amount of time writing letters. (Many have wondered, for example, how Richardson's Clarissa Harlowe, in addition to writing two million words, finds the time to undergo the experiences she's writing about.) But the epistolary novel is no longer a standard form for modern novelists, and to spend time guying its awkwardness in a modern novel seems perverse.

[31] Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, 16.

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VIII

We now return to the aspect of Austen's art which struck early readers most forcefully: its clear-eyed naturalism, its low-key probability, its careful observation of people and their manners. But reading a Regency novelist observing the manners and foibles of her own age is one thing; reading a modern novelist describing the manners and foibles of how he *imagines* the Regency period to be is quite another. The work of the modern novelist can only be a matter of laborious and quite possibly inaccurate reconstruction; so why not simply turn to the work of Regency novelists themselves, who were in a much better position to know what life at this period was like, and who have more than covered this ground already? In addition, the average modern reader will not find a portrayal of eighteenth century foibles interesting if those foibles disappeared with the eighteenth century; he will only be gripped if we continue to suffer from these foibles now. But if we continue to suffer from them now, why not show that this is the case by using a contemporary setting?

The reason many modern novelists turn to the early nineteenth century is that it seems to offer opportunities for romance and adventure that the twentieth century lacks: the absoluteness of class boundaries; the sense that much of the world was not properly explored; the splendours of dress; the camaraderie and terrors of life on board a wooden fighting ship. Different genres of the historical novel exploit different distinctive aspects of the period. The Georgette Heyer variety exploits the clothes, manners and class distinctions; while the Patrick O'Brien variety exploits the suspense and heroism of warfare in Nelson's navy. Moreover, there are serious novels which use other features of the period: William Golding's *Rites of Passage*, written in pastiche early nineteenth-century prose, explores the psychological effects of the confinement and excitement of a voyage to Australia lasting many months. We understand quite well why these novelists chose this period.

But how do Lassman's typescripts exploit the distinctive features of their chosen period? The opening chapters of *Northanger Abbey* present an account of the tedium of Regency Bath; the opening chapters of *Persuasion*, show a genteel family having to economize. It's not at all clear that topics this low-key and commonplace warrant setting a novel 200 years in the past: how exactly is the setting being exploited? What does this period have to show about social tedium and genteel economizing that the modern period cannot?

Oddly, modern novelists choose the early nineteenth century precisely because it offers all the things Jane Austen largely

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abjured – Romantic settings, dare-devil escapes, ostentation, hand to hand combat, pirates, betrayals, and so forth. Consequently, when critics want to point to twentieth and twenty-first century novelists who write like Jane Austen, they do not point to Heyer, O'Brien and Golding and other novelists who use early nineteenth-century settings, but to Anita Brookner or Barbara Pym, novelists who write carefully observed fictions about the less dramatic features of contemporary life. Jane Austen now would have every reason for not writing like Jane Austen then.

When it was first written, *Northanger Abbey* was intended to be read largely by middle-class provincial women on whom time hung heavy; and it was also intended to be read against the background of the sprawling *Mysteries of Udolpho* and – Jane Austen's favourite – Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*. In this context, Austen's performance can only seem light, sparkling, rapid, delightful. But a modern novel – as Lassman's is – cannot, for good commercial reasons, be intended to be read only by people who want to take months in reading it. And it is read against the background, not of Richardson and collections of sermons, but Philip Roth, *Pulp Fiction*, Twitter, and so forth. For the modern reader, who is not primed to make allowances, Lassman's typescript can only seem painfully slow and laborious.

The typescript is also likely to seem puzzlingly coy and prudish. Clearly, the modern historical romance can portray the steamiest sexual details, and the reader might well wonder why this resource is not better utilized, or what this self-denial signifies. But no original Jane Austen reader found her prudish or her reticence puzzling: she was simply following the conventions and laws of her own time, and, as such, roused no comment at all.

Lastly, the modern reader is likely to think the typescript is learned and accurate pastiche but that it pushes its erudition rather beyond the range of the average modern reader. Consider the following:

> Her mother was three months teaching her only to repeat the 'Beggar's Petition;' and after all, her next sister Sally, could say it better than she did. Not that Catherine was always stupid, – by no means; she learnt the fable of "The Hare and many Friends" as quickly as any girl in England.[32]

One is not in a position fully to comprehend the significance of this information until you know what the 'Beggar's Petition' and 'The Hare and many Friends' are. Are they prose works? Are they both

[32] Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, 2.

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fables? Are they poems? Are they songs? How difficult or lengthy are these works, and are they both of about the same length and difficulty? After all, if 'The Hare and his Friends' is a much longer or more difficult work than the 'Beggar's Petition' then this will go some way towards overturning the evidence that Catherine is rather stupid.

You will not be able to answer these questions fully unless you are familiar with the 'Beggar's Petition' (a frequently reprinted didactic poem from the Revd Thomas Moss's *Poems on Several Occasions* from 1769), and 'The Hare and his Friends' (from John Gay's *Fables* of 1727).[33] Once, no doubt, these poems were utterly familiar to any novel-reader, but now their obscurity stands as an obstacle to the modern reader's understanding and enjoyment. Of course, one can take some educated guesses, but the examples seem ill-judged in a modern historical novel: why not chose some simple eighteenth-century poems or fables which are still familiar? – the choice is wide enough.

Jane Austen was faced with one set of options, and the significance and wisdom of the choices she made must be judged against the options available to her. The modern novelist is presented with another set of options, and the significance and wisdom of the choices he makes must be set against the options available to him. It is thus not surprising that a set of ordered words in one period should be an important novel, and the same set of ordered words in a later period should not be considered publishable. After all, the inscription TOTAL SLUT seen against the options available in Swedish, is very different from TOTAL SLUT seen against the options available in English.

In sum, whereas the original readers found Austen's work focused, witty, intelligible, contemporary, racy and revolutionary; the modern reader, faced with Lassman's hoax, is liable to find the same words in the same order arbitrary, unmotivated, unoriginal, dated, slow, esoteric and coy; no more than a satirical pastiche whose satirical targets have long faded from view.[34] Lassman presented a work

[33] Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, 473.

[34] *Northanger Abbey* was probably written in 1798 or 1799 and it was sold to a publisher called Crosby in 1803 for £10. He did not publish the novel and was only willing to let Austen enter a contract with another publisher if she returned the money he had paid for it. Eventually, the novelist's brother, Henry, bought back the manuscript from Crosby in 1816, and it was finally published in 1818, a year after Austen's death. The relevance of this story to the topic of the present paper is how concerned Austen

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which shared the same manifest type as *Northanger Abbey* – he presented an identical *object* to his readers – but he presented a wholly different *work*.

I now turn to Kreisler and Greenhalgh whose cases can be treated more briefly.

IX

Let us suppose that Kreisler's *Leibesleid* and a waltz by Lanner share a manifest type. Are we justified in responding to them in different ways once we know one is by Kreisler and the other by Lanner? I think the answer must be 'Yes'.

Joseph Lanner (1801–43) is a minor composer but his music is nonetheless attractive, distinctive and innovative. He was one of the composers who is largely responsible for turning the triple-time German Dance and Ländler, used by Mozart and Beethoven, into the modern Viennese concert waltz. Composing for his own orchestra, he introduced richer harmonies, sweeping melodies, and greater use of minor keys. Above all, he assisted in the development of three features which are now thought distinctive of the modern Viennese waltz: a marginally quicker tempo than the Ländler;[35] a slight delay on the second beat of the bar; and the utilization of syncopated melodies.

Although it was the older Strauss, in about 1830, who developed the common format of the modern Viennese concert waltz – a sequence of five waltzes with an introduction and coda – it was Lanner who developed the waltz's introduction (by introducing different tempi and time-signatures), and made the coda more clinching climactic by exploiting themes already used in the main body of the work. He was also one of the first composers to *name* his waltzes, a practice taken up and made familiar by the older and younger Johann Strauss.

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was by the delay: she clearly felt that the vogue for Gothic novels had waned, and that a book published after 1816 which satirizes a fashion of the late 1790s had missed its moment. She herself may well have contributed to the waning of this vogue. (*Northanger Abbey*, vii–xiv). Presumably, she would have felt even less sanguine about the commercial and artistic prospects of a work with the same manifest type published for the first time in 2007.

[35] Kreisler does not imitate this particular innovation of Lanner's: the speed indication for *Liebesleid* is 'Tempo di Ländler'.

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When we listen to Lanner's work we should also bear in mind its cultural and political milieu. Metternich's Vienna was run on totalitarian lines, and estimates of the number of police informers vary between six and ten thousand. Accommodation was in short supply and medical conditions were appalling: there were regular epidemics of typhus and cholera, and nearly half of the adults who died were under twenty. The dance halls where Lanner and the elder Strauss ran their orchestras were patronized by people from middle classes backgrounds, but the majority of their clientele came from the working classes.[36] Such gatherings inevitably raised the spectre of disorder for the authorities, a spectre made worse by the evident and shocking sensuality of the new waltzes. One contemporary writer turns the dance into a kind of *Totentanz*:

> As soon as the women are touched by the man's arm, a feverish thrill passes through them. They put their head on his shoulder, their breast close to his, and let themselves be swept about. In this voluptuous posture, and to this lascivious music, they imbibe his every movement. Imploringly innocence flees, terrified from the hall; femininity throws herself beseechingly at their feet; and death stands in the corner and laughs up his sleeve.[37]

In consequence, we should hear Lanner's work as innovative, radical, inventive, a stepping stone between Schubert and Johann Strauss the younger; and an invitation to sensual release that offered working people some relief from the oppressive conditions of pre-1848 Vienna. Kreisler's work, on the other hand, is none of these things: it is middle-class music, deeply nostalgic, backward-looking and conservative, that is in some sense *about* an image of old Vienna – but a lilac-tinted confection that never existed in reality. My objection to Dr Schmidt is not that he misidentified a Kreisler piece as one by Lanner – this was perfectly reasonable, he had been told it was by Lanner and it sounds like Lanner – but that, with his talk of delightful Schubertian melos and the good old Vienna days, he falsifies how Lanner should be heard.

Of course, if we are asked to judge blind, we cannot tell the difference between Kreisler's work and the hypothetical work by Lanner; but the same is true of the two inscriptions of PAIN FORMIDABLE meaning *terrible pain* and *wonderful bread*, the Roman senator and the

[36] Alice M.Hanson, *Musical Life in Biedermeir Vienna*, Cambridge Studies in Music (Cambridge: CUP, 1985), 168.

[37] Hanson, *Vienna*, 163. Translation revised.

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albino giant, the rock and the statue. We must not confuse epistemology with ontology.

X

We have Gauguin to thank for Western art's turn away from the immediate everyday world of the Impressionists – with their parks, picnics, rivers, stations and beach scenes – towards the primitive. One aspect of this primitivism is his engagement with medieval art. He helped develop the technique of Cloisonism – where perspective is in abeyance, and thick black lines surround unshaded blocks of colour – and this is clearly influenced by stained-glass techniques; and we can see further medieval influence in his use of symbols, visions and distortion. Another aspect of his primitivism is the way his paintings from Tahiti not only extend painting's geographical range, but introduce animal totems, exaggerated bodily proportions, and vibrant colours into western art.

If we read through his letters, we find that the discovery of his own voice and style was agonizingly slow, and that the journey was beset by disappointments, cul-de-sacs, misjudgements and personal sacrifices. However, the way he turned art away from focusing on western civilization, and, in particular, his use of geometrical blocks of two-dimensional colour, are major influences on twentieth century culture, especially on the work of Picasso and Matisse, and the designs for the *Ballet Russe*.

In contrast, Shaun Greenhalgh did not spend years of disappointment and self-sacrifice discovering a personal style; he was not responsible for Western art's turn towards the primitive, and he did not influence Picasso and Matisse. The work he produced represents a faun just as Gauguin's might have done; and it follows the conventions of sculpture in just the way Gauguin might have done. But what Greenhalgh cannot put into his work is the originality, insight, discovery and innovation Gauguin put into his; and consequently Greenhalgh's achievement cannot approach Gauguin's.

XI

To repeat a witty remark is not to be witty; to transcribe a report of a scientific discovery is not to make a scientific discovery; and, in the same way, to copy a work of art or a certain style of art, cannot approach the achievement of creating a work of art or discovering a style.

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It is for these reasons that we place the achievements of the *pasticheur*, forger and mimic, below that of the original artist. The forger often has a splendid technique and a chameleon-like talent for imitation, but what he lacks is individual vision, inspiration and originality. On the other hand, there are many artists who lack some aspects of conventional technique (perhaps Berlioz as harmonist, Chopin as orchestrator) and yet they overcome these deficiencies, and became acknowledged masters, precisely because of their individual vision, inspiration and originality.

If we want to write a good pastiche, we know the work we must study, the critics we must read, the features we must examine, and the kind of trial and error we must engage in. Producing copies and pastiches is a *technical* problem: everyone knows how to set about solving it. But founding an influential movement in art, seeing the world in a wholly new way, developing a unique personal style, is not a technical problem. We do not know how to go about solving it; we do not know where to look for a solution. This is what makes being an artist so much more difficult than being a *pasticheur*.

XII

The argument of this paper, means that sameness of manifest type is not enough for sameness of work, otherwise Kreisler and Lanner, Austen and Lassman would have produced the same work. Instead, a work is not only identified by its manifest features, but also by the non-manifest features of its context, history and the intentions with which it was made. This means that one work may differ from another in the way that a fake of a known work differs from a perfectly innocent copy: physically the latter pairing may be indistinguishable and the relevant difference may only reside in the different intentions with which they were created. Ultimately, discovering a work of art's identity means tracing the appropriate causal chain back from the scattered tokens to the relevant intentions of the person who conceived it. These intentions will only become comprehensible when we understand the choices and conventions the artist confronted, and these in their turn will only become comprehensible when they are placed in their historical context. In other words, a work's historical context is *part of the work*; we cannot detach works of art from art history.

This means Kreisler was quite wrong to say of discovered fakes, 'The name changes, the value remains'. The change of name means a different person, and this often means a different place and a

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different time. This entails a different set of options; possibly a different set of conventions; and this ensures the choices made will have different meanings. These factors in their turn can create a new set of aesthetic qualities, and these will often affect a work's aesthetic value.

To try and detach works of art from the making of art is like trying to sunder gestures from gesturing, or words from speaking, because when gestures and words are completely understood they are recognized to embody the intentions which lead to their creation. It would be quite false to think these intentions are just distant causal events which are left behind in the past, because they continue to suffuse and imbue a work as long as the work exists; and this is true whether or not anybody now knows about them. A work is immanent in its token patterns, and those tokens contain and embody the history and context of their creation. This is the truth, I think, in the old Idealist claim that works of art are in some sense mental: they cannot exist but for human intentions, and works cannot be recognized for what they are unless we recognize these intentions.[38]

Consequently, if you are asked to judge the quality of a work when you do not know whether it is by Kreisler or Lanner, Gauguin or Greenhalgh, then the correct response is to decline because the important non-manifest qualities of the work have been withheld from you. There used to be a programme on the BBC's Radio 3 called *The Innocent Ear*. This played pieces of music without telling the listener what they were or who they were by; the implication being that knowing these things before judging was in some sense guilty or suspect. But knowing what a work of art's non-manifest features are is a prerequisite for knowing what the work of art's aesthetic qualities are – it is often the only way you can tell if a work is straight or ironic, satirical or non-satirical, clever or commonplace, original or unoriginal, realistic or fantasy, genuine or pastiche – and to try to judge in the absence of this information is like trying to judge a colour picture from a black and white photograph, or a novel which has its first chapter missing.

I've encountered two main objections to the view I'm proposing here. The first is that it's snobbish. It means you can't just look at paintings or listen to music; you have to be educated and know things about the works you contemplate. I think the reasoning here is true. You can get a certain amount out of just experiencing a work's manifest features, but sometimes the manifest features alone

[38] On aesthetic Idealism, see R.G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art* (Oxford: OUP, 1977), 139–151, and Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects*, 51–61.

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will be inert or misleading. Of course, I don't accept that this makes my view snobbish. It may require a certain level of knowledge to understand the text on a seed-packet, but nobody thinks asserting this fact is snobbish; and artistic knowledge is open to all in exactly the same way that horticultural knowledge is open to all.

The other objection comes from the opposite direction. 'Aesthetic pleasure,' it runs, 'should be autonomous and unalloyed: unsullied by gossip about political history, society, artistic trends, details about artists' personal lives, and so forth. Art requires that we detach an object from its quotidian background, and surrender ourselves to pure and thought-free contemplation.' There is also a certain amount of truth in this view – while contemplating works of art we should concentrate on the work and put immediate practical projects and bias into abeyance – but it can give no account of why a response to a Victorian statue is inappropriate to a virgin rock in Utah.

In the end, both objections should cancel one another out, and leave us not with a highbrow view or a lowbrow view, but with complex and sobering truth.[39]

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[39] I would like to thank Clive Ashwin, Stephen Everson, Marie McGinn, Anthony O'Hear, Catherine Osborne, Anthony Price, Beth Savickey, and audiences at UEA, the Welsh Philosophical Society, and the Royal Institute of Philosophy, for discussions of this paper.

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