

An A to Z of 150 CASE STUDIES



ADOLF HITLER, SECRET AGENT

The Special Operations Executive was set up by Sir Winston Churchill in the summer of 1940 for the purpose of planting spies and saboteurs behind enemy lines. Creating false identities and documents was core to its mission. Based in Baker Street in London, an address made famous as the home of Sherlock Holmes, the members of the SOE were sometimes called the Baker Street Irregulars, after the gang of street urchins who assisted the famous detective.

In 2002, when some of the records in the SOE archives were unearthed from the archives and put on show, it became clear that the British can hardly do anything without a joke. Among the items was a false passport in the name of Adolf Hitler. According to this travel warrant, Hitler was a Jewish painter seeking to emigrate to Palestine.

ALBERT EINSTEIN COULDN'T FIGURE IT OUT

In 1915 Albert Einstein conducted experiments together with Dutch physicist Wander Johannes de Haas into the magnetic properties of iron. They predicted that the experiments would produce a gyromagnetic factor (which measures the direction and strength of magnetism) of 1, widely accepted as correct at the time. However, two series of experiments came up with factors of 1.45 and then of 1.02. So Einstein and De Haas kept quiet about the outcome of the first series, only publishing the second factor. Later, the gyromagnetic factor proved to be not 1, but 2.

THE ALPHA PROJECT AT THE MCLAB

Scientific research into paranormal phenomena sounds very acceptable in theory. After all, is there anything science cannot investigate? In theory it is acceptable to explore, for example, whether a planned polder in the Netherlands could ever spontaneously run dry after a mass appeal to St Christopher. But, of course, no scientist with a sense of reality would ever take this on.

Research into supernatural phenomena does, however, take place. This entry is about telepathy (extrasensory communication of thoughts or ideas), precognition (knowledge of an event before it occurs, in which the knowledge cannot be traced back to sensually perceived phenomena), psychokinesis (moving objects by mental effort alone) and ESP (extrasensory perception). We are here in the realm of spoon-benders, where many a charlatan earns their daily bread and where there is no place for science.

James S. McDonnell, co-founder of aerospace manufacturer McDonnell Douglas, believed that there was more between heaven and earth than just aeroplanes. In 1979 he donated \$500,000 to Washington University in St Louis. The money was intended to set up a laboratory that studied paranormal phenomena. Initially it looked as though the donation would have to be declined, as not a single member of staff felt called upon to lead the lab. Finally, however, physicist Peter R. Philips agreed to take on the job and the donation was accepted.

The McDonnell Laboratory for Psychical Research, which was soon dubbed the McLab, placed an ad in the newspapers, looking for paranormally gifted young people who were willing to be tested. From the more than 300 responses, the researchers chose Steve Shaw and Michael Edwards, who were eighteen and seventeen years old respectively at the time.¹ The choice suggested that the selection procedure was not all it might have been: Shaw and Edwards were young magicians who had applied after consulting with James Randi (the stage name of Randall James Hamilton Zwinge, a professional magician on a mission to expose pseudoscientific nonsense, his Alpha Project).

Shaw and Edwards succeeded in fooling the researchers. The duo's tricks were mostly fairly simple. They would leave a window ajar before they went home and the next morning the lab would be 'mysteriously' strewn with bent cutlery. Clocks jumped around of their own volition and coffee grounds formed mysterious symbols. Often Shaw and Edwards did not even have to use their imagination because an experiment was badly set up. Asked to 'see' a picture in a sealed envelope, for instance, they were left alone with the envelope for several minutes. The envelopes were closed with staples. All they had to do was pry them open, look at the picture, insert the staples back into their original holes and bend them closed. In many of the experiments, Shaw and Edwards had to deliberately make mistakes so as not to get a perfect score, as that would have been too conspicuous. The fact that the researchers became more and more convinced of the duo's paranormal powers was of course not what Randi had in mind, and he repeatedly tried to show the McLab researchers the error of their ways. He spread the rumour that the 'gifted subjects' were frauds. He expressed (justified) criticism of a videotape showing their 'skills'. His efforts had some success, in that the researchers tightened up the measures they took to prevent deception. This made it more difficult for Shaw and Edwards to perform their tricks, but not impossible.

Randi's eventual confession and his recommendation that research into paranormal phenomena should be conducted in the presence of a good magician, however, were counterproductive. From then on, paranormal researchers considered magicians as unsuitable to work with, because they were by definition unsympathetic to the subject-matter.

Audrey Marie Hilley's fame is based on her prowess as a poisoner. She earned her place in this book, however, by taking on a series of false identities, including twin sisters, while on the run.

In 1975 Hilley's husband Frank died as the result of small doses of arsenic being added to his food and drink over a long period. The cause of death was determined as hepatitis and Frank's life insurance paid out more than \$30,000. In 1978 Audrey Hilley took out life insurance for her 18-year-old daughter Carol who, a year later, started suffering from the same stomach pains as her father had. This time the doctors made the right diagnosis: arsenic poisoning.

The diagnosis led the authorities to exhume the bodies of Hilley's husband, her mother Lucille Frazier and her mother-in-law Carrie Hilley. All of the bodies contained abnormally high doses of arsenic, but this could be established as the cause of death only in the case of her late husband. Hilley was charged with the murders but, strangely enough, was released on bail. In November 1979 she disappeared without trace.

In 1980 Hilley, now calling herself Robbi Hannon, met John Homan. They married shortly afterwards and set up home in New Hampshire. From the perspective of a fugitive, Hilley's antics had so far been sensible. Her next step was, however, far from it. Now Robbi Homan, she told her new husband that she had to go to Texas for medical or family reasons (the sources differ on this point). A little later, Homan received a shocking call from Texas with the news that his wife was dead. He need not worry about her body, he was told, as she had donated it to medical science.

If Hilley had wanted to leave her partner, she then clearly changed her mind, for a few months later she turned up on Homan's doorstep, with blonde hair and 20 kilograms lighter. She introduced herself as Terri Hannon, Robbi's twin sister. The twins looked and acted very much alike and, having lost Robbi, Homan started a relationship with Terri. One of his friends, however, proved less gullible and informed the police. They soon guessed Terri Hannon's real identity and arrested her on 12 January 1983 in Brattleboro, Vermont. She was deported to Alabama, where she had committed her crimes. In June of the same year, Hilley was sentenced to life imprisonment plus twenty years, for the murder of her husband Frank and the attempted murder of her daughter Carol. John Homan, her hapless slave, moved to Alabama so that he could visit her in prison.

In February 1987 Hilley was given a three-day pass to meet Homan in a hotel, but she never kept her date. She spent four days drifting around, in cold and rainy weather. When she was found, she was incoherent and covered in mud. Despite being given immediate treatment, she died of hypothermia three or four hours later.

Hilley is buried in the Forest Lawn Gardens cemetery in Anniston, Alabama. She shares her grave with the man she murdered, her husband Frank.

ARTHUR ORTON, TICHBORNE CLAIMANT

On 5 January 1829, Roger Charles Doughty-Tichborne was born in Paris into an aristocratic British family. After a good upbringing and education Tichborne spent some time in the army. He entered into a relationship with his cousin Katherine Doughty, but her family did not allow them to become an engaged because of Roger's excessive drinking. Roger was so upset by this refusal that, like a true romantic, he embarked on a long journey. He crossed the Andes from Chile and, on 20 April 1854 in Rio de Janeiro, boarded the *Bella*, which was bound for Kingston, Jamaica. After leaving port, the ship was never seen again.

After the death of their father in 1862, in the absence of Roger, his younger brother Alfred inherited the title and the property. The mother of the two brothers, Harriette-Félicité, refused to resign herself to the death of her first born and placed advertisements in the world's press, asking for information on his whereabouts. In 1865 her persistence paid off: a butcher called Tomas Castro from the Australian town of Wagga Wagga claimed to actually be Roger Tichborne. So how did he explain his absence of more than ten years? Roger/Tomas claimed that after the *Bella* had overturned, he had managed to survive in a lifeboat and had been rescued by a ship bound for Melbourne. Once there, he had worked as a cattle rancher and butcher, adopting the name Tomas Castro from a man he had met in Chile. Under that name he had married the illiterate Mary Ann Bryant.

Harriette-Félicité asked the butcher to come to Europe. When they finally met on 10 January 1867 in Paris, she recognized her son, but her family thought she had taken leave of her senses. Castro was corpulent and looked nothing like Roger, who was very slimly built. He could not speak French, in which Roger had been fluent, and knew very little of Roger's past. Enquiries by the family in South America and Australia had meanwhile revealed a connection between Castro and a man called Arthur Orton (1834–1898). The wife of one of Castro's former employers in Australia then identified him as Orton. The family of the Chilean whose name he had supposedly adopted did not remember Roger Tichborne, but they did recall Arthur Orton.

When Harriette-Félicité Tichborne died of heart failure in 1868, the family saw the opportunity to take the matter to court. The case dragged on from May 1871 to March 1872, with 100 witnesses to support the claimant Castro and 250 witnesses on the side of the Tichborne family. It also revealed a hitherto unknown juicy titbit: before leaving in 1854 Roger Tichborne was worried that his cousin Katherine Doughty might be pregnant by him and had left a packet with instructions about 'what to do in this eventuality' (McWilliam, 2007). It must have been an unpleasant time for Katherine, who was by then Lady Radcliffe, after making a good marriage.

The case ended in an anticlimax when a Lord Bellew testified that, during their boarding school days, he had given Roger Tichborne a tattoo. In this respect at least, Orton proved to be without blemish.

Orton was charged with perjury. He had no money to defend himself but gathered enough funds to enlist the support of maverick Irish lawyer Edward Kenealy. Mainly thanks to Kenealy the case continued, running from April 1873 to February 1874, becoming the longest trial in English legal history at the time. Kenealy managed to arouse such hatred among the magistrates and the members of the jury that the final judgement against Orton can probably in no small measure be attributed to his lawyer.² Orton was given two consecutive sentences of seven years and Kenealy was disbarred.

In the years that followed, the former lawyer turned this to his advantage. As a defender of the common people, who to some extent identified with Orton, he managed to win a seat in Parliament in 1875 (Kenealy was no great success as an MP, either: the only bill he introduced that I know of was rejected with three votes in favour and 433 against).

On 11 October 1884 Orton was given provisional release. By then Kenealy had been dead for four years and, as Orton took no interest in his political heritage, he signed up with a theatrical agent. He performed in music halls and circuses and ventured on a tour of America, which he started as a lecturer and ended as a barman. Destitute, he returned to England. As his illiterate wife had deserted him while he was in prison, he was free to marry a singer called Lily Enever. For some time they tried to live on his fame, but without success.

In 1895, presumably for financial reasons, Orton signed a confession, published in the tabloid newspaper *The People*, admitting that he was not Roger Tichborne, but Arthur Orton. As soon as he got the fee, he retracted the confession and used the money to set up a tobacconist's shop. The business collapsed and it will come as no surprise that when he died on 1 April 1898, Orton was destitute.

In an act of generosity, the Tichborne family gave permission for Arthur to be buried with the name 'Sir Roger Tichborne' on his coffin. Perhaps they hoped this would rid them of the claimant once and for all. But their hopes proved fruitless. In 1912, when the next heir, Joseph Tichborne, was about to be married, Teresa, one of Arthur Orton's daughters, attempted to shoot him. The marriage eventually took place the following year, with Teresa safely behind bars for six months for sending threatening letters to Joseph and his mother.

ASHLEY TODD AND SOMETHING ODD

In 2008 the battle was raging between the campaign machines of U.S. Republican presidential candidate John McCain and his rival, Democrat Barack Obama. As usual in American political campaigns no means were considered too mean, as long as you didn't get caught. But Ashley Todd was one ardent campaigner that McCain could have done without.

The twenty-year-old volunteer claimed that she had been attacked and robbed in Pittsburgh near an ATM. An Obama supporter had taken offence at Todd's McCain bumper sticker and had assaulted her, scratching the letter 'B' for Barack into her cheek so that she would be a walking advertisement for the Democrats.

The police were not convinced by Todd's story: why would an Obama supporter scratch a letter B into her face, especially as the B was *in reverse*? It didn't make any sense. In the end Todd confessed: the truth was that she had done it herself, at home, in front of a mirror. If nothing else became clear from this confession, it did at least explain the reversed letter.

Todd was sentenced to nine months' probation and 50 hours of community service. She was also ordered to participate in a probation programme for first-time offenders. Maybe she got another B.

ASTROTURF – PLANTED OPINIONS

The term 'grassroots' is primarily used in politics when a policy comes up against great public resistance. Policy-makers are accused of being out of touch with grassroots opinions. Since these opinions can influence policy, it can be worthwhile to falsify them. In the United States, special bodies to disseminate fake grassroots opinions have experienced something of a boom. As they have no roots, they are likened to artificial grass, or 'astroturf'.

Creating astroturf bodies usually follows a similar path. Company A secretly finances an 'independent' foundation B which then calls in 'independent' expert C and concerned 'independent' citizens D, E, etc. It is the expert's task to refute the opinion company A wishes to debunk with a 'scientific' argument. The citizens are there to demonstrate their power as voters. Many astroturf bodies disguise their real aims by giving themselves a name that sounds the opposite to what they want to achieve.

For example, when software giant Microsoft was threatened with anti-monopoly legislation, an organization called Americans for Technology Leadership rushed to their aid. It distributed preprinted 'personal' letters to potential Microsoft supporters and asked them to send the letters to the government. This organization was partly, perhaps even fully, financed by Microsoft. An investigation by the Public Prosecutor in Utah revealed that at least two of the people who 'sent' the letter were in fact already dead at the time their letters were posted.

In 2000–2001 the state of California was suffering from an energy crisis. Although it was partly due to mismanagement, the crisis was mainly caused by the behaviour of energy companies which had deliberately limited the supply of energy to California, forcing the state to buy extra, more expensive, energy. After the crisis, governor Gray Davis tried to curb the power of the companies. In 2003, the American Taxpayers Alliance opposed Davis's policy and managed to have him removed from office, something that had happened only once before in American history (Davis was succeeded by Arnold Schwarzenegger). The American Taxpayers Alliance was fully financed by two large energy companies.

Astroturf opinions can also be disseminated in other ways. Today, many online editions of newspapers offer readers the opportunity to comment on articles. A journalist at *The Guardian* noticed that many comments on articles on global warming – denying the existence of the phenomenon – were almost identical. When the journalist tried to discover the real identity of one of the contributors, the latter refused to cooperate.

(For an interesting astroturf body, driven by religious rather than business interests, see the Discovery Institute's Center for Renewal of Science and Culture in PROFESSOR BEHE.)



BARONESS MURPHY'S CELLO SCROTUM

In an issue of the *British Medical Journal* in 1974, Dr Elaine Murphy (b. 1947) read a letter by a Dr P. Curtis on a medical phenomenon called 'guitar nipple', which could occur as a result of the continuous pressure of the upper edge of the guitar against the breast.

As Murphy (wrongly) assumed that Curtis had made a joke, she decided to take it one step further. In a letter to the *BMJ* she described a case of 'cello scrotum', caused by the body of the cello rubbing against the crotch. Because of her position – at that time she was a medical professor – Murphy decided to have the letter signed by her husband, who was not a physician. To their astonishment the letter was published.

For 30 years, the letter was occasionally quoted in articles, the last citation being in December 2008 – much to the amusement of the Murphys. But then they decided that the prank had gone on long enough. In January 2009 the *BMJ* published a letter from Baroness Murphy, who is now in the House of Lords, stating, 'Perhaps after 34 years it's time for us to confess that we invented cello scrotum.' The Baroness also pointed out that 'anyone who has ever watched a cello being played would realise the physical impossibility of our claim' (Murphy, 2009). Especially if the cellist were a woman.

In April 2009 the anti-abortion movement in the United States thought it had found a new figurehead in the form of Becca Beushausen, a social worker in a suburb of Chicago. On her blog, Beushausen, who presented herself as a Christian, revealed that she was expecting a daughter, April-Rose, who had a chromosomal defect and would probably not live longer than a few days, or perhaps even hours. The fact that Beushausen chose not to have an abortion led to widespread expressions of support. The message spread quickly through pro-life and conservative Christian websites and, before long, visitors thronged to Beushausen's website, and she received gifts and money through the post.

The child was born in June. A friend of Beushausen announced the good news on the blog: 'April is here! Praise Jesus!' (Usborne, 2009). There was a picture of the mother and her newborn daughter, wrapped in blankets. The blog had nearly 1 million visitors that day.

One of those visitors was Elizabeth Russell, a New York doll-maker. She recognized immediately that April-Rose was not a real child. Exposed as a fraud, Beushausen offered her apologies. She said that she had fabricated the story and made use of a doll to serve as April-Rose because she was 'dealing with unresolved pain' resulting from the loss of a baby boy some years previously (Usborne, 2009). It was unclear whether this 'unresolved pain' derived from a miscarriage or an abortion.

BERINGER'S TABLETS, THE LYING STONES

It is Beringer's misfortune that this case of forgery will not go down in history under the name of the forgers, but under that of the victim, although it is often referred to by the name of the forged items, the *Lügensteine* (Lying Stones).

Around 1724 Dr Johann Beringer (1667–1738), from Würzburg, decided to devote his attention to the young science of archaeology, which was at that time not yet very scientific and was described as interest in 'things dug from the Earth' (Jahn, 1963). On 31 May 1725 some young boys who knew about the doctor's interest gave Beringer a few pieces of limestone with strange markings. They looked like worms, and something that resembled rays of sunlight. Beringer decided to investigate further and, in the subsequent weeks and months, found many stones with images of animals on a mountain near Eibelstadt. Beringer realized that the animals could have been 'drawn' by natural causes but the images of the sun, moon and stars continued to puzzle him. Were they perhaps the remains of a heathen culture? The pieces fell into place when he found stones bearing the name of Jehovah. Beringer concluded that the stones were carved by God, which also explained the grooves and gouges on the other rocks.

Two of Beringer's university colleagues, J. Ignatz Roderick, professor of geography, algebra and analysis, and Georg von Eckhart, privy councillor and university librarian, observed Beringer's belief in the authenticity of the stones with alarm. A year earlier, they had decided to teach Beringer a lesson because 'he was so arrogant', by faking a few fossils (Jahn, 1963). When Beringer continued to take his 'discoveries' seriously, they tried to show him the error of his ways by carving the name of God on some of the stones. This, unfortunately, did not have the desired effect.

The 'Lying Stones', pieces of limestone carved into the shapes of various animals, apparently discovered in 1725.



When the two hoaxers heard that Beringer had called in an engraver to draw the stones with the intention of publishing a book about them, they decided to confess. However, Beringer was so convinced that he was in the right that he refused to believe them and accused them of being jealous. In 1726 he published *Lithographiae Wirceburgensis*, describing the markings on the stones. Shortly afterwards, he must have become suspicious, as he initiated legal proceedings on 13 April 1726 to 'save his honour' (Jahn, 1963). In an effort to preserve his reputation, he is also alleged to have bought as many copies of his book himself as possible (which explains why it is now so rare).

Only fragments of the trial records have survived and the outcome is unknown. We do know, however, that Georg von Eckhart stepped down and J. Ignatz Roderick left Würzburg, suggesting that the trial was a resounding victory for Beringer. In the remaining fourteen years of his life, Beringer wrote two more scientific works, both of which were well received. Yet his name will remain forever associated with the image of the fool who believed in the 'Lying Stones'.

Anoushirvan D. Fakhran, an immigrant from Iran, wanted to be educated at the Paul VI Catholic High School in a suburb of Washington, DC. But how could he ensure that the school would accept him as a pupil? First of all, Fakhran changed his name to Jonathan Taylor Spielberg. (There is nothing illegal about that in itself, but Fakhran committed fraud when he stated on his application 'This change of name is not sought for any fraudulent purpose'.) He then changed his age: the rejuvenating 27-year-old wrote down that he was merely sixteen. He also gave the school the impression that he was the nephew of film director Steven Spielberg. He even drove a BMW coupé with the licence plate 'SPLBERG'. The hoax worked perfectly. Impressed by his surname, in September 1999 the school enrolled him in a class of teens. Staff allowed him to come and go as he pleased, and he was given less homework than his fellow pupils.

When his teachers started to become concerned about his bad grades, the school decided to contact his only known relative and called the DreamWorks studios. They were told that Steven Spielberg had no nephew living in Washington, DC.

Fakhran pleaded guilty to providing false information on the school's enrolment forms and forging his application for a change of name. He was given a conditional sentence of eleven months.



C. F. GOLDIE, TOWN PAINTER

In 1985 Karl Feodor Sim, a New Zealand shopkeeper, was convicted of forging the work of a fellow countryman, artist Charles F. Goldie (1870–1947). Sim was ordered to paint municipal buildings and toilets in the town of Foxton, where he was tried. After the court case, Sim legally changed his name to Carl Feodor Goldie, so that he could legitimately sign his paintings 'C. F. Goldie'. He no longer tries to pass his works off as authentic, and has the dubious honour of being New Zealand's first and so far only convicted art forger.

THE CAPTAIN OF KÖPENICK

On 16 October 1906 shoemaker Wilhelm Voigt (1849–1922) dressed himself in a second-hand Prussian officer's uniform and ordered a group of soldiers that he encountered near the local army barracks to follow him to the town of Köpenick, to the east of Berlin. As it did not occur to them to ignore the orders of a Prussian officer, they accompanied him to the railway station. On arrival in Köpenick, Voigt led the group to the city hall, where he arrested the mayor on suspicion of crooked bookkeeping and confiscated some 4,000 marks. No one doubted his authority – after all, *Deutschlands Ehr ist das Militär!*

Voigt did not enjoy his ill-gotten gains for long. At the end of October he was arrested and sentenced to four years in prison. A year later, however, he was pardoned by Kaiser Wilhelm II, who called him 'an amiable rogue' (Wietzorek, 2006). Voigt started to earn a living selling signed photographs and appearing in small theatres and variety shows. He wrote an autobiography, published in 1909 and later translated as *How I Became the Captain of Köpenick*, and toured the United States and Canada. A wax effigy of him appeared in Madame Tussauds in London. In 1910 he moved to Luxembourg and retired two years later. When German troops invaded on 2 August 1914, Voigt donned his uniform for the last time and the soldiers all sprang to attention.

Voigt's life inspired many a writer. In 1930 Wilhelm Schäfer published a novel about it, and the following year Carl Zuckmayer wrote a successful play that still tours in the English-speaking world under the title *The Captain of Köpenick*. Twenty-five years after his play appeared, Zuckmayer co-wrote the screenplay for a film of it together with director Helmut Käutner. The film starred Heinz Rühmann.

When Voigt died in 1922, impoverished by the inflation that followed the First World War, he was buried in the Notre Dame cemetery at the expense of the city of Luxembourg. His grave was neglected and was nearly cleared on several occasions. In 1961, however, the performers of Circus Sarasani from the German Democratic Republic paid to have the grave restored and fitted out with a new, albeit incorrectly dated, gravestone bearing the text 'Hauptmann von Koepenick' and 'Wilhelm Voigt, 1850–1922', together with the image of a Prussian helmet.

This was not the only honour conferred on Voigt. To my knowledge he is the only hoaxer to have his own statue – for being a hoaxer. In Köpenick, where he made his name, he still stands – cast in bronze – on the steps of the city hall where he arrested the mayor and took off with the city's cash.

CHARLEY PARKHURST, STAGECOACH QUEEN

Charlotte Darkey Parkhurst (1812–1879) allegedly escaped from an orphanage dressed as a boy. The disguise was a success, so she kept it up. As Charley Parkhurst she found a job as a stable boy in a small town in Massachusetts. She used to watch the stagecoach drivers closely and, recognizing her talent, the owner of the stables taught her how to drive two-in-hand, then four-in-hand and, later, six-in-hand teams of horses. Charley, who always wore gloves to disguise her small hands, became the most sought-after stagecoach driver on the East Coast, and many people hired coaches only on the condition that she took the reins.

Perhaps because someone discovered her identity, Charley headed west, settling in San Francisco in 1851. From the city she set out new routes through the state of California. During these years, she lost an eye, apparently after being kicked by a horse, earning her the nickname Cock-Eyed Charley.

In the 1860s Charley's talent, fearlessness and loyalty were so highly valued that she regularly worked for Wells Fargo. One evening during this period, she was so drunk that the wife of her boss Andy Jackson Clark told her seventeen-year-old son to put Charley to bed. The boy came back, trembling, and told his mother that Charley was a woman. The family decided to keep her secret: 'Those good people, sensing Charley's humiliation if confronted with the fact that he was unmasked, never mentioned it to a soul until after Charley's death' (Sams, 1995).

At the end of the 1860s Charley retired from stagecoach driving and bought some land in Santa Cruz County, where she ran a ranch and stage station, and did seasonal work as a lumberjack.

She died of tongue cancer in 1879. The first obituaries were full of praise but, as news of her true biological sex became more widely known (as well as the fact that she had once given birth to a child), the mood of some of the newspapers changed. One unkind journalist working for a Rhode Island paper wrote: 'Charley Parkhurst died of a malignant disease. She could act

and talk like a man, but when it came to imitating a man's reticence, nature herself revolted, and the lifelong effort to keep from speaking, except when she had something to say, resulted at last in death from cancer of the tongue' (Sams, 1995).

A CHRISTIAN MARTYR IN THE COLUMBINE MASSACRE

On 20 April 1999 Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, both of whom were born in 1981, killed thirteen people at Columbine High School, Colorado, where they were themselves pupils, and then committed suicide. A wave of shock and horror passed around the world. Shortly after the incident, several stories emerged, many of which are still in circulation. The two killers were allegedly inspired to commit their awful crime by the deliberately shocking work of rock singer Marilyn Manson (pseudonym of Brian Hugh Warner). To stop the situation escalating, Manson was forced to cancel the rest of his American tour. It only became clear much later that the two boys were not fans of Manson's music at all.

A second myth developed around Cassie René Bernall (also born in 1981), a teenager who found God after a rebellious adolescence. According to the myth, one of the two killers put a gun to Bernall's head and asked her if she still believed in God. After she answered 'Yes', the boy shot her dead. The story contains all the ingredients of an American legend: a white, all-American teenager who converts after committing sin and is then killed. Dying for one's faith is seen as praiseworthy in the United States – as long as it is the Christian faith, of course.

In 2000 Bernall's mother Misty published a book, *She Said Yes: The Unlikely Martyrdom of Cassie Bernall*, which confirmed Bernall's status as a martyr. As with many similar examples of Catholic martyrdom, closer research showed that very few of the supposed facts underlying the account can be corroborated. An investigation by the FBI showed that there never was a dialogue between Bernall and one or both of the killers. The killers' question was actually put to Valeen Schnurr, who had not had a wild adolescence and did not die during the attack, and was therefore not eligible for martyrdom.

Facts and legends are incompatible. The Bernall family – along with many other American Christians – made a clear choice. The family's website still carries the text: 'Cassie Bernall, who was killed at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999, after professing her faith in God.'

CHRISTINE JOY MAGGIORE, AIDS DENIALIST

In 1992 in a routine check-up, U.S. citizen Christine Joy Maggiore (1956–2008), owner of an import clothing company, was found to be HIV-positive. In the years that followed she became one of the most prominent American AIDS denialists. She claimed that there was no link between HIV and AIDS and expounded her 'theory' in a book she self-published, *What if Everything You Thought You Knew about AIDS Was Wrong?*

Maggiore refused to take anti-retrovirals, had unsafe sex with her husband and breastfed her daughter Eliza Jane. On 17 May 2005 Eliza Jane died at the age of three and a half. Maggiore herself died at the end of December 2008. Her death certificate and the autopsy report on her daughter leave no doubt as to the cause of both their deaths.

CLAUDIUS PTOLEMY, NOT QUITE THE RHODES SCHOLAR

The universe that Ptolemy described in *Amalgest* (c. AD 150) remained intact for fifteen centuries until Copernicus presented his own version in 1543. In *Amalgest*, which wielded an enormous influence for an incredible length of time, Ptolemy claimed that he had made all his astronomical observations himself. It was only in the nineteenth century that scientists started to feel that something was not quite right. Some of the observations seemed not to have been made in Alexandria, where Ptolemy lived, while others which would logically have been made in the city were not included. In 1977, in a book that is practically incomprehensible to anyone but an astronomer, Robert R. Newton presented his solution to this puzzle. *The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy* claims that all the observations and calculations in *Amalgest* would be correct if they had been made on the island of Rhodes and not in Alexandria. Newton shows that, rather than making the observations himself, Ptolemy had taken them all from the – now largely lost – work of Hipparchus of Rhodes, who lived three centuries earlier.

Claudius Ptolemy.



Meyrick Edward Clifton James (1898–1963) was born in Australia and grew up in Europe. From the age of sixteen he wanted to be an actor. His career was interrupted by the First World War, in which James was wounded while serving at the Front. After the war he continued building a career, but it never really took off. James became a stock actor, playing stereotypical roles with little depth. The 1920s and 1930s drifted by without event.

At the start of the Second World War, James joined up and was assigned to an office unit. He did not see active duty but, in the spring of 1944, when the preparations for D-Day were in full swing, James was offered the role of his life.

The Allies had long been disseminating incorrect information on the invasion in an attempt to mislead German intelligence. One of the officers involved in this operation was struck by the remarkable similarity between James and the commander of the Allied troops, Field-Marshal Montgomery (1887–1976). A plan was hatched to have James appear as Monty in all sorts of places to mislead the Germans about the impending invasion.

A few adjustments had to be made to achieve a passable physical match. James had lost most of one finger in the First World War, so a prosthetic was fitted. The actor prepared for his role by spending time with the General Staff so that he could study Monty's speech and mannerisms. Despite the physical resemblance, the two were complete opposites in terms of character. The Field-Marshal was an ascetic who didn't smoke or drink and was hard on himself and others. James was a libertine, who chain-smoked and drank like a fish.

In May 1944 James played his role with verve, appearing in strategic locations including Algiers and Gibraltar. As expected, his presence in Gibraltar was immediately reported by Major Ignacio Molina Pérez, a Spanish spy working for the Germans. This information reinforced the German High Command's belief that the invasion would take place in southern France and not in Normandy.

James reaped little benefit from his contribution to the Allied victory. The British Army simply ignored his efforts, not releasing the documents relating to the operation until 2010. After the war, James resumed his acting career. In 1954 he wrote a book about his wartime role, *I Was Monty's Double*, which was made into a film in 1958. The film starred M. E. Clifton James, playing Montgomery – and playing M. E. Clifton James playing Montgomery.

CLUELESS KRUGEL COPS OUT

Ex-policeman Danie Krugel claimed to have invented something that – if it worked – would guarantee him a Nobel Prize: if he had a strand of a missing person's hair (or some other source of DNA), he could pinpoint their location, wherever they were in the world. Unfortunately Krugel was not willing to explain how his invention worked. The only (non-) explanation he would give was that it had something to do with 'quantum physics', a matter of 'complex and secret science techniques' and a 'secret energy source' driving a 'matter orientation system machine' (Goldacre, 2007).

Krugel alleged to have had many successes. This in itself is not impossible, although it had little to do with the invention. Krugel used to be part of a police unit that traced missing children. It is not inconceivable that he used his professional abilities for his own ends and attributed the results to his magic box.

A distasteful example of Krugel's performance could be seen in *Carte Blanche*, a series broadcast by the South African TV company M-Net. At the end of the 1980s, two South Africans called Gert van Rooyen and Joye Haarhoff kidnapped six schoolgirls. None of the girls have ever been found. In an episode entitled 'Fingerprint of Fate', Krugel promised to locate the bodies. With no concern for the feelings it might unleash, the girls' families were asked to provide hairs from the missing children. After they had been kept in suspense for several weeks, Krugel came up with nothing at all.

COLLECTING REINHOLD VASTERS

Reinhold Vasters (1827–1909) was the 'nearly perfect forger'. His skill and knowledge of the art of the Renaissance were unequalled. Vasters, who worked in precious metals, made no errors of style, used no wrong materials, and ensured that there were no nineteenth-century influences in his work at all. It was only due to an alert curator at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London that Vasters was finally exposed, 69 years after his death. And that's when art historians started gnashing their teeth. Twentieth-century views on Renaissance art proved to be based partly on objects dating not from sixteenth-century Italy but from nineteenth-century Germany – from Vasters's studio in Aachen, to be precise. In the words of one curator, 'The problem is, he created so much he begins to distort perceptions of what Renaissance art should be' (Kessler, 1987).

A pendant of enamelled gold and pearls by Reinhold Vasters, c. 1860.



Vasters registered his mark as a master goldsmith at Aachen in 1853. Although he had little experience, he was hired later in the same year to work on restoring the treasures of the city's cathedral. During his life he became renowned for his own creations, objects based on Renaissance artistic styles but which he sold as contemporary pieces. In secret, however, he was going much further. His forgeries were sold through Viennese art dealer Frédéric Spitzer (1815–1890), who had opened a salon in Paris in 1852. Spitzer's death also meant the end of Vasters's career as a forger. This may have been a good indication of his natural caution. His collaboration with Spitzer lasted for 37 years, during which time nothing at all leaked out about his illegal activities. So why, at the age of 63, run the risk of being exposed by working with another art dealer? Three years after Spitzer's death, his art collection was auctioned and the last wave of Vasters's forgeries flooded onto the market. By that time, Vasters had retired. But by selling an object from his own collection of authentic art now and again, he was able to ensure that he was in an excellent position financially.

Although financial gain was probably Vasters's main incentive, he must have enjoyed his career as a forger. His Rospigliosi Cup was attributed to one of the leading goldsmiths and sculptors of the Italian Renaissance, Benvenuto Cellini. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York proudly displayed its precious acquisition for 70 years.

After Vasters died, his papers were sold. In 1919 they were donated to the Victoria & Albert Museum, a fitting home for the records of a respected Victorian craftsman. The papers contained drawings of many treasures of the Renaissance era, which in itself was not strange. Vasters was believed to have made the drawings to study such pieces or perhaps to inspire him in the creation of his own contemporary works.

In the twentieth century art historians diligently studied hundreds of Vasters's forgeries without recognizing them as such. If Vasters had not wished to be exposed, he should have destroyed his papers. The fact that he failed to do so suggests that he had a character trait in common with many forgers – he wanted to be recognized as an equal to past masters, such as Cellini.

In 1978 Charles Truman, an assistant curator of the Ceramics department at the Victoria & Albert Museum, came across a package containing more than 1,000 drawings and notes by Vasters. Truman looked at the drawings in the same way that so many before him had done: 'Oh, look, here are the jewels from the Louvre, and isn't this bowl now in the British Museum?'

But when Truman tried to explain details in the drawings and deciphered some of the technical notes in the margins, the truth gradually dawned on him. The drawings were not of Renaissance art works, it was the other way around: objects supposedly from the Renaissance had been made by using the drawings. Truman didn't jump to any conclusions, but waited until 1980 to go public with his findings. The name Reinhold Vasters, a name that no one had connected with forgery until then, suddenly struck fear into the hearts of curators around the world. Using Truman's data, they set to work to check their collections. The Metropolitan alone discovered 40 pieces from the master forger's hand.

The revelations meant that the history of Renaissance art had to be rewritten. If Vasters had not revealed his secret, the prevailing interpretation would have been accepted as the truth. It makes you wonder how many forgers of Vasters's calibre have never been detected, and in how many different disciplines.

COMMON NAMES TO CONJURE WITH IN THE NEW CHINA

How childishly easy forgery can be. Liu Hui, active as a surgeon and vice-dean of Tsinghua University Medical School in Beijing in 2006, had an impressive-sounding curriculum vitae with a list of publications as long as your arm. The only problem was that Liu had added publications by another doctor with exactly the same name. Lu Jun, a former professor at Beijing's University of Chemical Technology, was recently caught doing the same thing.

COUNTERFEIT MEDICINES

Medicines are expensive and always in demand. So it is hardly surprising that there is a lively trade in fake ones. An investment of €1,000 in the trade in heroin, for example, generates a turnover of €3,000, leaving a profit of €2,000. The same investment in fake medicines brings in €30,000 – a substantial profit of €29,000. According to the World Health Organization, trade in counterfeit drugs now generates more than \$30 billion a year in revenue. Estimates of the deaths caused by fakes are very vague but run 'from tens of thousands a year to 200,000 or more' (McNeil Jr, 2007).

What kinds of drugs are counterfeited? Malaria medicine is an old favourite. A study in Southeast Asia in 2007 showed that 53 per cent of available pills were fakes. Simple counterfeits contained chalk, starch or flour. More advanced versions contained paracetamol, which does not kill the malaria parasites but does lower the fever, fooling patients into thinking the medicine is working. Other favourites are antibiotics, AIDS drugs, tuberculosis tablets and meningitis vaccines.

For the most part, counterfeit drugs are copies of existing drugs. In May 2006, for instance, police at London's Heathrow Airport discovered 385 kg of counterfeit medicines bearing the labels of leading brands like Novartis, AstraZeneca, Pfizer and Proctor & Gamble. Eighteen months later, a consignment of half a million Plavix (a blood-thinning drug) pills were intercepted. The main ingredient proved to be cement.

Counterfeiters have mainly been active in Asia and Africa. In November 2002, a study showed that up to 20 per cent of all medicines in South Africa was fake.

The counterfeiters are interested only in making money. That is why they are sensitive to trends and produce medicines that do well on the market. In the recent past they have therefore focused mainly on Viagra (Pfizer's anti-impotence drug) and Tamiflu (a bird-flu drug produced by Roche).

Who are these counterfeiters and how do they sell their goods? Here, again, China can be identified as the main producer, followed closely by Russia. In China there was even a prominent figure involved. From 1998, Zheng Xiaoyu was for several years in control of the department that approved medicines in China. His unofficial policy was clear: anyone who manufactured rubbish for export received approval. His reign came to an end in 2005, however, when a medicine he had approved killed dozens of Chinese patients, including many children.

The journey from the Chinese factory to the consumer's medicine cabinet is long, and in many cases passes through the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the city of Dubai in particular. Dubai is the junction between Europe, Africa and Asia. To encourage trade, the UAE has set up free trade zones, around twenty of which are now in operation. They act as transit depots for goods. Since the goods do not officially enter the country, no duties have to be paid and checks are minimal – ideal circumstances for concealing their origins. A real-life example shows how this works: RxNorth, once one of the biggest online pharmacies in the United States, used to get a large proportion of its drugs from China. From mainland China, the medicines were transported to Hong Kong. They were then forwarded to the UAE. The next stop was the Bahamas, where clients' orders were packaged and addressed. As a final smokescreen, the packages were sent to the UK, from where they were finally dispatched to the customer in the United States.

The counterfeiting of medicines is an 'almost-perfect crime', in the words of Maureen Kirkman, head of scientific and regulatory affairs at South Africa's Pharmaceutical Manufacturer's Association. 'The counterfeiting industry is like the Mafia: the rewards are big', Kirkman says. 'Either the patient dies or doesn't know they have taken counterfeit drugs' (Padayachee, 2002). Because of the substantial interests at stake, trade in counterfeit medicines is hard to combat. A few simple guidelines, however, would be enough to at least limit it a little. In Europe and North America, for instance, it is still common for charities working in developing countries and wishing to respect their autonomy to give them money to buy the medicines they need. However, these countries generally have neither the laboratories nor the necessary know-how to distinguish fake drugs from real ones. Donating reliable European or American medicines instead of money would be a step in the right direction. Paternalistic behaviour can sometimes be justified.

It is not only developing countries and internet buyers that are the victims of counterfeit drugs. The quality of imitations (and especially the packaging) has recently reached such a high standard that bona fide suppliers also get taken in. Over the past decade in Britain, for example, the NHS has issued around ten warnings after counterfeit medicines have ended up in conventional pharmacies.

CRIMINAL MILKMEN

From March to September 2008, China saw a sharp rise in the number of children with kidney problems. The authorities very probably knew in July that the problems were being caused by contaminated milk but, with the country hosting the Summer Olympics in August, they kept quiet. Public health clearly did not weigh up against this large-scale exercise in public relations. Revealing the truth would be an embarrassing business, especially as the toxic products mainly came from the state-owned dairy company Sanlu, sponsor of the Olympic Games and supplier to the Olympic village.

The facts were not made public until mid-September. It turned out that somewhere in the supply line to Sanlu, the milk had been diluted with water. It remained unclear if it was the farmers who had first committed the fraud to make an illicit profit, or others further down the line. Either way, Sanlu was stuck with watered-down milk with a nutritional value much lower than required. The company came up with a devious solution. The nutritional value of milk depends on the protein content, which is measured by counting the number of nitrogen molecules. Sanlu realized that if they increased the nitrogen content, the watered-down milk would pass the test. So they added melamine, a nitrogen-rich material used for synthetic resin and plastic hardeners. Over a period of several months, some of the milk had been processed into more than 1,500 tons of milk powder, which doctors paid by Sanlu recommended in the media as ideal food for babies and infants.

As a result, between March and September 2008 some 300,000 infants became ill, many seriously. Children who had been perfectly healthy one week suddenly turned out to have half a dozen kidney stones a week later. The official number of deaths was six but must have been higher, though how many is anyone's guess. Research in 2010 showed that around 40,000 victims suffered permanent kidney damage.

China responded by mobilizing all the power at the disposal of a totalitarian state. A swift investigation of the dairy industry revealed melamine contamination at another 21 companies. In January 2009, 21 company executives went on trial. Later that same year, the first two sentences were passed: Zhang Yujun and Geng Jinping – who together sold 1,500 tons of tainted milk powder – were executed by firing squad. To the anger of many, former Sanlu general manager Tian Wenhua escaped the firing squad and was 'merely' sentenced to life in prison.

The brand name Sanlu ceased to exist but the affair cast a long shadow. In February 2010 milk products contaminated with melamine were discovered again. They were probably old Sanlu products removed from the shelves in 2008 and repacked by manufacturers. After all, it would be a shame to waste them, wouldn't it?

In the aftermath of the scandal the Chinese government responded with the incongruity so typical of totalitarian regimes. In December 2009 Zhao Lianhai, the father of one of the sick infants, was arrested while demonstrating with other parents and,

nearly a year later, sentenced to two and a half years in prison for 'disturbing the peace' (*De Volkskrant*, 2010).

In April 2011 the Chinese government announced that it would be shutting down 553 of the country's 1,176 dairy companies in an attempt to clean up the industry.

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D-DAY DECEPTION DIDN'T END BACK THEN

It was a great honour: in 2009 Howard Manoian (*b. c.* 1925) was awarded the Légion d'Honneur for bravery by the French state. And with good reason. On 6 June 1944, D-Day, he was an American paratrooper with the famous 82nd Airborne Division and landed in the town of Sainte-Mère-Église:

One planeload jumped and landed in the square by the church and of course the Germans were already up and they were firing as they [the paratroopers] came down . . . Half of them were killed or wounded immediately. That was the first time I saw a person dead face to face. (BBC, 2009)

Manoian fought his way to Paris. During the push German bullets wounded him in one hand and both legs. When German planes targeted the hospital where he was recovering, he was injured once again. This all made Manoian a hero in Sainte-Mère-Église, where a plaque was even erected in his honour. The 85-year-old veteran fully deserved his Légion d'Honneur.

On the day of the award, 6 June 2009, exactly 65 years after D-Day, the *Boston Herald* announced that Manoian's stories were largely fabricated. Yes, he did land in Normandy, though not by parachute but on a supply ship that moored at the Utah landing zone long after a beachhead had been established there. Manoian did not belong to the 82nd Airborne Division but to the 33rd Chemical Decontamination Company. As no chemical weapons were used in the fighting in 1944 and 1945, the Company had little to do. And yes, Manoian had been injured, eleven days after D-Day. On 17 June 1944 he broke a finger – due to his own clumsiness.

DANIEL GOLDREYER, ART RESTORER ON A ROLL

In 1986 a man called Gerard Jan van Bladeren walked into the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and repeatedly slashed Barnett Newman's painting *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue* with a Stanley knife. The City of Amsterdam contracted Daniel Goldreyer in New York to restore the painting for a fee of 800,000 guilders. It took Goldreyer four years to complete the job, but he claimed that he had closely followed Newman's own style. Using a thin brush, he had applied thousands and thousands of dots of paint in the large field of red covering most of the canvas (which measured 245 × 543 cm in total). The work had hardly been back in Amsterdam when there was a wave of criticism about the quality of the restoration. An investigation by the Netherlands Forensic Institute eventually concluded that Goldreyer had painted over the whole field of red with non-removable paint using a roller. A legal tug-of-war followed, which cost the municipality of Amsterdam some €680,000. Goldreyer filed a suit for defamation of character and claimed \$125 million in damages. In the end, the City of Amsterdam paid him \$100,000, after which Goldreyer abandoned his legal fight. And *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue* was carried away to the Stedelijk's unvisited storerooms.

DEREK ATKINS, THE VERY FISHY MARINER

Committing fraud ran in Derek Atkins's blood. He not only captained the fishing vessel *Zuiderzee* without holding a captain's licence, but also fiddled the logbooks and exceeded his fishing quotas. Furthermore, Atkins changed his name while he was on the sex offenders' register and tricked a woman he had led to believe he wanted a relationship with out of several thousand pounds sterling.

When Atkins had run up fines of up to £1 million for some twenty charges of flouting fishing regulations, the Marine and Fisheries Agency received a letter from Atkins's girlfriend asking them to halt prosecution proceedings against her partner as he had died of a heart attack.

Soon afterwards, *Fishing News* published an obituary, which spoke highly of Atkins's qualities: 'People found him to be a gentleman at sea with a great sense of humour who would always help anyone. He was a quiet family man and will be deeply missed by his family and friends' (Bamford, 2009).

An inspector at the Marine and Fisheries Agency became suspicious and asked the police to look into the matter. Handwriting analysis showed that the letter from his partner had been written by Atkins himself. He was found not much later, alive and kicking. The obituary proved to be his own work, too.

In February 2009 the judge, who described Atkins as a 'lying, cunning and calculated fraudster', sentenced him to 30 months in prison (*Daily Mail*, 2009).

DISMEMBERING MICHELLE REMEMBERS

Michelle Pazder (née Smith) was a trendsetter. Her book *Michelle Remembers* (1980, written with her therapist and later husband, the Canadian psychiatrist Lawrence Pazder) told stories of ritual abuse, causing a hype that made headlines for a decade. It probably started with a *folie à deux*, though the question is who was the craziest.

Michelle Smith, a receptionist, suffered from depression and started therapy with Lawrence Pazder. Pazder must have missed the lectures on transference and counter-transference and on professional ethics when he was at college, because love blossomed between the therapist and his patient. During many sessions with Michelle, forgotten memories of her early life in Victoria, British Columbia, resurfaced while she was under hypnosis. They were recollections of the kind that a bona fide therapist would soon have dismissed as fictitious. Michelle recalled that her mother, Virginia Proby, had forced her to take part in satanic rituals. In the years 1955–6, according to her forgotten memories, Michelle's life was like a horror film. The five-year-old was forced to endure a wide range of atrocities, including the sacrifice of small babies and other ritual murders, the mutilation of snakes and kittens, drinking blood, poisoning and acts of sexual perversion. There was no evidence at all for any of

these allegations. Any elements of her story that were verifiable proved to be incorrect. Michelle claimed that she had not been brought up religiously, while witnesses said that she had attended church with her parents regularly every Sunday for many years. Torture was highly unlikely as former neighbours said that the walls of the houses were so thin that it could never have passed unnoticed. Michelle had been poisoned twice: once she drank turpentine and on another occasion she ate shoe polish, but both on her own initiative. Her parents had rushed her to the accident and emergency department.

Michelle Remembers became a bestseller thanks to American fundamentalist Christians, who seized on the concocted memories to prove that Satan is among us. Ritual abuse became a worldwide hype and immediately caused untold damage. The child protection authorities in Rochdale, England, believed the nonsense and sixteen children were removed from their homes. Paediatricians in England's northeast region of Teesside discovered no fewer than 121 cases of ritual abuse in a very short period. In the Dutch village of Oude Pekela, family doctors Fred Jonker and his wife Jetje Jonker-Bakker sounded the alarm after a mother had discovered that her young son had anal injuries, most likely the result of quasi-sexual experimentation with a friend of the same age. The Jonkers stoked up the mass hysteria until there were 215 cases of satanic child rape in the village. In Oude Pekela, the Prince of Darkness delegated his dastardly deeds to even more scary assistants – clowns! The affair at Dutch crèche De Bolderkar was another low point in this tragic saga. The staff at the crèche discovered that parents were committing incestuous paedophilia en masse. They gathered this information by allowing the children to play with anatomically correct dolls. Although the method is known to be suggestive and notoriously unreliable, fourteen children were taken from their homes. A number of parents admitted their guilt, but the police had used banned interrogation techniques and, eventually, no one was charged.

It is impossible to even guess at the damage caused by the hysteria. Twenty-two years later, in April 2010, the legal successor to De Bolderkar paid 'appropriate financial compensation' to a woman who had been taken away from her parents at the age of four because her father had allegedly abused her. The case had been dismissed (Haenen, 2010).

DOLLAR DUPLICITY, NORTH KOREAN STYLE

It all started with an observant bank teller at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas. In December 1989 he was handed a u.s. \$100 banknote, which didn't 'feel' right to the touch. He was puzzled since all the control equipment indicated that the bill was real. The note made its way to Japan, to Yoshihide Matsumura, a currency expert whose machines for detecting fake bills are among the most advanced in the business. Matsumura was impressed by the quality of the banknote. The paper was identical to that of real \$100 bills – 75 per cent American cotton, 25 per cent linen – and manufactured using the right machinery (a Fourdrinier machine). Equally remarkable was that the notes were produced on an intaglio press, while forged notes are almost all printed using an offset press. Intaglio presses are so expensive and heavy that normally only governments own them for printing banknotes.

Matsumura passed the banknote on to the u.s. Secret Service, where it was assigned code C-14342. After a careful investigation, the bill turned out to have three flaws. But, the Service concluded the flaws might have been deliberately added by the forgers so that they could distinguish their own products from the real thing.

The Secret Service thought it had found a clue to where the fakes came from when bills from the same series turned up in Lebanon's Bekka Valley. The Hezbollah movement, which was active in the area, was financed by Iran. And shortly before his fall, the Shah had taken delivery of two intaglio printing presses. This promising trail, however, came to a dead end.

When rumours about the 'supernote' started spreading at the beginning of the 1990s, it was not only governments that were concerned. Gunmen who took schoolchildren hostage in the Russian city of Rostov on the Don in December 1993 demanded a ransom of \$10 million in \$100 bills – along with a sophisticated machine to weed out the fakes.

In 1996 the u.s. government changed the design and safety features of the \$100 bill. But this had little effect as the existing bills were only withdrawn from circulation in phases. This meant that the counterfeiters could continue to use the fakes until they were able to copy the new bill. The new version of the fake bills first turned up in London in 1998, and was given the code c-21555.

Slowly but surely the Secret Service gathered clues for a new suspect. Japan traced the supernotes to Yoshimi Tanaka, a Red Army terrorist who had disappeared inside North Korea in the 1970s. In Northern Ireland an estimated \$28 million worth of supernotes were also in circulation. This trail led to the Official IRA, a faction of the Irish Republican Army, which opposed peace talks. It was discovered that an Official IRA leader, Seán Garland, had made four trips to Moscow, where he had visited the North Korean embassy.

North Korea was a logical candidate as producer of the supernote. Good counterfeit money is a cheap way to finance terrorist organizations that are trying to destabilize the capitalist world, one of the ambitions of dictator Kim Jongil (who has since died, in 2011). However, this was not the main reason. In an attempt to bring Kim Jongil to his knees, especially in negotiations on North Korea's nuclear facilities, the West had been trying for years to bring down North Korea's economy. It had imposed trade embargos and the country was unable to borrow money on international markets.

Western secret services have known for many years that North Korea makes money from illegal trade. It produces counterfeit cigarettes, for example (Marlboro is a popular brand), that are estimated to generate more than \$700 million in gross revenue every year. North Korea also manufactures and exports hard drugs like heroin and crystal methamphetamine on a large scale and it is the place to go for counterfeit pharmaceuticals and weapons. In the mid-1990s the secret services realized that, even with these extra sources of income, North Korea should have been bankrupt. And that was clearly not the case. On the contrary, Kim Jongil doggedly continued to expand his arsenal, and 70 per cent of the necessary components were imported and paid for with dollars.

The u.s. Secret Service and its counterparts focused their attention on Office 39. This organization runs cigarette and drug factories and organizes criminal activities abroad. Some 130 people work in its headquarters, a plain, barracks-like building on Changgwant Street in Pyongyang. The secret services reckoned that if North Korea was producing the supernote, Office 39 was running the operation.

So they deployed all the weapons of the espionage armoury: satellite photos, bribery, defectors . . . , and no doubt the odd case of threat and blackmail. This led them to discover that there were three dollar-printing plants in North Korea. One was under the control of the North Korean army reconnaissance corps. The second produced counterfeit dollars for the Communist Party Central Committee. The third, housed at 62 Printing House in Pyongsung, printed fake bills for Kim Jongil. Estimates

varied, but the plants were believed to produce between \$500 million and \$1 billion a year in supernotes.

At the beginning of this century, there was a new development. Until then, most supernotes had turned up outside the United States, which was to be expected, since two-thirds of all dollar bills circulate overseas. From around 2000, however, North Korea tried to export huge quantities of supernotes to the home of the dollar. In 2003, the U.S. responded by changing the design of the \$100 bill again. But history repeated itself: North Korea was able to use the old counterfeit bill until the new one was ready. In March 2005 the FBI managed to get hold of two new samples. When they were given to a Secret Service agent to have them tested, the agent called a few days later and said: 'Why'd you give me these? They're real!' (Rose, 2009).

An interesting question is why President George W. Bush's administration did not take any action. Normally, it had few qualms about dropping bombs on someone else's territory. But Bush's policy was clearly not to alienate Kim Jongil any further, presumably so as not to jeopardize the talks on restricting the latter's nuclear arsenal.

Either way, by 2007 Kim Jongil's plans were clear. That year North Korea imported a huge quantity of Fourdrinier paper, enough to print several billions of dollars.

DROWN! BATHTUB TIPS FOR STAYING MAGNETIC

The life of Dr Ruth B. Drown (1891–1965) is a perfect illustration of how difficult it is to combat deception. Drown learned the art of quackery from Albert Abrams, who was being exposed as a fraudster in America around the time Drown's career took off. Like Abrams, Drown used an electrical circuit that was completed when the patient was connected to her devices. Like Abrams, Drown sold weird contraptions for a lot of money, in her case the Drown Radio-vision Instrument, the Drown Therapeutic Instrument and the Drown Homo-vibra Ray Instrument. And like Abrams, Drown made incorrect diagnoses, causing distress to many innocent victims.

Drown's 'achievement' was that of adding a few odd twists of her own to Abrams's crazy notions. The 'Drown Atlas of Radio Therapy', for example, offered guidelines for dangerous manoeuvres, like emptying a bathtub:

Any patient who is weak and depleted should never take shower baths and stand in the water over the drain, because the patient's magnetism is washed down with the water through the drain, leaving him depleted.

Also, a weak patient, after having had a tub bath, should leave the tub and have someone else drain the water and clean the tub. If it is necessary to do this himself, he should leave the tub and put on a robe before starting to drain the tub. Too many people sit in the tub and drain the water while finishing the bath, and their own magnetism is sucked away through the drain pipes to the ground, leaving the patient with that much less reserve. (Smith, 1968)

Drown also discovered a hitherto unknown cause of cancer: jazz music. The disease could fortunately be reversed by listening to more soothing music.

Drown claimed that her Radio-vision Instrument would make x-rays a thing of the past. A photograph made with the instrument in London revealed a blood clot and cancer in a patient in Connecticut, 5,500 km away.

In 1951 Drown was found guilty of 'introducing a misbranded device into interstate commerce', after the court ruled that her therapeutic instruments were not therapeutic at all.³ The trial took place after a complaint from Marguerite Rice, who Drown treated in 1948 for a lump in her breast. Sadly, Rice died just before the trial was due to start. Drown was fined \$1,000 and stopped dispatching her machines to other states, but otherwise persisted with her quackery.

In May 1963 the California State Department of Public Health deployed an undercover agent to gather evidence against Drown. The agent gave Drown blood samples from 'her three children' to analyse. The blood actually came from a turkey, a sheep and a pig. She also bought a Drown Therapeutic Instrument for \$588. Drown was sensible enough to pass away before the trial in 1967, but her two colleagues, Cynthia Chatfield and Margaret Lunness, came up before the judge. During the trial, photos made by the Drown Radio-vision Instrument were shown to be photographic plates that had been momentarily exposed to light. An expert also dismantled a Drown Therapeutic Instrument, showing that the nine switches on the instrument, all of which had settings from 1 to 10, were totally ineffective: the power in the circuit was the same irrespective how they were set. Lunness was placed on probation for three years, while Chatfield was sent to prison.



EBAY'S ALTERNATIVE REALITY

For anyone who wants to be safeguarded from counterfeit goods there is an easy-to-remember rule of thumb: don't buy anything on eBay. A few figures should suffice to illustrate eBay's unreliability. Between 60 and 90 per cent of sports memorabilia put up for sale on eBay is fake (see *NEW SIGNINGS*). If you want an Egyptian amulet or a flint arrowhead, you should also steer clear of eBay: 'less than five per cent' of the archaeological artefacts put up for sale on the site are authentic (Ammelrooy, 2009). The same applies if you are looking for a piece of design furniture (see *FURNITURE FAKERS*).

eBay and all the companies it has bought up offer the reliable citizen an easy way to dispose of a redundant cradle or a wedding dress that has been worn only once. But the site is also a godsend for forgers. It enables them to reach a large audience in images and text at almost no cost to themselves. By using the right keywords forgers can be almost certain that their goods will come to the attention of potential victims. Contact through a fraudulent internet identity enables the forger to decide whether, from his point of view, the buyer can be trusted.

One thing that works in the forgers' favour is that eBay does not 'police' the transactions on its site very effectively. Legal rulings are by no means consistent, with eBay getting off scot-free in some cases and not in others. In July 2008, for instance, the company was ordered to pay €38.8 million in damages to LVMH, a consortium of Paris-based handbag manufacturers and perfumers, including leading brands Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior, for not adequately policing the sale of counterfeit goods on its sites. In 2009, however, cosmetics company L'Oréal and Swiss watch manufacturer Rolex lost a case against eBay. The court did not deny that fake products of both brands were sold on eBay, but it concluded that the online auction site was taking sufficient steps to restrict the sale of counterfeit items.

I am not so sure. eBay is reported to have some 15,000 employees worldwide. Every day 2 million new items are put up for

auction or sale. Suppose none of these employees are engaged in secretarial work, management, catering, programming or other activities, this means that each one will check some 133 advertisements every day. I would imagine that few eBay employees would be capable of that.

eBay offers a small advantage to those who hold history dear. Since the arrival of the auction site, dealers in archaeological artefacts, especially in Iraq and Iran, no longer make the effort to sell smuggled objects. The sale of counterfeits on eBay proves just as lucrative and they don't risk being punished for it.

ELMYR DE HORY AND THE ART OF LIVING WELL

Elmyr de Hory (1906–1976) preferred a good story to historical fact. Since the main source of information about his life is his own autobiography, the facts all have to be taken with a pinch of salt.

De Hory claimed (with no evidence to back this up at all) to be the son of an ambassador of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and a lady from a banking family. What is certain is that he left his home town of Budapest in the mid-1920s and ended up in Paris, where he studied art under Fernand Léger and others. If his claims are to be believed, he was close friends with Picasso and Matisse, whose work he would later forge on a grand scale.

During the Second World War, because of his suspected Jewish origins and his homosexuality, De Hory was sent to a concentration camp. He managed to escape and returned to Paris, where he tried to earn a living from his paintings.

After the war De Hory discovered forgery, selling his works throughout Europe and, after 1947, in the United States. While in America on a three-month tourist visa, he decided to stay on when it expired. For many years, his life became like a road movie with farcical elements, including a long series of pseudonyms, an expired passport, paintings hurriedly sketched on hotel-room walls, a flight to Mexico after being exposed as a forger, and a melodramatic suicide attempt.

In the mid-1950s De Hory lived in Miami in an uneasy *ménage à trois* with Fernand Legros and Réal Lessard, who sold his forgeries for him. When De Hory discovered that his two partners were keeping most of the proceeds for themselves, tensions between them rose until, in 1959, De Hory returned to Europe. Their paths crossed again in Paris and they reached an agreement. De Hory moved into a luxury villa on Ibiza, built specially for him, and was paid a 'salary' of \$400 a month. Legros and Lessard would visit every now and again to pick up his paintings, but did not interfere with him in any other way. It soon became clear to De Hory that little had changed. His \$400 a month was peanuts compared to what Legros spent on houses, cars and paying off the families of the young boys he loved so much.

In 1966 the curtain fell when a Texan oil magnate discovered that 56 paintings he had bought from Legros and Lessard were forgeries. De Hory evaded the police for two years but in 1968 turned himself in and ended up in front of a Spanish judge. That he was given only a remarkably short prison sentence of two months was due to the fact that none of his victims were prepared to make statements and that there was no proof that he had produced any of his forgeries on Spanish territory. After completing his sentence he returned to Ibiza.

By now De Hory was enjoying a certain notoriety and his autobiography was ghostwritten by Clifford Irving (see *GHOSTING AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY*). In 1974 De Hory and Irving worked together on the film *F for Fake*, directed by Orson Welles. The film is a must for anyone interested in De Hory.

On 11 December 1976 De Hory learned that the Spanish and French governments had reached agreement on his extradition to France. The same day, he died from an overdose of sleeping tablets.

Irving estimated that De Hory produced around 1,000 works of art, which sold for some \$60 million. His forgeries are now commanding such high prices at auction that forgers are forging his forgeries.

EMIL ABDERHALDEN AND HIS UNREPEATABLE EXPERIMENTS

In 1909 the Swiss biochemist and physiologist Emil Abderhalden (1877–1950) published an article on *Abwehrfermente* (defensive enzymes). He claimed that the body produces these enzymes when confronted with foreign proteins and came up with a practical application based on them: a pregnancy test. In 1912 he published a book, also entitled *Abwehrfermente*. His findings were confirmed by many laboratories, and when the fourth edition of the book was published in 1914, Abderhalden was able to refer to 451 publications on the phenomenon. Besides pregnancy tests, the *Abwehrfermente* were used to diagnose cancer, infectious diseases such as syphilis, and psychiatric diseases like schizophrenia.

Dr Emil Abderhalden.



German-Jewish biochemist Leonor Michaelis (1875–1949) tried to prove that digestive enzymes did not exist, but his was a voice in the wilderness. When Michaelis published his argument in 1914, it marked the end of his career in Germany.

In the 1920s and 1930s Abderhalden steadily continued to publish on his beloved *Fermente*. During the Nazi regime Josef Mengele applied the theory in experiments in which he deliberately infected Auschwitz inmates of various races.

After Abderhalden's death, his son Rudolf took up the torch. Interest in the *Abwehrfermente* gradually waned and, after the 1960s, nothing more was heard of them.

We will never know whether Abderhalden deliberately committed fraud from as early as 1909. However, the experience of Hans Brockmann, who worked for him for a short period of time in the 1930s, speaks volumes. When an experiment worked the first time but not the second, Abderhalden asked Brockmann why he had repeated it at all, as it had worked well the first time. Brockmann saw Abderhalden for the half-baked scientist he was and left immediately.

ERICH VON DÄNIKEN'S ALIEN BELIEFS

Swiss-born Erich von Däniken – the best-known representative of a group of pseudoscientists who claim that there is evidence of extra-terrestrial beings having visited earth – started his career as a petty criminal.⁴ In the 1960s he served several jail sentences for embezzlement. In 1968 he wrote the book that would establish his reputation, for good or ill, *Chariots of the Gods? Unsolved Mysteries of the Past*. The book is by no means original. It is based on *Le Matin des Magiciens* by Robert Charroux, published by the science-fiction magazine *Planète* in the early 1960s, which in turn can be traced back to fiction written by H. P. Lovecraft (1890–1937) in the last ten or twelve years of his life. Everything that Däniken has written since has essentially rehashed the 'hypothesis' launched in this first book: that numerous ancient artefacts offer conclusive proof of alien intervention in human history. In simple terms, the pyramids in Egypt are too complex to have been built by human civilization over 4,000 years ago, and must therefore have been constructed with the assistance of extraterrestrial intelligence. To provide 'evidence' for his theory, Däniken appears to have worked his way systematically through the UNESCO World Heritage list: Stonehenge, Easter Island, even the Nazca lines in Peru, which are either drawings by alien visitors or runways for flying saucers. All in all, Däniken's theory shows little respect for our ancestors, claiming that they could not have produced these wonderful artefacts without the help of aliens. Just how nonsensical this hypothesis is has been proved often enough. The adventurer Thor Heyerdahl (1914–2002) – despite his other theories often proving inaccurate – showed as early as 1958 that the statues on Easter Island could have been made by the islanders themselves, while a team led by archaeologist Anthony F. Aveni (1938) showed in 2000 that it is relatively easy to create figures in the Nazca desert.

The theory of evolution is lost on Däniken. Here, too, he believes that the Earth could not have managed on its own: man owes his existence only to the fact that extraterrestrial beings came to our planet and interfered with DNA.

Chariots of the Gods remains a bestseller and a source of inspiration for many crackpot theorists. Other than that, however, Däniken's influence is quite limited. The Ancient Astronaut Society has only 10,000 members worldwide, while the Mystery Park that Däniken opened in Interlaken in 2003, a mishmash of pyramids and space-age constructions, went bankrupt in 2006.

ERN MALLEY, AUSTRALIA'S BELOVED BOGUS POET

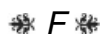
Ernest Lalor Malley may well be the most celebrated poet in Australian history: many people know at least some lines of his poetry and he is quoted regularly. Perhaps this says something about Australian poetry, because not only did Malley write just sixteen poems, none of which made any sense at all, he was a complete fabrication.⁵ He was cooked up by two young but conservative Australian poets, James Phillip McAuley (1917–1976) and Harold Frederick Stewart (1916–1995). They were irritated by the modernist poetry in the Australian magazine *Angry Penguins* and decided to teach its editor, Max Harris (1921–1995) – whom they considered pretentious – a lesson. Their aim was 'to exaggerate to the point of imbecility characteristics of the poetry esteemed by Harris' (Porter, 1993). McAuley and Stewart, who were both in the Army, wrote the complete works of the fictitious poet in a single afternoon while hanging round the barracks, making good use of all the sources at their disposal:

Swamps, marshes, borrow-pits and other
Areas of stagnant water serve
As breeding grounds . . . (Winder, 1993)

Evocative as it sounds, this opening to one of Malley's poems is no more than a chopped-up sentence from a u.s. military report on mosquitoes.

Posing as an equally fictitious sister, Ethel Malley, the pair sent the works of Malley, who had allegedly died prematurely from a thyroid disease in July 1943, to Max Harris. Along with an introduction he wrote himself, Harris published the poems under the title 'The Darkening Ecliptic' in the autumn 1943 issue of *Angry Penguins*. According to the magazine Malley was a poet on a par with W. H. Auden and Dylan Thomas. On 25 June 1944 the *Sunday Sun* published a statement by McAuley and Stewart, describing in colourful detail how they had written the poems by lifting words and phrases at random from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the collected works of Shakespeare and the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*. Harris tried to salvage what was left of his dignity by claiming that the two had nonetheless subconsciously written beautiful poetry.

As for Malley, he is an indelible part of Australian cultural life. It must have been strange for McAuley, Stewart and Harris to know that their authentic cultural achievements will forever remain overshadowed by those of a poet who never existed.



FAKE PILGRIMAGE

In May 2012 the Italian police wound up a drugs gang, seizing 30 kg of cocaine and making 33 arrests. The cocaine had been carried from Colombia by fake monks and nuns travelling to Europe via Africa 'on a pilgrimage'. But the God they worshipped was Mammon, as they had no qualms about hollowing out Bibles and prayer books to carry their illicit goods.

The link between the supplier and the client was the South American doorman of a convent in Milan. The doorman had

FATSO FARNAM, THE FARE-DODGING FOODIE FRAUDSTER

On Monday 30 June 2008 a taxi in Wauwatosa, a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, took a fare to the Mayfair shopping mall. At 122 kg and only 5 ft 10 in., the passenger, apparently in his early fifties, was far too heavy for his height. The taxi driver was therefore probably not surprised when the man grimaced and clutched his chest while getting out of the cab. But when the man then collapsed to the ground the driver made a quick decision: better to lose the price of one fare than all that endless hassle with the police. He drove off, leaving the man groaning on the sidewalk.

Once the taxi was out of sight, Robert P. Farnam stood up, dusted off his clothes and went into the mall to look for a restaurant. At Applebee's he tucked into a sirloin steak, salad, mashed potatoes, a soft drink, a strawberry smoothie and a brownie. As he walked to the cash desk to pay the \$22.66 bill, his face creased in pain and he collapsed.

The staff at Applebee's called the emergency number and, shortly afterwards, a crisis team from the Wauwatosa Fire Department arrived. They laid Farnam on a stretcher and whisked him off to the Wisconsin Heart Hospital, lights flashing and sirens blaring. But Farnam's welcome there was not too friendly. Dr William T. Kumprey had seen him far too often in the preceding months and had had enough of his antics. He told him that if he saw him just once more, he would call the police. Farnam, who was clearly not too bright, then let slip that he had been admitted to Froedtert Hospital earlier that same day, after eating a hearty meal and faking a heart attack to avoid paying for it. The doctor immediately called the police.

Farnam was no stranger to the cops. He had already been arrested five times in 2008 after pretending to be dying in restaurants or when getting out of taxis, and proved to have been regularly apprehended for the same curious crime in previous years. He was on probation and had been ordered to stay away from a number of restaurants, though Applebee's was not on the list. Farnam was charged with fraud and given a strong warning that he should stop faking heart attacks.

Farnam clearly paid heed to the warning. A few weeks later he was arrested again in a restaurant, Gyros Corner West, located in another Milwaukee suburb. This time he had pretended to lose consciousness due to a diabetic hypo.

THE FILM FESTIVAL THAT NEVER WAS

Turkish film director Özgür Doğan scored a hit with his feature film *İki Dil Bir Bavul (On the Way to School)*, which premiered in October 2009. The film won nine awards in a period of only a few months. In February 2010 the director received a letter that the film had won an award for the best music at the Ankara film festival in December 2009. This honour was a complete surprise, especially as the film has no music.

The envelope also contained a visiting card from the 'Ministry of Public Works'. When Doğan called the number on the card, he got someone on the line who did not work at a ministry and who knew nothing about the award.

The Ankara film festival, which allegedly took place in December 2009, proved to be fictitious. The organizers disappeared without trace, as did the €12,000 grant that the Turkish Ministry of Culture had awarded to the festival.

FINDING THE PAST WITH HERR PROFESSOR PROTSCH

Professor Reiner Protsch (*b.* 1939) was not a run-of-the-mill academic. He had a liking for Cuban cigars, Porsches and gold watches, and used to brag about his apartments in New York, Florida and California, where he would hang out with film star Arnold Schwarzenegger and tennis legend Steffi Graf.

In the early 1960s, after studying in California, Protsch returned to his native Germany. He then made three very important finds. Hahnhöfersand Man, dated at 36,300 years old, was the world's oldest German. Binshof-Speyer Woman, 21,300 years old, had remarkably well-preserved teeth. Paderborn-Sande Man was apparently 27,400 years old. Scientific careers have been built on less. He had also become a professor at Frankfurt University.

In 2001 Thomas Terberger of Greifswald University became suspicious about Protsch's work. As a standard precaution he had the professor's finds re-dated at Oxford University. The results were astounding. Hahnhöfersand Man proved to be only 7,500 years old, Binshof-Speyer Woman was just 3,090, while Paderborn-Sande Man drew his last breath a mere 250 years ago.

The University of Frankfurt, where Protsch worked, set up a commission of inquiry which unearthed many more irregularities. According to his colleagues, Protsch did not know how to work the carbon-dating machine that was the department's pride and joy. He had offered to sell the university's collection of 278 chimpanzee skulls to an American collector for \$70,000. He had also shredded piles of documents from the university's archives dating from the Second World War, some of which referred to 'experiments' by Josef Mengele. Further investigation showed that the aristocratic Prussian name Von Zieten, which Protsch liked to use as an appendage to his last name, had nothing to do with his family. Protsch turned out to be the son of Wilhelm Protsch, an ardent Nazi and Party stalwart. It is possible that Protsch destroyed the documents to protect his father's reputation.

On 18 February 2005 the University of Frankfurt reported that Protsch had been forced to retire. In July of the same year, he was charged with forgery, fraud and embezzlement. In June 2009, after a series of trials, Protsch was finally sentenced to eighteen months behind bars.

THE FIRST HUMAN CLONE

After the successful cloning of frogs in the 1960s, it seemed only a matter of time before the first cloned human being would make an appearance. And it was not only scientists who were fascinated with the idea; it also captured the public imagination and became a popular cultural theme. One of the best-known examples is perhaps Ira Levin's 1976 novel *The Boys from Brazil*, filmed in 1978.

On Friday 3 March 1978 the *New York Post* carried the remarkable headline on its front page: 'Baby born without a mother, he's the first human clone' (Culliton, 1978). The article was based on a book by journalist David Rorvik, *In His Image, The Cloning of a Man*. The book described how, in 1973, Rorvik had been approached by an American millionaire referred to only as Max. Then in his sixties, Max wanted to leave behind a clone of himself and hired Rorvik to put together a team that could

make his wish a reality. After Rorvik had rustled up a group of willing scientists, including a geneticist who used the alias Darwin, the team moved to a secret location in a country 'beyond Hawaii' (i.e. outside the jurisdiction of the United States). They obtained ova by telling the female donors that they were taking part in an anti-infertility programme. Using the ova and genetic material from Max, Darwin set to work. When an ovum had divided to form more than 64 cells, it was implanted in the surrogate mother, known as Sparrow. In December 1976 a healthy child was born.

If this story had been written by a gutter-press reporter and published in a tabloid, no one would probably have paid it any attention. But Rorvik was no run-of-the-mill hack. He was a serious journalist and author of several books, including *Brave New Baby*, about the dangers of genetic technology. Furthermore, *In His Image, The Cloning of a Man* was published by J. B. Lippincott & Co., a far from frivolous publisher specializing in medical literature. This may explain why scientists felt the need to respond when they were approached by the media. Nearly all of them denounced the book as a hoax. Some claimed that if Darwin really existed, he would be shouting about his achievement from the rooftops: it would probably have earned him a Nobel Prize, and certainly eternal fame. Most of them pointed out that it could not be true, as science was simply not yet sufficiently advanced to achieve such a feat.

One problem in proving the book's authenticity was that Rorvik was very shy of publicity. Rumour had it that he was holed up in a cabin in Montana. Even Lippincott rarely spoke to him in person; all his business affairs were dealt with by his lawyer. A second problem was that Max had given Rorvik permission to publish his story on condition that the identities of all those involved were kept strictly secret, with the exception of Rorvik himself. The simplest solution, to get hold of Max and his clone and test their DNA – was therefore out of the question.

The case would perhaps have remained unsolved if, in the same year that the book was published, British biologist J. Derek Blomhall had not filed a lawsuit for defamation. Blomhall claimed that the cloning method described by Rorvik was based on work that he had performed on rabbits. Blomhall's work and name had been used in the book without permission and Blomhall demanded \$7 million compensation. Despite the case dragging on for three years, it never came to a substantive treatment of the facts. The judge first wanted to determine whether the book was fact or fiction. The parties failed to reach agreement on how this question should be answered, while Max insisted on complicated conditions to protect his identity.

Early in 1981 the judge had had enough of the wrangling. He ruled that Lippincott/Rorvik had produced no evidence for the authenticity of the work and described the book as 'a fraud and a hoax' (Broad, 1981). From a scientific point of view, this was not a satisfactory outcome. The court did not consider it proven that the book was real and assumed that it was not, but did not prove that it was *not* real. Such rulings are grist to the mill of conspiracy theorists. Although this one was simply based on a summary of the facts, it was clear that Lippincott/Rorvik could never win the case. Lippincott paid Blomhall an out-of-court settlement suspected to be several hundred thousand dollars, while Rorvik continued to insist that the book told the truth.

The best that outsiders could come up with by way of explanation was that Rorvik published the book to stimulate a discussion on what was acceptable in terms of cloning and what was not.

A FISHY PRISON HOAX

In August 1872 Carl (aka Karl) Theodore Staiger, director of the Brisbane Museum, visited the penal colony Gayndah Station on the west coast of Australia. The inmates decided to play a prank on him. In the morning, Staiger got a curious-looking fish for breakfast that was unknown to him. The inmates told him that the fish had not been observed anywhere else, only recently near Gayndah. Staiger expressed his disappointment that he had only been able to see the fish cooked and not alive. Shrugging their shoulders, the inmates said there was little hope of that because it sometimes took a month between successful catches. Staiger made the best of the situation, got someone to make a few sketches of the fish from different angles, and ate it with gusto.

Staiger sent the drawings and a short description of the fish to the biologist Count Francis de Castelnau (1810–1880). A couple of years later Castelnau published a short article in the *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales*, entitled 'On a New Ganoid Fish from Queensland'. After examining the sketch of the roughly 18-inch-long fish, Castelnau concluded that, considering its depressed spatuli-form snout, it was closely allied to *Atractosteus spatula*. However, there were also differences and, based on the drawing, Castelnau provisionally named the fish *Ompax spatuloides*.

In the years that followed, some ichthyologists seriously doubted the existence of *Ompax spatuloides*, whereas others entered the fish in their guidebooks because the possibility of finding ganoid fish in the waters of Queensland had been confirmed by a number of eminent naturalists (Whitley, 1933).

It took more than half a century for the truth about the *Ompax* to come out – almost six decades in which no other specimen of the fish was ever caught. On 6 August 1930 a newspaper in Sydney, *The Bulletin*, published an article by an author hiding behind the pseudonym 'Waranbini'. The author remembered with pleasure that morning in 1872, when Staiger was served a fish consisting of the head of a lungfish, the body of a mullet and the tail of an eel (the Staiger sketch shows a head that almost certainly belongs to a needlefish or a platypus: Waranbini probably made a mistake here). For many years the inmates of Gayndah Station had derived great pleasure from *Ompax spatuloides*. Whenever a marine mystery was captured, they remarked, 'It must be an Ompax!' (Whitley, 1933).

Gilbert P. Whitley of the Australian Museum in Sydney read Waranbini's story and wrote an article in the *American Naturalist* dismissing *Ompax spatuloides* as a myth once and for all.

FORGERS DONATE WORKS TOS STOCKHOLM'S MOMA

On 7 November 1993 the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm was the scene of a major art theft: the thieves sawed a hole in the roof and made off with a sculpture and seven paintings by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. The stolen works were valued at some €63 million.

A week later, the mood turned to jubilation when the paintings turned up on the museum steps. The police assumed that the thieves had become nervous and had brought the works back. But closer inspection offered a different scenario. 'They smell of paint', said the museum's security chief. 'They are dry but are no older than a week'.

The forgeries, complete with signatures, were most likely produced by otherwise innocent students of the art academy in Stockholm. The museum could not, however, appreciate the humour. 'This is a bad joke', said director Björn Springfeldt

A FORGER OF FORGED ART

Andy Behrman arrived in New York in his late teenage years, and soon became embroiled in a world of fashion, drugs, sex and gossip. At the end of the 1980s he was taken on as a salesman by Mark Kostabi, an artist with a very unusual method of 'painting'.

Kostabi was a talented graphic artist who built up a career in New York in the early 1980s. His ideas on art soon became ideas for their own sake, gimmicks that many an art critic considered vulgar. Nevertheless, his work was undeniably 'in' and was used, for example, for the cover of *Use Your Illusion*, an album by rock band Guns N' Roses. In 1988 Kostabi opened a studio where he himself did hardly anything at all. 'Ideas people' conceived ideas for paintings and submitted them to a 'committee'. If the idea was approved, the work was produced by 'painters'. A second committee then decided whether it should bear Kostabi's signature. If so, he signed it – a second or two's work.

The painters at his studio were paid \$10 an hour, while Kostabi himself earned at least \$50,000 for each work. He defended himself by saying that this was how it worked in Rembrandt's time too. At the same time, he was quoted as saying: 'Anyone who buys my paintings is a total fool. But the more I spit in their faces, the more they beg me to sell them another painting' (Greig, 1993).

The question is, of course, whether a Kostabi is a Kostabi. The fact that he signed the paintings says little. Normally, if a painter signs a painting it means that it is his work that he produced it. But now Kostabi himself was no longer responsible for whether the work should be signed or not, but had delegated this decision to a committee, this no longer applied.

These considerations became important in 1992, when Behrman started what could be called 'forging forgeries'. Together with one of the painters in the factory, Beate von Ploetz, Behrman put some 30 paintings he had signed with Kostabi's name up for sale.

When Behrman's extra earnings were discovered Kostabi accused him of 'forgery', but art critic Hilton Kramer hit the nail on the head, noting drily: 'The difference between a real Kostabi and a fake Kostabi is such that to date no method has been found of distinguishing between them' (Greig, 1993).

This excellent critical comment was of little help to Behrman. Kostabi's lawyers had called for him to be sentenced to five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000, so the ultimate ruling of only five months behind bars and five months' house arrest must have come as a relief. Beate von Ploetz was acquitted, as it was simply impossible to determine whether she had produced 'real forged' or 'forged forged' Kostabis.

In 2002 Behrman published his autobiography, *Electroboy*, in which he talked about bipolar disorder, electroconvulsive therapy, mixed with a lot of sex, drugs and gossip. It showed that Behrman loves media attention as much as his former boss.

ST FRANCESCO FORGIONE AND HIS BOTTLED STIGMATA

Francesco Forgione (1887–1968) entered a monastery at the age of sixteen and was ordained as a priest in 1910. He seemed to have trouble with the vows of chastity (he had sexual intercourse twice a week) and of poverty (he was suspected of embezzling funds). Forgione's greatest 'achievement', however, was the stigmata that appeared on his hands and feet. Despite his activities being investigated in 1920 and him being banned from celebrating Mass for many years, Forgione was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1999 and canonized in 2002.⁶ The miracle required to achieve this status was Forgione's bilocation: he could be in two places at the same time.

In 2007 Italian historian Sergio Luzzatto published evidence for the allegation, which had already been made sometime earlier, that Forgione had produced his stigmata himself using chemicals. The proof included a handwritten letter from the priest in which he requested a pharmacist for carbolic acid 'in strict secrecy' (Popham, 2007).

The biography of Padre Pio, as Forgione is known, on the Vatican's website mentions only in passing the 'spiritual sufferings' that are the best-known fact about his life. The evidence that Forgione was a fraud has no consequences for his status as a saint. Popes are infallible and do not admit their mistakes.

Almost 40 years after Forgione's death, an absurd ecclesiastical circus was set in motion. His corpse was exhumed and the skull was fitted with a facial mask made by the company that supplies Madame Tussauds. The body, which incidentally showed no signs at all of stigmata, was put on public display in a glass cabinet reminiscent of Snow White's. All in all a respectable end for such a fraudulent trickster.

The veneration of this fornicating, embezzling and cheating monk was yet to reach its bizarre pinnacle, however. Plans were revealed in 2009 to erect a statue of Padre Pio – 60 m high – in southern Italy. The statue was to be coated with special photovoltaic paint that would trap the sun's heat, generating solar energy that could be used to illuminate it at night. This would make it the world's first 'ecological religious icon' (Squires, 2009).

FRENCH: THE LINGUA FRANCA OF EVERYONE ELSE

Born in France in 1818, Vrain-Denis Lucas was brought up in the country. He had little education, but did have an insatiable interest in history. In 1852 he left for Paris, hoping to find a job in a library or a bookshop, but he had no success because he could not read the classical languages. Instead, he went to work for a man called Letterlier, who kept genealogical records. His customers were mainly nouveaux riches wishing nothing more than to have their names related to illustrious names from the past. Lucas soon got the hang of the business and forged fifteen antique signatures to prove that the Marquis du Prat was a descendant of a prominent chancellor and cardinal.

Within no time, Lucas started using his skills to produce 'rediscovered' signatures of prominent historical figures. He presumably did this initially on a small scale until 1861, when he came into contact with the famous mathematician Michel Chasles (1793–1880). Chasles proved to be a keen customer and one incredible manuscript after another came to light. The documents testified to a glorious victory for French science: an exchange of letters between Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) and Sir Isaac Newton (1643–1727) showed that the former in reality had discovered the laws of physics with which Newton was later to make his name with his *Principia*. By accepting these documents as authentic, Chasles appeared to have lost his customary

shrewdness. Not only is it very unlikely that Pascal and Newton ever corresponded with each other (given that Pascal died three years before Newton had even graduated at Cambridge), it is also unthinkable that they would have done so in French, for Latin was then the language of science. The documents that Lucas supplied contained one discrepancy after the other. The correspondence showed that Lucas possessed a wide knowledge of facts, but lacked sufficient intelligence to order them in any systematic way. Letters from an aged Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) refer to him observing planets, while Galileo was completely blind in his latter years. King Dagobert (c. 603–639) addressed his correspondence to ‘Saint’ Eligius (c. 590–c. 660), yet the latter was of course not canonized until after his death. Furthermore all correspondents – including Julius Caesar, Cleopatra, Martin Luther, Pythagoras and Mary Magdalene – were writers of excellent French!

Lucas also supplied Chasles with old books which he bought cheap at book markets and then forged stamps and marks, for example the *ex libris* of François Rabelais (1493–1555), to make them appear valuable.

Lucas’ work ethic was remarkable. He would sit in a library in Paris every day, writing frantically like (as the judge later said) ‘a Benedictine monk’ (Rosenblum, 1998). In a period of eight years he supplied Chasles with an astounding 27,000 forgeries by 600 authors. All went well until 8 July 1867, when Chasles proudly presented a number of letters to the French Academy of Sciences. His colleagues became suspicious and, in the years that followed, he found himself facing increasing opposition. But it was not until 1869, when it was proved conclusively that the handwriting in letters from Galileo was not Galileo’s, that the scales fell from everyone’s eyes.

Lucas was arrested on 9 September 1869. The money he had earned had probably been spent by his mistress while he sat in the libraries. On 24 February 1870 he was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment, a fine and payment of the costs of the trial. Nothing is known of what became of him after his release.

FRIEDERICH LICHTENBERGER AND THE MEDUSA WATER

In 1858 the San Francisco-based newspaper *Alta California* published a letter from a Friederich Lichtenberger, which was interesting from a scientific point of view. Lichtenberger, a doctor, described how he had seen an unfortunate gold prospector, Ernest Flucterspiegel, turn to stone. While looking for gold, Flucterspiegel found a geode, a hollow in a rock, and drank about half a pint of the fluid he found in it. After returning to the prospectors’ camp, Flucterspiegel complained of pains in his ‘epigastric’ and ‘left hypochondriac’ regions. He was dead within a short time, stiff and petrified. When Lichtenberger dissected the corpse with an axe, he discovered that Flucterspiegel’s heart ‘strongly resembled a piece of red jasper’ (Rose, 2005). As it turns out, the story was a fabrication invented by the paper’s editors to reel in readers.

FUDGE-FACTORING THE UNIVERSE

Scientists sometimes use the ‘fudge factor’ if empirical facts do not accord with a theory, or vice versa, while there are no discernible errors in either. Call it a little white lie.

In the hands of an unscrupulous scientist, the fudge factor can be used to disguise bad research or incorrect calculations. In the hands of a good scientist it often proves, with hindsight, to fill a gap in a theory that is later closed by new insights.

Perhaps the most famous application of the fudge factor was by Albert Einstein in his general theory of relativity, published in 1916. Einstein later called this his ‘greatest blunder’⁷ (Goldsmith, 1997). While working on his general theory of relativity, Einstein noted that his calculations implied that the universe was expanding or contracting. That was incompatible with the prevailing view of a static universe: galaxies could rise and fall, but the universe itself was believed to be immutable. Einstein solved the problem by adding an element to his theory: the cosmological constant. This was a kind of reverse gravity that held the limits of the universe neatly in place. Ten years later the American astronomer Edwin Hubble (1889–1953) discovered that the universe is not constant, but is expanding – just as Einstein’s theory predicted before he applied the fudge factor. This apparent gap in his theory, which Einstein filled with the cosmological constant, was later closed definitively with the help of new scientific insights.

FURNITURE FAKERS GO VIRAL

Faking designer furniture dates back to the 1960s, when replicas of Harry Bertoia’s Diamond Chair (1952) and Eero Saarinen’s Tulip Chair (1956) were first produced. This generally occurred on a small scale, with the items often being sold in shops. Antiques dealers would be open about them being fake (this is less often the case these days because there is greater attention for fakes and the internet offers a safer alternative) or would tell a prospective buyer that he had ‘just acquired something that is not yet on the market’.

The advent of the internet has been a godsend for ‘furniture fakers’, offering them a new market. Consequently, in the early twenty-first century, trade in fake designer furniture has increased alarmingly. Among the classics available as fakes are Pierre Paulin’s Tongue Chair from 1967, Arne Jacobsen’s Egg and Swan chairs from the late 1950s, the Lounge Chair (1956) and La Chaise (1948) by Charles and Ray Eames, the Panton by Verner Panton from 1967, Isamu Noguchi’s coffee table from 1944, various items by Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe’s Barcelona chair from 1929, Eileen Gray’s side table from 1927, Eero Aarnio’s Pastil Chair from 1967 and George Nelson’s wooden bench from 1946.

These items can be found in many a museum, which is convenient for potential buyers, and even more so for potential ‘imitators’. Producers of fake furniture only rarely make distinctive errors. Willy Van Der Meer’s sideboards, for example, can be recognized as fakes only because the side panels are attached with rivets rather than screws.

Generally speaking, there are two ways in which potential buyers can identify fake furniture. First, it looks too good. An authentic early Eames Lounge Chair is half a century old and anyone lucky enough to own one will have spent many hours sitting in it. And that leaves its mark. Cupboards, tables, chairs: everything wears in its own way and the traces (or, in the case of fakes, the absence of them) can only be identified after careful study. Producers of fake copies are of course also aware of this and sometimes try to make their brand-new replicas look old or claim that the unsullied item has ‘recently been restored’.

The second sign of a fake is that the price is too good to be true. For many years, finding a Maurice Calka polyester Boomerang Desk was like looking for a needle in a haystack but, in the early years of this century, a suspiciously large number suddenly appeared from nowhere – on eBay. Although these desks will easily fetch €30,000, they were available on eBay for

one-third of that price. The low price is one of the standard tricks in the furniture faker's arsenal. Another is to get potential buyers to think that they have discovered this chance in a million themselves. A picture of a lamp worth only a few pounds might show a couple of Jacobsen chairs in the background. An enquiry from an interested party will receive a reply saying, 'No problem, the chairs are for sale, too.'

Today, fake designer furniture is mostly made in the mecca of the fake industry, China, and in a few other Asian countries. Intellectual property rights apply just as much there as in the West, but without effective controls they mean nothing.



GAZA CITY ZOO'S AMAZING ZEBRAS

Only ten of the 400 animals in a zoo in Gaza City survived the Israeli offensive against Hamas at the end of 2008 and the start of 2009. The rest died during the air raids, or later of starvation. In the autumn of 2009, looking for a new attraction, the zoo employed a professional painter to give two white donkeys a makeover of zebra stripes using hair dye. Sad as it may sound, the innocent impostors are a favourite with the children, who have never seen a real zebra and are therefore none the wiser.

A GENUINE LETTER FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE

Have you ever wanted to know who your real friends are? In 2007 Amir Vehabović, who lives in Bosnia, was so curious that he devoted a lot of time and effort to find out once and for all. He bribed a coroner to issue a fake death certificate and then found a company of funeral directors willing to organize the ceremony and inter an empty coffin.

On the day of his funeral, Vehabović hid behind a gravestone offering him a clear view of his open grave. He waited to observe just how many of the 46 people he had invited would congregate to see him launched into eternity. Some time passed. And then the pall-bearers came into view carrying the coffin. They in turn were followed by . . . his mother. And that was all; no one else had so much as bothered to turn up.

Not much time passed before the 45 absentee guests received the following missive from Vehabović.

To all my dear 'friends',

Some of you I have known since early school days, others I have only forged a relationship with in the last few years. Until my 'funeral', I considered all of you close friends. So it was with shock and, I admit, sadness and anger that I realized not one of you managed to find the time to come and say goodbye to me when you heard I was to be buried. I would have understood if just some of you came, bearing flowers or words of apology from others who could not make it. But no. Not a single one of you turned up to pay your last respects. I lived for our friendships. They meant as much to me as life itself. But how easy it was for you all to forget the pledges of undying friendship I heard on so many occasions. How different our ideas of friendship seem to be. I paid a lot of money to get a fake death certificate and to bribe undertakers to handle an empty coffin. I thought my funeral would be a good joke – the kind of prank we have all played on one another over the years. Now I have just one last message for you: my 'funeral' might have been staged, but you might as well consider me dead, because I will not be seeing any of you again. (Vehabović, 2007)

GET BETTER PRAYERS

Cardiologist Mitchell W. Krucoff studies the effects of prayer on the recovery of heart patients. The fact that he makes the results seem better in America's popular media than is justified on the basis of scientific publications suggests that he has a religious background.

In 2001 Krucoff published the results of a study that had tested four 'noetic' therapies: stress relaxation, imagery, touch and prayer. The account of the study makes amusing reading, although the money could have been better spent on something useful. Krucoff made the study into a veritable ecumenical event. The Unity School of Christianity held a 30-day-long 24-hour vigil in a chapel. In Nepal, 150 monks hummed the 'mantra of the deity that wears a leaf robe'. Jews placed printed prayers in the Western Wall and fundamentalist Christians went for 'daily prayers and motivation by Holy Spirit'. Baptists and Roman Catholics joined in to complete the scene.

In the months following publication of the study, Krucoff talked up the results. In one TV programme he claimed: 'In the group randomly assigned to prayer therapy, there was a 50 per cent reduction in all complications and a 100 per cent reduction in major complications' (Grant, 2007). Well, I'm not so sure about that. The percentage of deaths in the different groups showed that the use of imagery or stress-relaxation therapy was not to be recommended: 13.3 per cent of the patients had died six months after the start of the study. Touch therapy was less dangerous: only 6.7 per cent of the patients did not make it. Prayer seemed relatively harmless, with only 3.3 per cent of patients giving up the ghost. How Krucoff reconciled this result for the prayer group with 'a 100 per cent reduction in major complications' is a mystery to me; in my book, dying is a pretty major complication. Krucoff bragged that the power of prayer was the best form of noetic therapy, and he was right: other noetic therapies caused even more casualties. What he did not tell the media, however, was that the mortality rate in the control group – the 'standard therapy group' which had not received 'noetic' therapy – was zero per cent. For the truth you need to consult an article by Krucoff in *American Heart Journal*, hardly standard reading for the average American. In that article, Krucoff had to come clean, admitting that 'All mortality occurred in noetic therapy groups. By six months . . . mortality differences suggest a statistical trend favouring the standard therapy group' (Krucoff, 2001).

In 2005 Krucoff published the results of a large follow-up study. The 'noetic' therapies had been narrowed down to two: prayer versus MIT (music, imagery and touch). Once again there was a big difference between the scientific article and Krucoff's bragging in the press. The article made clear that it did not make any difference whether someone was prayed for. However, Krucoff implied that parts of the study justified a new follow-up study. His intention was obvious: to keep on undertaking trials until he happened to get a statistically significant result in favour of prayer.

Maybe Krucoff should study the work of his colleague Herbert Benson. Benson undertook a similar study, which lasted for several years and involved patients from six hospitals. The intercessors included Teresian Carmelites and members of the

prayer organization Silent Unity.⁸ To all their prayers they added the phrase 'for a successful surgery with a quick, healthy recovery and no complications' (Benson, 2006). The patients were divided into three groups: one that received prayer but did not know it, one that did not receive prayer but did not know it, and a third that received prayer and knew it. Complications occurred in 51 per cent of the first group of patients, in 52 per cent of the second group and in 59 per cent of the third group. So whether patients received prayer or not made no difference, if they did not know. But as soon as they knew that they had received prayer, there was a higher incidence of complications. Benson assumed that the certainty that they were being prayed for might well give patients unrealistically high expectations of recovery, which could actually lead to more complications.

GHOST ARMY: 23RD HEADQUARTERS SPECIAL TROOPS

Military deceit is as old as the Trojan Horse. It was also used in the Second World War. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, for instance, had his tanks brought in by train prior to a battle. Wagon after wagon arrived, an impressive sight, news of which invariably reached the enemy through informants. The wagons were, however, partly filled with wooden frames shaped like tanks which, when covered in canvas, could not be distinguished from the real thing. When his troops passed through a city in convoy, Rommel also made them look more numerous by having the first vehicles through to then double back outside the city and join up behind the last one through. In North Africa, British forces used wooden dummies of soldiers laid flat on the ground. They could be pulled upright using a system of cables and pulleys to make the enemy shoot at them. This enabled the British to pinpoint the position of German artillery accurately without running risks, with the added bonus that the enemy wasted their ammunition.

When Germany declared war on the USA on 11 December 1941, four days after Japan's sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, American commanders knew that, as the U.S. was certainly not strong, it would have to be clever. The day after Pearl Harbor, the citizens of Washington, DC, saw heavy artillery set up on the roof of the White House. It was a fine symbol of resistance, but that is all it was: the artillery was fake, made of wood and painted black. The U.S. military, although expanding, was then far below the strength required to take the lead in a global war.⁹

In 1942 and 1943 the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops was formed. Its members were carefully selected: candidates had to have an IQ of at least 119 and a talent or skill that was useful for deception. Decorators, fashion designers, writers and actors may not be the first choice for a hardened warrior putting together a fighting unit, but 23rd Headquarters Special Troops had plenty of them.¹⁰

After the invasion of Europe, the Special Troops had to use cunning and guile to create the impression that the Allied forces were bigger than they really were. With only 1,100 men, they had to pretend they were a division (14,000–17,000 men) – or even two!

The first detachments went ashore in Normandy on D-Day, 6 June 1944. A few miles away from the actual landing points, they cleverly set up a number of floodlights so that, at night, it looked like a harbour, luring the Luftwaffe away from the real landing points, which were sheathed in darkness. By the end of June all 1,100 men were on French soil and the group could start performing its trickery. The 'Ghost Army', as the men had come to call the unit, had a wide variety of tricks at its disposal. There were dummies, including inflatable replicas of tanks, planes and artillery. They used recently invented wire recorders to project the sounds of tanks, artillery, soldiers laughter and so on.¹¹ They could create an imaginary infrastructure, like the non-existent harbour. They could imitate other units: if the generals wanted the enemy to believe that the 13th Army Corps was located at a certain position, the men of the Ghost Army would stitch that Corps' insignia onto their uniforms, spray its codes onto their vehicles and leak sufficient valid information to convince the local German spy that they were indeed the 13th. Finally, they used radio deception: members of the group would hold radio conversations which they knew the Germans would listen to, giving false information about orders and troop positions.

The Ghost Army was especially employed to discourage German attacks by giving the enemy the impression that they were facing a large army. And it did this successfully, repeatedly forcing German army units to mark time when they had the numerical superiority to have decimated the Ghost Army without much trouble.¹² The men of the Ghost Army showed great creativity. They used half-tracks to make tread marks in the snow that ended under camouflaging. To German reconnaissance planes this looked as though tanks were hidden there, causing the enemy to choose a different route. A battery of inflatable cannons had the same effect.

The Ghost Army carried out 21 assignments (55, including assignments which were part of operations by other military units). This colourful group played a role in the Battle for Brest, the Battle of the Bulge, the Battle of Metz and the attempted crossings of the Mosel and the Rhine. According to a reasonable estimate, their efforts – two of whom lost their lives in combat and fifteen were wounded – prevented the deaths of 40,000 Allied soldiers.

For many veterans of the Ghost Army, post-war life was bitter. On the basis of their deeds these men qualified for many a medal, but the American ministry of war never acknowledged the unit's existence and did not therefore bestow any military honours on its members. This silence must be seen in the context of the times. After all, something that worked against the Germans in 1945 could also work against the Russians ten years later.

In the mid-1990s, parts of the archives about the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops were made public. The obligation to observe secrecy no longer applied, much to the relief of veterans who could finally tell their grandchildren what they did in the war.

GHOSTING AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY, CLIFFORD IRVING STYLE

In 1970 Clifford Irving was a reasonably successful American fiction writer who lived a happy life with his wife and children (and the occasional mistress) on Ibiza. However, he suffered from writer's block, a problem he shared with his writer friend Richard Suskind. One day, while they were talking about an article on the eccentric billionaire Howard Hughes (1901–1976), the conversation took a sudden turn. The struggle for power at the top of Hughes's business empire led Irving to suspect that Hughes was ill, or no longer alive. Besides a small group of aides, no one had seen Hughes during the past fifteen years. The two friends fantasized about writing Hughes's 'autobiography'. According to Irving this involved little risk. In the 1960s the recluse had lost \$137 million in a court case just because he had refused to appear in person. So what were the odds that he