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The Possibility of Forgery

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In this paper, I explore some issues in the philosophy of art. I examine a well-known thought experiment about a 20th century French author who, without copying the words, attempts to write his own version of Don Quixote that would be indistinguishable from Cervantes’ novel to any given reader. I argue that this second Don Quixote is a unique work in its own right, and that this gives us important insights into the nature of artworks, the possibility of forging artworks, and aesthetic evaluation in general. I am currently expanding this paper into an honors thesis on the nature of indistinguishable artworks.

It goes without question that the problem of authenticity in art is a practical problem for art critics, museum curators, and art lovers in general. There is also a philosophical problem about the value, if any, of forged artworks that has produced a fairly robust literature in the last half-century or so. Particularly notable is Nelson Goodman’s Languages of Art, wherein Goodman offers a comprehensive theory of art. The chapter entitled “Art and Authenticity” is the most relevant to my discussion here, and as you might imagine, the one that has produced the most literature with respect to forgery. As a result, my discussion takes Goodman’s as a jumping off point from which to explore the philosophy of forgery.

While Goodman’s work is my jumping off point, my main interlocutor shall be Chris Janaway, whose article “Two Kinds of Artistic Duplication” offers a defense of Goodman’s view against certain arguments presented by Arthur Danto. In this paper, I shall attempt to show that Janaway doesn’t get the whole truth of the matter, and misses some important lessons from Danto.

The possibility of forgery has produced some literature of its own. Peter Kivy, for instance, has suggested a possible case in which an allographic work (Bach’s Partita in A-minor for Unaccompanied Flute) has been forged. Kivy, however, acknowledges that his case is a “tangential” one, which has led me to search for more substantive considerations. Moreover, it is not at all clear that Kivy’s claim even amounts to an objection to Goodman at all, as Kirk Pillow has argued. My project, however, is separate from Kivy and Pillow’s debate. I am most concerned with whether or not two notationally identical works can be

4 Kivy, 233.
different works, and what implications this might have.

I begin in section 1 with an outline of Goodman’s autographic/allographic distinction about artworks, and discuss its motivation and its consequences for forgeries. In section 2, I discuss Jorge Luis Borges’ short-story “Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote” and the conclusions that Arthur Danto draws from it. In section 3, I discuss Janaway’s attempt to salvage Goodman’s distinction from Danto’s attack. In section 4, I consider Janaway’s view, and in section 5, I consider a point that I think have been overlooked in the debate.

Section 1 - Goodman

Goodman tackles the problem of authenticity and forgery in the chapter of Languages of Art titled “Art and Authenticity”. There, he lays out the distinction between autographic and allographic works. In the section titled “The Unfakable”, he points out the “rather curious fact that in music, unlike painting, there is no such thing as a forgery of a known work”. This is explained by the distinction between two kinds of art. Goodman’s original formulation is somewhat uninformative: “Let us speak of a work of art as autographic…if and only if even the most exact duplication of it does not thereby count as genuine”. All other artworks are to be called allographic. He offers something a bit more substantive about allographic artworks in the next section, where he explains that the only thing that matters between different copies of musical scores or literary works is “exact correspondence as sequences of letters, spaces, and punctuation marks”, which gives the curious result that, in the case of allographic works, an attempted forgery that exactly corresponds to the original work is merely another instance of the original work, and not a forgery. By contrast, with an autographic work, such exact correspondence cannot make it the case that an attempted forgery just is another instance of the original work; it remains a forgery. The reason is Goodman’s idea of a notational system. Literary works and musical scores are “in a definite notation”, and this notation “provides the means for distinguishing the properties constitutive of the work from all contingent properties”. Thus, such works are allographic. Autographic arts, like painting, lack such notational systems, and therefore lack a means for distinguishing the constitutive from the contingent properties of a work.

It may be helpful at this point to consider some examples, and to discuss the autographic/allographic distinction and other common distinctions in aesthetics. Imagine that we have the Mona Lisa in front of us. We then find a painter to create a copy that is perceptually indistinguishable from the

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8 Goodman, 112.
9 Goodman, 113.
10 Goodman, 115.
11 Goodman, 116.
12 Ibid.
13 Of course, there are more kinds of allographic art than music and literature, and more kinds of autographic art than painting. My discussion is restricted to these very simple, obvious cases. Goodman himself offers fundamental accounts of many more kinds of art in Languages of Art.
Mona Lisa. According to Goodman, this work is not genuine - if the painter attempted to deceitfully pass it off as the original, it would be a forgery. The reason is that painting is an autographic art, and so perceptual indistinguishability cannot establish the authenticity of a work. Instead, we must refer to historical facts about the work, such as who the author is, and the context in which the original and the copy were made. Now imagine that we have Hamlet in front of us. We then find a writer to create a copy that is identical, word-for-word, with Shakespeare’s Hamlet. According to Goodman, this work is genuine. It is, in fact, a genuine instance of Shakespeare’s play. The reason is that literature is an allographic art, and thus operates by a notational system that allows us to identify certain works. Since this copy matches up with Shakespeare’s original word-for-word, it has an identical notational system. Therefore, it is just another instance of the same work, not a forgery. Chris Janaway, in discussing Goodman’s distinction, uses the term “check of authenticity”, which I think is helpful. In the case of an autographic work, the check of authenticity is and must be a reference to the history of production of the work. The only way to establish that the Mona Lisa in front of us is the real one, painted by Leonardo, is to establish that Leonardo, and not some other painter, painted it. In the case of an allographic work, however, the check of authenticity only requires reference to the notational system of that particular work. The way to establish that the work in front of us is Hamlet is to see if it matches up notationally with Shakespeare’s. If it does, it is Hamlet. So the check of authenticity for autographic and allographic works is different. Put another way, establishing the identity of artworks of each kind requires something different. To identify a given painting as Leonardo’s Mona Lisa, we must be able to say that Leonardo painted it. We must be able to refer to historical facts about the work. To identify a given play as Shakespeare’s Hamlet, all we must be able to do is show that it corresponds notationally with Shakespeare’s. The upshot of this is that with allographic works, the history of production of a work seems to be irrelevant to the identity and authenticity of a work. This distinction might remind us of two others we often find in aesthetics, so next I will explain how it differs.

One such distinction is between artworks that are physical objects versus artworks that are performance arts. Painting, an autographic art form, results in physical objects of contemplation. Music, an allographic art form, results in performances of pieces. But Goodman’s distinction cannot be made along physical object/performance piece lines. Literature is also an allographic art form, yet unlike music, it does not result in performances. A work of literature is manifested in a physical object, like a painting. Therefore, the autographic/allographic distinction differs from the physical object/performance art distinction.

The second distinction is between types and tokens of works. Paintings are one-ofs, as it were, which is to say that there is only one Mona Lisa, housed at the Louvre. Literature and music, however, have types and tokens. The fact that I can read Hamlet here in Hamilton, NY at the same time as someone living in Tokyo suggests that there are many
tokens of that play; Hamlet itself is the type to which they correspond. Similarly with music, there can be two genuine performances of Beethoven’s 9th in two different places on the planet. These would be tokens of the type “Beethoven’s 9th”. But Goodman’s distinction cannot be made along these lines either. The reason is that etchings are a kind of artwork that admit of types and tokens, and yet etchings, according to Goodman, are autographic works. An etching is like a work of literature with respect to types and tokens, and yet it is autographic, literature allographic.

We might now ask what the consequences of Goodman’s view are. I’ve already said that in the case of allographic works, if the check of authenticity is simply a reference to the notational system of the work, then the historical facts of production of the work become irrelevant. As a result, Goodman concludes, we cannot forge an allographic work. As soon as we succeed in producing something notationally identical to the original, we have just produced another instance of the original, not a forgery with which we can deceive the unsuspecting. In the next section, I consider an example that seems to threaten this view, presented by Jorge Luis Borges in a short story.

Section 2 - Borges

In “Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote”, Borges asks us to imagine a turn-of-the-20th-century French author of some repute named Pierre Menard, who gets it into his head to write Don Quixote.14 Menard, as Borges points out, does not set out to simply copy Miguel de Cervantes’ novel and pass it off as his own. He does not seek to copy it mechanically from the original. Neither, however, does he simply aim to write a “contemporary” version of the novel. Menard sets out to write the book we know of as Don Quixote. Borges says of Menard’s methods, “To be, in some way, Cervantes and to arrive at Don Quixote seemed to him less arduous – and consequently less interesting – than to continue being Pierre Menard and to arrive at Don Quixote through the experiences of Pierre Menard”.15 As Borges tells the story, Menard in fact succeeds in writing “the ninth and thirty-eighth chapters of part 1 of Don Quixote and a fragment of chapter 22”16.

To me, and indeed to many aestheticians, this story provides a wonderful thought-experiment. Upon reading it, I think we are inclined to ask: what are the consequences of Menard’s work? I think it fair to say that Goodman would hold that Menard’s efforts were in vain. Insofar as he succeeded in writing those parts of Don Quixote identically word-for-word with Cervantes’ version, he has just produced an incomplete instance of Cervantes’ version. The reason is that literature is allographic, and works are identified by their notational systems. Since Menard’s work, for those two-and-then-some chapters, is notationally identical to Cervantes’, then it just is Cervantes’ work. It amounts to another copy, no different from the version I might be reading. But this is not what Borges has to say about Menard’s work. Among some other differences, the most notable is the claim that “The text of Cervantes and that of Menard are verbally identical,

14 Borges, 65.
15 Borges, 66.
16 Borges, 65.
but the second is almost infinitely richer...It is a revelation to compare the Don Quixote of Menard with that of Cervantes. There are two things, specifically, that Borges offers in defense of this view. First, he presents a passage from Cervantes, and then the identical passage from Menard’s. It is worth quoting the section in its entirety:

‘Truth, whose mother is history, who is the rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, example and less to the present, and warning to the future.’

Written in the seventeenth century, written by the “ingenious layman” Cervantes, this enumeration is a mere rhetorical eulogy of history. Menard, on the other hand, writes:

‘Truth, whose mother is history, who is the rival of time, depository of deeds, witness of the past, example and less to the present, and warning to the future.’

History, mother of truth; the idea is astounding. Menard, a contemporary of William James, does not define history as an investigation of reality, but as its origin. Historical truth, for him, is not what took place; it is what we think took place. The final clauses – example and lesson to the present, and warning to the future – are shamelessly pragmatic.

Borges is claiming that Menard’s work has a different meaning than Cervantes’, despite having the very same words. The reason, we’re to infer, is that Menard’s is the work of a 20th-century Frenchman surrounded by a certain culture of mainstream thought that would be fundamentally different from what Cervantes, a 17th-century Spaniard, was surrounded by. If we accept that the two works have different meanings, I think we must also accept that they have different aesthetic properties. The aesthetic properties of a novel seem to depend upon, indeed supervene on, the meaning of the words in the novel. So, even though the words of Menard’s work are the same as Cervantes’, if the meanings are different, then they have different aesthetic properties.

Borges points out another fundamental difference between the two Quixotes: the contrast in writing style between Cervantes and Menard. Menard’s style he calls “archaic”; it suffers from “a certain affectation”, it is contrived, a show, an act. Cervantes, writing the same words, is using the dialect natural to him, and so it is genuine, smooth, unaffected. Here again we find different aesthetic properties being ascribed to works that are identical verbally, or to use Goodman’s words, notationally.

The problem that Borges’ conclusions present to Goodman’s thesis ought to be apparent. If Menard’s Quixote has different aesthetic properties than Cervantes’, then despite their being notationally identical, they cannot be the same work, because works that are the same will necessarily have the same aesthetic properties. And if this is right, then the consequences that Goodman draws regarding forgeries must be false, because if we can have notationally identical works that are nonetheless distinct works, then it seems that we can forge allographic works. In support of that claim, I must stress again that the reason Menard’s version is different than Cervantes’ is found in non-perceptual historical facts about his work that are

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17 Borges, 68.
18 Borges, 69.
Not true of Cervantes’ work. The reason his work is a distinct one is that he had certain intentions and was writing in a certain cultural context that differed markedly from Cervantes’ intentions and cultural context. Goodman’s claims about allographic works threaten to make such historical, non-perceptual facts of works irrelevant. But if Borges is right, then Goodman must be wrong. And if Goodman is wrong about notational identity, then his claim that allographic works cannot be forged falls apart, because it hinges on his claims about notational identity.

This is essentially Danto’s argument as presented by Janaway. Danto agrees with Borges about Menard, and draws two conclusions:

1) There can be two verbally identical texts which constitute distinct works of art.²⁰

2) Nothing counts as an artwork at all, or as the specific work we treat it as, except in relation to the history of its production and the complex institutions of the art world which surround it.²¹

The reasons for these conclusions are already implicit in what I’ve said. The first conclusion is just the generalization of Borges’ claim that Menard’s Quixote is different from Cervantes’. The second conclusion attempts to explain why Borges is right. Menard’s Quixote counts as a different work because it has a different history of production, and different art world institutions surrounding it. Janaway explains this point nicely. Imagine that we found out “that a painting attributed to Rembrandt could not have been by him”.²² It seems to be the case that our evaluation of the painting would have to change. Similarly, imagine that we find a pencil sketching and learn a decade later that it was actually done by Picasso. Again, we would change our evaluation of the sketching. The reason is Danto’s: we would have learned that the work in question had a different history of production and surrounding institutions than originally thought. Our identification and evaluation of works of art fundamentally depend on historical facts about the work.

Janaway says he is willing to go along with Danto on this point²³, but as we’ve noted, this flies in the face of Goodman’s claims about allographic works. That is, Goodman could agree with Danto about a painting. We only identify the sketching as the work it really is when we know it was by Picasso. Goodman can accept that because painting is an autographic work, and he has already said that the check of authenticity with such works must necessarily be a reference to the history of production. But Danto’s claim holds for all artworks including allographic ones, so he could say of a given novel that our identification of it would depend on similar historical facts. Goodman cannot agree with this, because novels, as allographic arts, are only identified by their notational systems. Identifying the given work in front of me as by Shakespeare only requires reference to its notational system and seeing whether it

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²⁰ Janaway paraphrases the conclusions that Danto endorses here.
²¹ Janaway paraphrases the conclusions that Danto endorses here.
²² Janaway.
²³ Janaway.
matches up with the notational system of a Shakespearean work. The history of production and surrounding institutions are irrelevant for Goodman. Danto and Borges seem to have shot a hole in this. Janaway, as I said, is willing to grant Danto’s point that two notationally identical works can be different works. But he still thinks we cannot forge allographic works. According to Janaway, Goodman has not established that point with his autographic/allographic distinction. Janaway attempts to save Goodman’s conclusions about forgery by buttressing the autographic/allographic distinction with something called “privileged interpretational instructions”. In essence, Janaway’s argument suggests that Menard’s work can be a distinct work, but if he were to attempt to pass it off as the original Don Quixote, he could not trick us, and his work would become Cervantes’.

Section 3 - Janaway
Janaway’s article is concerned with reconciling Danto and Goodman. As I’ve said, he thinks Danto is right with respect to Borges’ short story, namely, that it presents two distinct works that are nonetheless notationally identical. This seems to open the door to the possibility of forging an allographic work, since the distinction between the two Quixotes is not notational, but historical. This means that historical factors matter even for allographic works. Janaway says that “It is clear that two notationally equivalent things must have suitably divergent causal histories if they are to stand a chance of being distinct works”.

But forgeries of allographic works, Janaway insists, are impossible. He offers the idea of “privileged interpretational instructions” to show that this is the case, despite the truth that notationally identical works can be distinct works of art.

Imagine again that we have a painting that is perceptually indistinguishable from the Mona Lisa. For this to be a successful forgery, it must also be the case that we can be told “This is by Leonardo”. This is what Janaway calls a privileged interpretational instruction. In effect, it tells us that we ought to interpret the painting we are looking at as a painting by Leonardo. Our knowledge of the cultural context in which Leonardo was working, and of Leonardo himself, will then inform our interpretations and judgments of the painting. But the work is a forgery, because its causal history is significantly divergent from the original by Leonardo. However, the reason the forgery is successful is because we can be deceived into thinking the painting is Leonardo’s, precisely by being given this privileged interpretational instruction. Put another way, the Mona Lisa is forgeable because it is an autographic work. The indistinguishable copy is a forgery precisely because it has a different history of production than the original. But the reason the forgery is successful is because we can be deceived into thinking that the work is not a forgery, simply by being told that we ought to interpret this painting as the original by Leonardo. When we are told this, our cultural and historical knowledge is brought to bear on the painting before us and we judge it as a

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24 Janaway. Janaway offers a thought-experiment to defend the claim “suitably divergent causal histories”, in order to explain some intuitive ways of cashing that out.
Leonardo, even though it is not. So the forgery succeeds in tricking us.

The same cannot be said in the case of allographic works, according to Janaway. If we were to take Menard’s *Quixote* and tell some viewers to interpret it as Cervantes’ *Quixote*, then there seems to be no way in which we are truly being deceived. The works, as we’ve said, are notationally identical, though distinct because of their divergent causal histories. But as soon as we say of Menard’s work “Interpret this as by Cervantes”, then the causal history of Menard’s work drops out. Janaway says, “if we held Menard’s text, the instruction to constrain our reading by the idea that it has the same history as Cervantes’ work would obliterate the significance for interpretation of the different history Menard’s text has...He cannot be tricking us.”

Menard’s *Quixote* could not be a forgery because as soon as we are given the interpretational instruction to read it as though it were Cervantes’ original, Menard’s text becomes a functional instance of Cervantes’; it functions as the original, despite being a distinct work. We therefore cannot successfully forge an allographic work, because in telling someone our notationally identical work is by someone else, it becomes an instance of the original we tried to forge.

Janaway considers the fact that his claim about functions could be strange. The objection goes as follows: just because Menard’s text would begin to function as Cervantes’ does not mean that it just is Cervantes’, or another instance of it. It is still its own text. But Janaway thinks that such claims distinguishing “functioning as” from “is” only work some of the time, and that they do not work in this case. He suggests that

“To put forward a set of words that corresponds with all correct instances of Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, and to pronounce, in the context of the existing (however loose) institutions of literary interpretation that it is that work by that author, functions as a presentation of a copy of Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, and thereby is a presentation of a copy of Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*. If the causal history of these words is outlandish a la Menard, and the self-effacing attribution to Cervantes is ironical or insincere, that makes no difference. A creation which could have had a carefree independent career loses that opportunity once it declares in the right context that it wishes to be regarded as the original work. By contrast, in the drawing case, if the forgery goes forever undetected, we might want to say that the forged drawing ‘counts as’ or ‘functions as’ the Picasso – but here it does so merely deceptively...In some settings A’s functioning as B is compatible with A’s failing to be B, while in other settings A’s functioning as B is A’s being B, or being a genuine instance of B.”

In short, by trying to pass off Menard’s *Quixote* as Cervantes’, we make it the case that it will simply function for readers as Cervantes’ original, and the unique history of production of Menard’s version becomes irrelevant to interpretation. But with paintings, or autographic works more generally, while the forged *Mona Lisa* could function for me as the original (I could conceivably get the same aesthetic experience from the forgery as from the original), it would not thereby be the *Mona Lisa*, or a genuine instance of it. Even if I’m told to interpret it as Leonardo’s, this does not make its functioning as Leonardo’s the same as its being Leonardo’s, which is

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25 Janaway.

26 Janaway.
exactly what happens in the case of allographic works.

Janaway’s argument, then, is very simple. He holds that Danto’s reading of Borges is exactly right, and that identical works, whether autographic or allographic, can be distinct works because they have divergent causal histories. This would seem to suggest that we can forge works of either kind, and therefore that Goodman’s conclusions about forgery are false. Janaway thinks that Goodman’s claims were ultimately right, but insufficiently motivated. To get them off the ground and make them work, he adds the notion of “privileged interpretational instructions”. With such instruction about an allographic work, the divergent causal history that makes Menard’s Quixote a distinct work from Cervantes’ becomes irrelevant to my interpretation and experience of it. Thus, a forgery becomes impossible, because I cannot be deceived about the work in front of me. So Goodman was right, despite Danto’s also being right.

It is worth mentioning before moving on that Janaway invokes Jerry Fodor on this point. Fodor grants Danto’s claim about the histories of artworks, and calls these “actual histories”. But, we can also give artworks virtual histories. That is, we can tell stories, true or false, about their history of production. Moreover, Fodor says, “it is in large part virtual rather than actual etiology that counts aesthetically.”27 This is another way of reading Janaway’s argument. The virtual history of Menard’s Quixote, after we say “Interpret this as Cervantes’” (and thus try to create a forgery) takes over for the actual history, or makes the actual history drop out. As a result, Menard’s work just becomes Cervantes’, because the only thing separating the two is the difference in causal history, and the virtual history we’ve supplied by offering an interpretational instruction has made the actual causal history irrelevant to the interpretation of the work. Menard’s work becomes Cervantes’ as soon as we tell someone to interpret it as such. The virtual history matters aesthetically, not the actual history.

If Janaway is right, then Goodman’s conclusion has been saved. In the next section, I consider Janaway’s argument and what it misses.

Section 4 – The Possibility of Forgery

Our aesthetic experiences are intimately informed by our contextual knowledge of the artwork we are looking at. This is, of course, what Janaway’s argument hinges on. If we are provided with a certain set of contextual knowledge by being given an interpretational instruction, we will experience the work before us in a certain way, and this rules out the possibility of being deceived. To my mind, however, there is something more to the issue of causal history that we must keep in mind as we go through. Before going on, however, I would just remind the reader that we have already agreed that Menard’s work is indeed a distinct work from Cervantes’ Quixote. This will be the first premise of my arguments here.

Part of the rationale for this first premise is that the meaning of the words in Menard’s version is different than the meaning of the words in Cervantes’ version of the novel, thus making it the

27 Janaway.
case that the two works had different aesthetic properties. It is tremendously important, however, to our aesthetic experience that the two works have different meanings. If I am presented with Menard’s *Quixote* and told to interpret it as by Cervantes, I will have the experience of Cervantes’ novel. I could converse knowledgably with students from a Spanish literature class about Cervantes and the novel. In a certain sense, I haven’t been deceived about anything, because the work has functioned for me exactly as Cervantes’ own novel would have. But I have been deceived about something: the work in front of me, since it is by Menard, has a different meaning than the one I’ve taken from it. In a very important sense, I am entirely wrong about the work I’ve read. I’ve been duped into drawing certain conclusions about the work that are true for a different work, and false for the one I’ve read. It is something like a Gettier problem in epistemology. I have true beliefs, but not about the work in front of me. My true beliefs are true in virtue of another work, Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, making them true. My “justification” in this case is the work in front of me, which is Menard’s *Quixote*. But since Menard’s version has a different meaning than Cervantes’, my justification is defeated. The defeater for it is that the text I read doesn’t mean what I think it means. In epistemology, we conclude that though I had a justified true belief, I failed to have knowledge. In aesthetics, I propose that we conclude that though I have true beliefs about a work of art, they are not about the work of art in front of me. I have been epistemically and aesthetically lucky.

It might be objected that this is a mere reiteration of the claim that, because the two works are different in actual causal history, they must be different for us aesthetically. In short, I seem to be begging the question against Janaway. In direct response to this, I would say that I have said something more substantive here. I have granted that, in one sense, I cannot be deceived. The work I am reading can indeed function for me as Cervantes’ *Quixote*. But it is a case of epistemic luck. I am right about Cervantes and wrong about Menard, but I do not know that about myself. I have therefore been deceived in a different way. Another way to think of it is that my deception amounts to my being unaware of the diversity of artworks in the artworld. The artworld is the sum total of artworks that exist. Under the privileged interpretational instruction to read this text as Cervantes’ *Quixote*, I am robbed of the entirety of the artworld: I do not know that another work exists, also called *Don Quixote*, written by Pierre Menard. So while I can make the right aesthetic judgments about Cervantes’ novel, I am missing out on one important member of the artworld.

It is important to note here that what’s just been said, even if true, does not have any implications about forgery. The deception I have indicated is not the same as forgery. As a result, what we

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28 I think that our lack of knowledge that Menard’s *Quixote* exists is extremely important because, if such a work really did exist, namely, one identical to an extant work that was not a copy, but produced in the way Menard wrote his *Quixote*, this would be of extreme aesthetic and intellectual interest.
should conclude from the above considerations is that, even if Janaway is right, he has missed some interesting points about the Borges story. I would like now to present another argument against Janaway that may have something to say specifically about forgery.

Recall that Janaway’s argument involves the idea that one work can function as, or essentially be, another work. This happens when the two works are notationally identical, and we are given a certain interpretational instruction about them. The idea that something’s functioning as X makes it a case of X is basically the idea of multiple realizability. In the philosophy of mind, this is an important notion. There, something just is an instance of pain if it functions as an instance of pain. The point works because we fundamentally believe that mental states like pain are multiply realizable, that is, that different beings can be in pain even if they have completely different physio-chemical and mental structures from us. The question is whether we believe that artworks are multiply realizable in the same way.

In a very real sense, artworks are multiply realizable. We’ve already seen this in section 2. The fact that I can see the New York Philharmonic perform Beethoven’s 9th at the same time as someone in London can hear the London Symphony Orchestra perform Beethoven’s 9th shows that it is a work that is multiply realizable. Similarly, after the performance, we can both sit down with Shakespeare or Dickens. Again, the work is multiply realizable. It seems a simple matter of course, then, to say that Don Quixote is multiply realizable as well, and that Menard’s work, in functioning as Cervantes’, just is Cervantes’ work.

But there is a distinction to be made here. In all artworks that are multiply realizable, the causal history of each particular instance of the work is derivative of the original creative process. That is, the causal histories of my copy of Dickens and my friend in London’s copy are derivative of the original creative process of Dickens’ writing A Tale of Two Cities. As such, these causal histories of each particular instance are irrelevant aesthetically. That mine is published by Penguin Classics in a publishing house in New York and his is published by Signet Classics in a publishing house in London does not, and should not, matter to our aesthetic evaluation of Dickens’ work. But the same cannot be said of Menard’s Quixote. The causal history of that particular instance of Don Quixote is not derivative of Cervantes’ original creative process. To be sure, it refers to it insofar as Menard is trying to write the same words, but it is a new, unique creative process. We have a new branch of a genealogical tree, as it were. So, while I admit that Menard’s Quixote could function for a reader as Cervantes’ Quixote, it doesn’t thereby become just another instance of it. It remains its own work with its own important causal history.

We should consider, I think, what would happen if we were presented with Menard’s Quixote and told the truth, namely that it was by Menard. This would affect our aesthetic experience in a way that being told my copy of A Tale of Two Cities was printed in London, not New York, would not change my aesthetic experience of that novel. Or, put another way, it doesn’t matter aesthetically if Cervantes decided to go to sleep between chapters 5 and 6 of Don
Quixote, or if he had writer’s block. It
does matter aesthetically, to the very same
words on the page, if they were written by
someone else.

This argument, however, might
be thought to not say anything about
forgery either. It seems that I am still
begging the question against Janaway, or
that at best, I have just presented Danto’s
argument that the two works are distinct
works because of their distinct causal
histories. But the point of the argument
is that we cannot consider Menard’s work
one realization (of many) of Cervantes’
work, because its having its own, distinct,
causal history means it is a totally unique
thing. It stands on its own. It is like a
mental state unique to one being. If
someone were to start printing copies of
Menard’s Quixote, of course, it would be
multiply realizable in the obvious sense:
all the copies would be multiple instances
of Menard’s Quixote. But, while they
could be easily mistaken for copies of
Cervantes’ version, they would not be
multiple realizations of Cervantes’ novel.
The reason is that the original they are
copies of, Menard’s Quixote, is not itself a
multiple realization of Cervantes’ Quixote,
but a unique work, precisely because it
had its own, non-derivative creative
process.

Still, someone might say that
none of this entails the possibility of
forging an allographic work. Instead of
trying to reply to this insistence, I would
like to engage in a new strategy that I call
‘tactical retreat’. What I will do next is
try to make explicit a point that I think
everyone could agree that has been kept
implicit in the debate between Janaway
and Danto.

Section 5 – The Objects of Evaluation

Aesthetic judgments are complex
processes of evaluation. But one thing
we know about them is that we can make
such judgments about artworks or about
the artists that produced them. Imagine
a similar thing to forgery, plagiarism.
Suppose a student turns in an A paper,
but a week later, the professor discovers
that it was plagiarized. The student is
given an F on the paper. The F, of
course, is not a reflection on the quality
of the paper, but on the quality of the
student’s work. The paper remains an A
paper. We might be able to draw some
important lessons from this about Borges’
short story.

On this view, we would say that
both Quixotes are the same aesthetically,
but that Cervantes and Menard must be
evaluated in different ways. Cervantes,
who wrote his version in the normal way,
produced a great work of literature. He
is, we want to say, a great author.
Menard’s creation is much more unique
because of the peculiar way in which he
arrived at the very same words. We
want to say something very different about
him, even if the end product was the
same. This is a strategy of tactical retreat,
because on this view, I concede that the
two works are aesthetically the same –
that Janaway is right – but argue that
more needs to be said than what Janaway
has said. If I’m given Menard’s Quixote
under the interpretational instruction
“This is by Cervantes”, I can make
judgments about both the work and
Cervantes. Suppose I then find out that
the work is Menard’s. I still might want
to say the same things about the text, but
something different about the author.
Imagine another thought-experiment, the
classic one about infinite monkeys at
infinite typewriters for an infinite
amount of time who produce *Hamlet*.\textsuperscript{29} Presented with their instance of the work, I can make all the same aesthetic judgments as I would be able to make given a typical printing of Shakespeare's play. Following Danto, I can even say that the two works are different in some important respect. Of Shakespeare, however, I would say he is a genius. Of the monkeys, I would probably only say that they were very lucky.

**Conclusion**

What, then, have I really said in this paper? I take it that I have undertaken a Janaway-esque project. Janaway took a point Goodman made, and showed why it needed more support. I took a point Janaway made, and showed why there was much more to be said. While I disagree with Janaway about forgery, it remains the case that even if he is right, there are still some important lessons to be learned from Borges and Danto and the fact that the two *Quixotes* really are different artworks.

The question of forgery is a fruitful one for the philosophy of art because it extends into a number of different debates: questions about formalism and intentionalism, for instance, would certainly bear on the discussion of forgery, and vice versa. Questions about what it is for an artwork to be representational, and what this does for the value of an artwork are relevant here too, as well as the distinction between artistic value and artistic significance. Aestheticians would do well, then, to continue to consider the problems raised by Goodman and Danto,

\textsuperscript{29} Thanks to Jeremy Lupo for alerting me to the relevance of this thought-experiment to my paper.
Bibliographical References


