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PURPOSE OF THE JOURNAL

1. To present theoretical and research papers in scientific graphology according to traditional academic standards.
2. To create a forum for helping graphology gain a wider academic and professional audience in America.
3. To interface with the international professional graphological community.

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THE CLIFFORD IRVING FORGERY

Marc J. Seifer, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT: The Clifford Irving forgery of the handwriting of Howard Hughes was a superior example of an intricate counterfeit. Irving not only reproduced the billionaire's signature, but he also created entire handwritten letters that fooled leading handwriting experts. This paper shall review this case and present a clear analysis to describe how the questioned documents were established to be forgeries.

In January of 1971, *Life Magazine* published a letter from Howard Hughes. This missive, addressed to two of his top officials, Chester Davis and Bill Gay, was in reference to the ousting of a third executive: Robert Maheu. *Life* hired Alfred Kanfer to analyze the handwriting. Kanfer, who is well known for his work in detecting tell-tale neuromuscular spasms in the handwriting of cancer victims, stated that the writing was that of a man with the following characteristics:

Here is an intellect of quite a peculiar nature....He keeps a very small, highly uniform margin throughout, indicating that he is not concerned with the form and formalities, at least not beyond a certain minimum point of order and decency. He is anxious not to waste any time or effort on anything he does not think is essential for his main interests. As he runs from one end to the other of a long sheet of paper, so may he be running through his life, his work. He may perhaps be driven, rather than be running on his own....Hidden in this personality are some spots of sentimentality, warmth and perhaps weakness. One could think that from his drives resistance may mount around him. His...strength may already be overstrained. [3, p.27]

Just one year later, Clifford Irving, a well-known writer with the McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, signed a six-figure contract with McGraw-Hill, and exclusive serial rights with *Life* to write an authorized autobiography of Howard Hughes. Inspired by his own earlier book *Fake!* about a master art forger, Irving had actually perpetuated a hoax, as he had never contacted Howard Hughes, although he had described to the publishers his various supposed meetings with the reclusive billionaire.

Having taken a calculated risk, Irving knew that Hughes was an eccentric hermit now, he was older in frail health, and was virtually impossible to get a hold of. Actually, ever since his business manager Noah Dietrich left him in 1958, Hughes had become progressively more paranoid. Not one newsman had even laid eyes on the richest man in the world in over ten years! Therefore Irving was banking on a number of possibilities:

I do not understand why the problem of Wasken is not yet fully settled, and why this bad publicity seems to continue. It could hurt our company's valuable properties in Nevada, and also the entire state.

You told me that, if I called Governor Foxall and District Attorney George Franklin, it would put an end to this problem.

I made those calls, and I do not understand why this very damaging publicity should continue merely because the properly constituted board of directors of Hughes Tool Company decided, for reasons they considered just, to terminate all relationship with Wasken and Stoper.

I asked you to take whatever action is necessary to accomplish the objectives briefly outlined above.

I ask you now please to inform the members of the board of Hughes Tool Company of my desires and feelings in respect to this matter.

Figure 1. The first part of the "Dear Chester and Bill" letter (reduced from Life).

I ask you to do every-
thing in your power to
put an end to these prob-
lems, and further I ask
you to obtain immediately
a full accounting of any

and all funds and/or
property to which Mr.
Maben may have had

As I have said, this
matter has caused me
the very gravest concern,
and is damaging my
company and all the loyal
men and women associated
with me in the very
deepest and far-reaching
way.

My sincere regards;

Howard R. Hughes

Figure 2. A section from the second page of the "Dear Chester and Bill" letter (actual size from Life).

1. Hughes might not even hear about the book due to his isolated condition.
2. He might be too paranoid to do anything about the situation.
3. He might be indifferent to the book or actually delight in the fraud himself.
4. Hughes might even be dying or dead by the time the book came out.

Armed with the "Dear Chester & Bill" letter from *Life*, Irving was able to forge a number of letters to the executives of McGraw-Hill from "Howard Hughes." The writing was quite extensive, i.e., full page handwritten letters; also the forgery was top-notch. It not only fooled the editorial staff, but also the graphologist, Alfred Kanfer, and questioned-documents experts Russell and Paul Osborne. Having studied six forged letters, one of which was over 1000 words long (to Mr. McGraw), Alfred Kanfer stated:

The two handwriting specimens written by the same person...both show full identity in regard to the strongest and most outstanding characteristic, the very wide and almost disintegrating spacing between words....Even the irregularities and fluctuations of size and pressure in both writings are identical. The chances that another person could copy this handwriting...are less than one in a million. [2, p. 99]

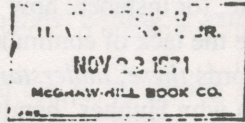
The Osborne brothers concurred, stating:

Both the specimen and questioned documents reveal great speed and fluency of writing. Yet the questioned documents accurately reflect in every detail the genuine forms and habit variations thereof which make up the basic handwriting identity of the author of the specimen documents. Moreover, in spite of the prodigious quantity of writing contained in the questioned documents, careful study has failed to reveal any features which raise the slightest question as to their common identity. [2, p. 133]

The authors of *Hoax* point out that the Osbornes were not allowed to work with originals, but were forced to work from their own photographs. However, this is no excuse, as an important rule of thumb in analyzing forgeries is always to work with originals (if they are in existence). One of the most important reasons for this is because of the pressure patterns. Forging the form of a writing is one thing; but to capture the automatized psychomotor impulses evidenced in the pressure is virtually impossible. Other reasons to use originals involve seemingly insignificant air strokes and minor slips of the pen that a photograph or xerox copy cannot pick up. Naturally, the original should remain pristine (and placed in a plastic holder). All use of ruler marks, and various attempts at superimpositions can be made with clean photocopies.

Figure 3 is a full page of one of Irving's fakes. As one can see, it is an excellent forgery. Each individual letter matches the letters in the "Dear Chester & Bill" letter, the spacing and slant is accurately matched as are the bizarre disconnections.

11-17-71



Mr. Harold McGraw
McGraw Hill
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. McGraw -

The facts placed before me, I find astonishing. I do not understand, in the first place, why it is not possible for your publishing house in possession of a legitimate contract between myself and Mr. Clifford Irving and between yourselves and Mr. Irving, for the publication of my autobiography, cannot deal firmly and forcefully with other publishers who which are asserting fraudulent claims to the rights which I have granted to Mr. Irving and Mr.

Figure 3. One of the Howard Hughes forgery letters composed by Clifford Irving (from Hoax).

Note, for instance, how Howard Hughes puts a break practically after every other letter. Notice the lack of continuity in the word *problem*, line 3, Figure 1, and in paragraph three, the words *these*, *understand*, *property*, *considered* and *relationship*. This brings us to the reason why Hughes' handwriting was relatively easy to copy. The forger could write one or two letters, rest, write another one or two, rest, and so on. As there is no fluency in Hughes' actual writing, the forger need not simulate one. Each letter could be carefully and easily placed next to the others. Although the Irving rendition gives the appearance that it was written quickly, he may have used a light box and taken a considerable amount of time to create this masterpiece of deception.

As the form is so similar, it must be reiterated that the handwriting examiner would have to rely on pressure patterns for total certainty.

Another important thing to consider in working with forgery cases is to get samples of the handwriting of people who might be suspects. Enclosed are two samples of Clifford Irving's handwriting. The first, Figure 4, appeared in the book *Hoax*. It looks nothing like Hughes' writing. However, the second, Figure 5, which appeared in the *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, looks very much like Hughes' writing. Note the lack of consistency to the writing trail, i.e., the numerous breaks between letters. Note, also, the changing sizes, and the print script quality and the letter *p*. All of these factors are similar to Hughes' real handwriting, Figure 6.

Dear Howard,

I hope I haven't screwed up by using this address but I consider it something of an emergency. I was distressed, naturally, that no contact was made on St. Croix — not just distressed that it left me totally out of touch but also worried on your account, having last seen you flat on your back. A word as to your good health would be reassuring.

Figure 4. Part of a fake letter to Howard Hughes by Irving (from *Hoax*).

As for major discrepancies between Irving's handwriting and Hughes' real writing, note in particular that the forgeries are generally more rounded. Hughes' writing is leaner and more sharply written.

Other graphic patterns that appear in Hughes' writing and not in the Irving forgery involve minute automatized motor patterns at the ends of letters, most notably in the *f*, *p* and ending *e* (see Figure 7). Word endings usually represent the least conscious aspects to a writing trail, and therefore they are often the most difficult part of a writing to forge. In the Hughes sample, note how his *f*'s end with a movement going up, whereas in the QD, the *f*'s end with a movement going down. In the letter *p*, the circle continues into a little curlicue in Hughes' writing, but not in the QD. Also, the ending *e*'s tends to turn to the left (as do some other letters) in the Hughes' sample, but they never do in the questioned document.

Figure 8 contains one of Howard Hughes' genuine signatures at the bottom. The middle signature is a forgery, and the top one is a sample provided by Clifford Irving when requested by the court. Note how similar the bottom two signatures are. This is an excellent forgery. However, after careful analysis, numerous differences emerge. Starting at the left, and based upon Cabanne's analysis, we see the following: The *o* ends to the left in the QD, but is attached to the *w* in the known HH signature; the *w* ends with a horizontal stroke in the QD as can be found in Irving's known handwriting, but not in the HH exemplar. Moving to the *gh* combination, Hughes tends to swing up in a light graceful stroke, coming under and around to the right to create the top of the *h*, but the QD arrives at the top of the *h* from the left, and is written with a heavier more direct stroke. The *h* is always (or almost always) connected to the *e*'s in the numerous known HH signatures, but is separated from the *es* in the QD. The ending stroke is long and tapered in the exemplar and is short and more abrupt in the QD. The QD is also written more slowly.

CONCLUSION

As a con-artist, Clifford Irving created a grand hoax, one that challenged not only the established order, but also that elusive reclusive, Howard Hughes. In fact, he drove Hughes out of a paranoid seclusion, at least to the extent of appearing over the telephone to state that the autobiography was a fraud. Irving's success, though short-lived, was due in a large measure to the peculiar handwriting style of the billionaire, as Hughes' writing was choppy, inconsistent and written in piecemeal fashion. Unwittingly, the publishing of Howard Hughes' handwriting in *Life Magazine* helped sow the seeds for one of the greatest hoaxes of all times.

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 give publish and and
 have hand cont tract
 According enclosed Dear
 Clifford Irving -

Figure 5. Known handwriting and signature of Clifford Irving used as an exhibit during the trial (from JFS).

reach agreement with
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 H. V. Hughes

Figure 6. Known sample of Howard Hughes' handwriting used in the trial (from JFS).

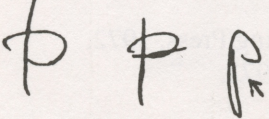
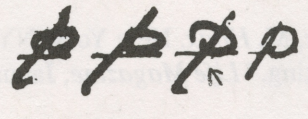
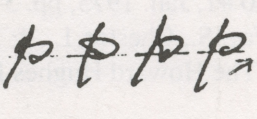
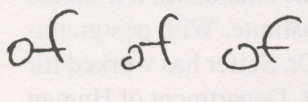
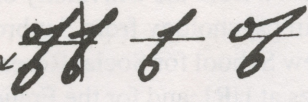
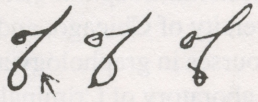
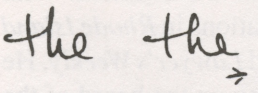
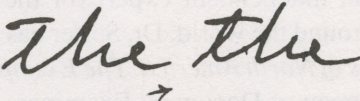
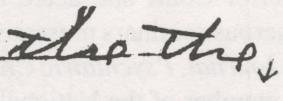
| CLIFFORD IRVING | QUESTIONED DOCUMENT | HOWARD HUGHES |
|---|---|--|
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Figure 7. Parts of Exhibits C, D and E. In particular, compare the word endings of the QD with HH's handwriting (from JFS).

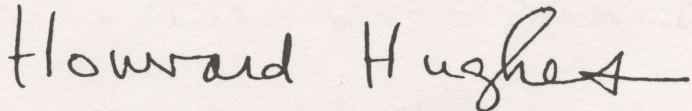
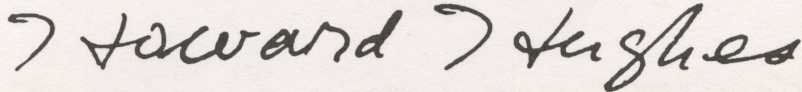
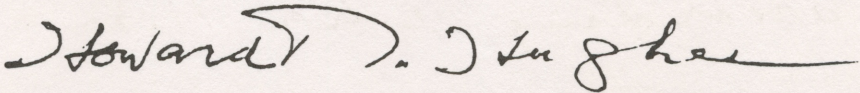
| | |
|-------|--|
| C. I. |  |
| Q. D. |  |
| H. H. |  |

Figure 8. The middle signature is the forgery. The top is a requested sample of CI's writing, whereas the bottom is a known sample of HH. Compare the ends of the w's, the he combination and the ending s (from JFS).

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BIOGRAPHY: Marc J. Seifer, editor of the *Journal of the American Society of Professional Graphologists*, has a B.A. from the University of Rhode Island, M.A. from the University of Chicago, and Ph.D. in psychology from Saybrook Institute. With postgraduate courses in graphology at the New School for Social Research, Dr. Seifer has worked for the Laboratory of Criminal Sciences at URI, and for the Fraud Unit, Department of Human Services, and also Attorney General's Office in Rhode Island. He has testified in Civil and Superior Court and acted as an independent expert for the Federal Government. With numerous seminars presented around the world, Dr. Seifer has publications in *Rhode Island Bar Journal*, *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, *The Exemplar* and *Lawyer's Weekly*. He is a member of the National Bureau of Document Examiners and also on the board of the American Board of Forensic Handwriting Analysts.

