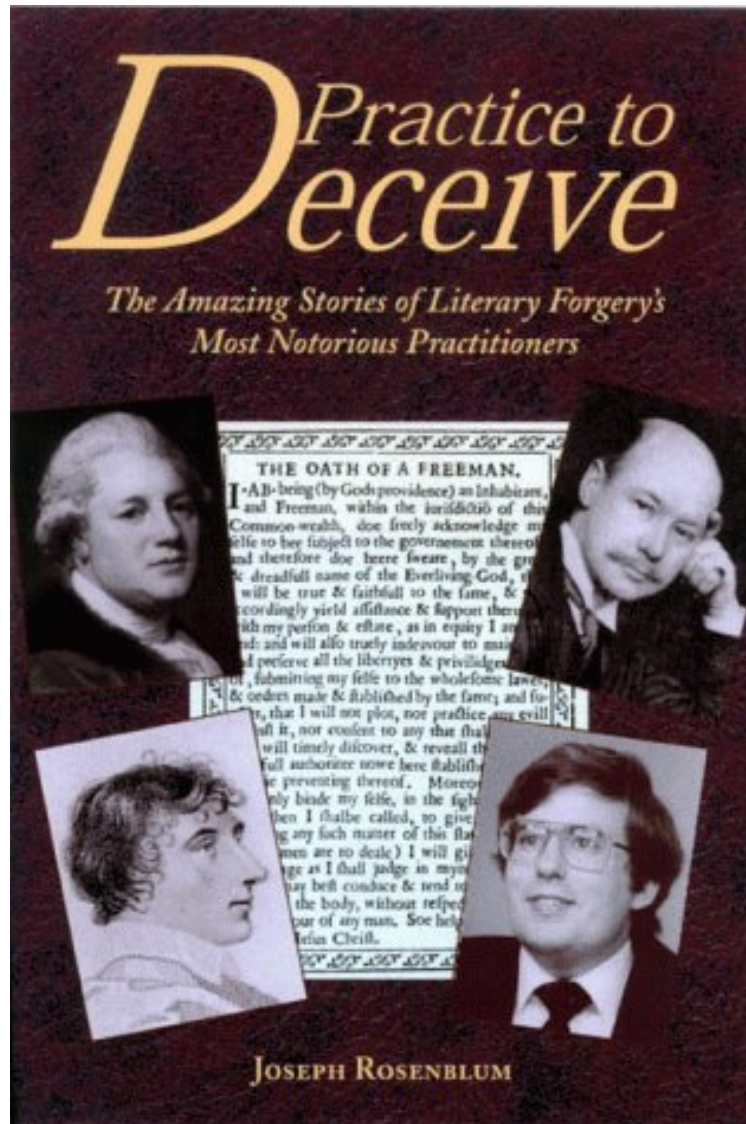


# Practice to Deceive: The Amazing Stories of Literary Forgery's Most Notorious Practitioners

Joseph Rosenblum

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**Joseph Rosenblum : Practice to Deceive: The Amazing Stories of Literary Forgery's Most Notorious Practitioners** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Practice to Deceive: The Amazing Stories of Literary Forgery's Most Notorious Practitioners:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Entertaining overview of literary forgery through the agesBy Hal JordanForgeries nearly always make for interesting reading. Joseph Rosenblum has chosen nine fairly well-known

cases of literary forgeries and does a good job of discussing them. More complete accounts of all of these cases are available, but anyone interested in a briefer overview, will find Rosenblum's book entertaining reading. I found the two most interesting chapters to be those devoted to Thomas J. Wise -- who got away with producing and selling an incredible number of nineteenth century pamphlets, supposedly written by eminent British authors -- and Mark William Hoffman, whose forgeries of early Mormon documents had a sad and violent outcome.<sup>5</sup> of 6 people found the following review helpful. Entertaining, extremely interesting, highly informative. By Midwest Book Review

Convoluted stories of master criminals whose devious and clever schemes hoodwinked people for centuries. Sounds like a good plot for a novel, but it also accurately describes those 'stranger than fiction' types of stories to be found in Rosenblum's book. Focusing on literary forgeries, he enlightens us to both the motives and the methods used by nine talented if devious men: George Psalmanzar, James Macpherson, Thomas Chatterton, Willim-Henry Ireland, John Payne Collier, George Gordon Byron, Vrain-Denis Lucas, Thomas James Wiese and Mark William Hoffman. While Rosenblum acknowledges that most of them worked for financial gain, the other complicated motives, fooling colleagues with whom they had grudges, manufacturing evidence to support a critical thesis, and just seeing if it could be done, make for interesting reading. I was especially fascinated with the first story in the book as George Psalmanzar manufactured 'information' about China and Formosa at t time when little actual information was available in Europe. As a Sinologist by training, I have been much fascinated by early travel accounts of Europeans in the far East whose worldviews limited them interpreting the evidence before them in very peculiar ways. like the British who compared the 'red Indian's' to the Irish in the 18th and 19th centuries. George must have seem just as valid to his readers and auditors as many of those actual travelers, even though he had never left England. Rosenblum's introduction places these rogues in the context of other famous forgers, "From Antiquity to 1700", and reminds us that the current, financially-motivated reasons for forgery are time-bound. We think of literature too much as a financial property to really understand historical views of this activity such as 1) that it takes a great deal of talent to forge Shakespearean dramas such as did Ireland and Collier or to forge something in Ancient Greek or Latin that will be convincing to educated scholars. 2) That for many eras and civilizations plagiarism and forgery were considered a kind of compliment and the literary text was not separated from history, philosophy and other 'belles lettres' until very recently in the history of civilization. While entertaining to read, then, Rosenblum's book is also extremely interesting and full of insights on the nature of authentication and the literary text. It should be required reading in library schools and graduate literary programs, and, I think, would be more useful and educational than many of the critical works that make up reading lists for MA's and Ph.D.s in our universities. Jan Bogstad, Reviewer

First edition. Nine amazing stories of literary forgery's most notorious practitioners. Introduction gives an overview of literary forgery from classic times to the modern. This work begins with the strange story of George Psalmanazar and continues through the literary hoaxes of Ireland, Chatterton, Wise, Lucas, Collier, MacPherson and Hofmann. Each story not only enlightens the reader about the cunning, skill and techniques of the chosen forgers but also explores their personalities and varied motives. Illustrated. Commemorative bookplate on front free endpaper. xx, 360 pages. cloth, dust jacket.. 8vo..