

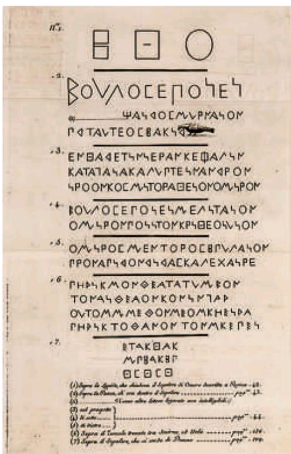


CLOSER INSPECTION

GOOD IS IN THE DETAILS

For the (faux) history books

Earle Havens stands in the midst of Johns Hopkins University's George Peabody Library Exhibition Hall in Baltimore trying to decide where to begin. After all, the curator of rare books and manuscripts at JHU's Sheridan Libraries, has 70 pieces to consider. The hall's exhibition, "Fakes, Lies, & Forgeries," features historical works that blur fact and fiction. Just bear in mind, says Havens, "all of this is fake." — *Kris Coronado*



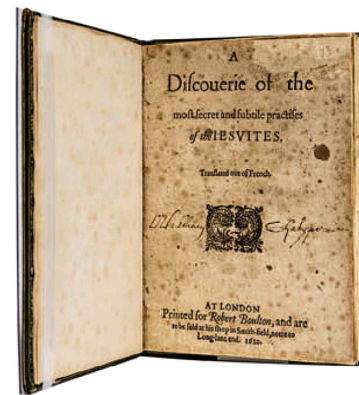
A REAL FIND?

An illustration in a **1773 Greek travel book**, written in Italian, purports to depict the inscription found on poet Homer's tomb, found in Greece. The author claims he excavated the tomb, finding Homer's remains sitting on a bench with a stylus and ink pot. The hoax was intended to end two scholarly debates over Homer at the time: if he was literate or even existed at all.



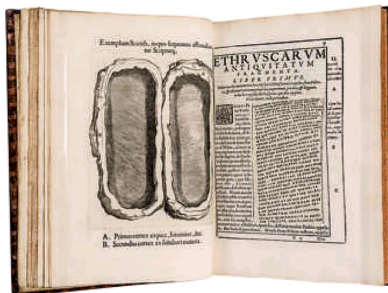
IMAGINED ALPHABET

Some authors detailed fictitious accounts of sites and sounds abroad in faux travelogues. This 1704 book on Formosa was written by George Psalmanazar (a pseudonym) and meant to detail the traditions of the people of Formosa (now Taiwan). The writer invented a **fake language**. "Linguists generally consider this to be the first constructed language in Western history," Havens says.



SHAKESPEARE, OF SORTS

The **signature** on the title page of a 17th-century anti-Catholic text clearly reads "William Shakespeare." But the autograph was by William Henry Ireland, a late-18th-century Shakespearean forger. Ireland also scribbled illegible notes in the pages of the book. "Forgers very often only want to give you only as much information as is needed to convince you that it's authentic," Havens says.



HIS BACKYARD 'DISCOVERY'

This circa 1637 book was written by Curzio Inghirami — "a minor aristocrat with a lot of time on his hands," Havens says. The Tuscan-born Inghirami claims the Etruscans (a people of ancient Italy) were a significant, if not prophetic, culture. Inghirami describes finding several "scariths" (a word he made up, meaning "capsules") on his family's estate. He said the capsules were filled with ancient manuscripts —

but they were written in an Etruscan alphabet he had developed based on earlier inscriptions.

The manuscripts made predictions of the future, including the coming of Christ. "He's causing the ancient Etruscans to predict the coming of Christ in order to demonstrate the Etruscans — even though they were pagan — were actually Roman Catholics and they just didn't know it," Havens says.

*** SMART TIP** See these items at the George Peabody Library Exhibition Hall (17 E. Mount Vernon Pl.; Baltimore) through Feb. 1. Free.