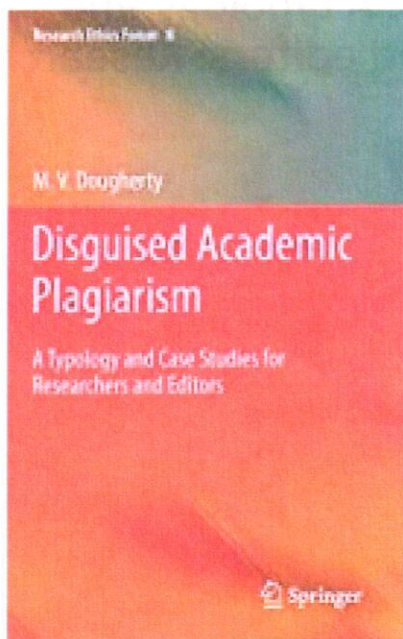


BOOK REVIEW



Disguised Academic Plagiarism. A typology and case studies for researchers and editors. Research ethics forum 8, by M.V. Dougherty, Switzerland, Springer, 2020, 158pp., \$59.99 (Hardcover), ISBN 978-3-030-46710-4



Most students, professors, authors, editors, and publishers have some experience with plagiarism. It is discussed at universities, often in student handbooks and in seminars on the responsible conduct of research and considered a serious violation of academic norms. Plagiarism is also one of the three pillars of research misconduct adopted by the U.S. government Office of Research Integrity (ORI). Research misconduct is defined by ORI as “fabrication, falsification or plagiarism in performing, reviewing or reporting research results.”

However, few among the people who are acquainted with plagiarism understand all the subtle ways it is found in the scholarly literature. In his book “Disguised Academic Plagiarism” M. V. Dougherty provides a superb analysis, with remarkable clarity and precision, of the principal forms of plagiarism that are widely hidden from the scholarly and publishing communities. Dougherty is a professor in the Department of

Philosophy at Ohio Dominican University. His analytical skills as a philosopher are turned into forensic skills in his case analyses that reveal the hidden and unsuspected forms of plagiarism.

The book is organized around six forms of plagiarism, which represent the author’s typology. They are translation plagiarism; compression plagiarism; dispersal plagiarism; magisterial plagiarism; exposition plagiarism; and template plagiarism. While they all represent the expropriation of words, ideas, phrases or large sections of writing by the plagiarizer without attribution to the original author, they accomplish it in different ways and deceive the readers in multiple ways. Each of these forms of plagiarism is distinct in the methods used to deceive readers. The book provides a rich set of case studies to illustrate the forms of plagiarism cited in the typology.

“Translation plagiarism” is the most obvious example in the typology for those unfamiliar with the scholarly literature of this field. It is committed by a person who translates a paper from its published language (first language) into another language (second language) and then extracts large sequences of text verbatim or near verbatim from the original text and uses the translated texts to write a new paper in the second language. This is unusually difficult to detect because translations, say from German to English, would escape detection by software designed to find exact text matches. Also, scholars unfamiliar with the foreign text, would have no awareness of the plagiarized material from a foreign source. Since English is the Lingua Franca of international

science as well as other scholarly fields, this transgression will usually appear when non-English language papers are plagiarized in an English-language publication.

“Dispersal plagiarism” consists of dividing up a text into different segments and using the extracts, largely unchanged and without attribution, in separate publications as the sole work of the plagiarizer. In these and other forms of plagiarism discussed by Dougherty, the plagiarizer seeks to hide the original source of the scholarship while pretending to be the author.

For many universities and suspicious reviewers, plagiarism detection methods, through application of text-matching software programs, can be helpful in discovering egregious cases. The use of these software programs can be problematic and must be interpreted correctly. For example, certain statements are recognized as “generally accepted factual knowledge.” Statements like “asbestos causes mesothelioma” appear in countless texts and cannot be viewed as plagiarism. That may seem obvious. The allegedly plagiarized text must be unusual, unique and highly unlikely to have been composed by two writers who had no contact with each other’s works. In other words, the chances of a coincidental replication of text must be extremely improbable to claim that plagiarism has occurred. No one would claim that a bibliographical citation was plagiarized, but it would be highly improbable that an entire bibliography was identical to that of a prior publication as a matter of coincidence.

Dougherty shows us the limitations of text-matching software to identify plagiarism. For example, failing to give credit to an author for a novel theoretical idea or a unique interpretation of a historical text would often escape text-matching software, unless the text were taken verbatim from the original source. The title of the book uses the term “disguised plagiarism” to emphasize the less obvious forms.

All writers use paraphrasing as a substitute for a direct quote. However, when paraphrasing a text does not cite the original work, it plagiarizes the author. Dougherty uses the term “compression plagiarism” as a disguised form when the plagiarizer appropriates short extracts from a published work, even paraphrased excerpts with no attribution to the original source. “... a plagiarist might take portions from the introduction, central chapters, and conclusions of a lengthy book in producing a short journal article” (p. 5). This type of plagiarism is difficult to detect because the extracts are not copied and pasted on to a new paper. A paragraph can be reduced to a sentence, or a long sentence into a shorter one. “Compression plagiarism” also appears when an author copies and rephrases a unique argument from a paper and introduces it as his own with the phrase “I shall argue that ...”

Another form of plagiarism, which the author refers to as “expositive plagiarism,” addresses the field of historiography. Dougherty’s knowledge of classical scholarship provides the authority behind this category. He distinguishes three types of classical analysis. 1) the analysis of canonical primary texts, i.e. the writings of Homer; 2) the exegesis of these texts by authoritative sources; 3) a new author producing a new work of exegesis. When the author (3) conflates his/her own interpretation with the canonical text or with the authoritative sources, he/she commits “expositive plagiarism.” He writes: “When the words of a canonical historical figure in philosophy (e.g. Kant, Hegel) or biology (e.g. Oken, Haila) are presented as the new insights by a present-day commentator, the present-day reader is misled and thereby disadvantaged in assessing their weight” (125). The reader may think he is reading the analysis of writer (3) rather than writer (1).

The cases illustrated in the book are unambiguously examples of plagiarism. The evidence is beyond anything a skeptic could deny. They illustrate the skill, investigatory acumen, and persistence it takes to reveal the evidence to an “ah-ha” moment. But what

are the incentives for reviewers, editors or publishers for engaging in this type of investigation? There is no professional award for unearthing plagiarism in scholarship. One is not about to get tenure for such investigations. Editors and publishers are not likely to allocate the time. Dougherty does note, however, that when confronted with the weight of evidence he presents in the book, journals have responded with either errata or a retraction.

In addition to his contribution to the typology for disguised plagiarism, Dougherty also shows the reader what a forensic standard is like for making the case. No one doubts that plagiarism corrupts the scholarly record. This book argues persuasively that “if retractions are limited to obvious plagiarism cases, then many unreliable plagiarizing articles will remain as part of the body of published research literature to the detriment of researchers” (44). The book should be required reading for courses on research integrity for humanist scholars. It is less relevant for scientists where disguised plagiarism takes other forms such as plagiarized data and the manipulation of photographs.

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