

Lindey, Alexander, Plagiarism and Originality (New York: Harper & Brothers Pub) 1952

Parallel-Hunting

p.302. Note 3.

For examples of parallels in literary research, see Harold Jenkins, "Benlowes and Milton," Modern Language Review, Cambridge, April, 1948; H. J. Oliver, "The Composition and Revisions of The Compleat Angler," Modern Language Review, July, 1947; Calvin S. Brown, Jr., "More Swinburne-D'Annunzio Parallels," Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, 1940; H. Arlin Turner, "Hawthorne's Literary Borrowings," Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, 1936; A. C. Bradley, A Commentary on Tennyson's "In Memoriam", New York: The Macmillan Company, 1907; Ernst Dick, Plagiats de Chateaubriand, University of Bonn, 1905 (a doctoral thesis); John Churton Collins, Illustrations of Tennyson, London: Chatto & Windus, 1902; and R. D. Haven, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

p.60 Whether the virtues of parallels outweigh the vices is open to debate. The fact remains that the vices are considerable.

1. Any method of comparison which lists and underscores similarities and suppresses or minimizes differences is necessarily misleading.

2. Parallels are too readily susceptible of manipulation. Superficial resemblances may be made to appear as of the essence.

3. Parallel-hunters do not, as a rule, set out to be truthful and impartial. They are hell-bent on proving a point.

4. Parallel-hunting is predicated on the use of lowest common denominators. Virtually all literature, even the most original, can be reduced to such terms, and thereby shown to be unoriginal. So viewed, Mark Twain's The Prince and the Pauper plagiarizes Dickens' David Copperfield. Both deal with England, both describe the slums of London, both see their hero exalted beyond his original station. To regard any two books in this light, however, is to ignore every factor that differentiates one man's thoughts, reactions and literary expression from another's.

5. Parallel columns operate piecemeal. They wrench phrases and passages out of context. A product of the imagination is indivisible. It depends on totality of effect. To remove details from their setting is to falsify them.