

Plagiarism or Common Practice?

Black, Hayton and Kovar

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## Task

At the request of the commission, I have looked at BLACK, Jeremy (ed). Britain in the Age of Walpole. Macmillan, 1984, Chapter 4. Walpole and Ireland, by David Hayton p. 95 and further and Kovář, Martin: Velká Británie v éře Roberta Walpola: k vývoji britského státu a britské společnosti v první polovině 18. století. Praha: ISV nakladatelství, 2004, kapitola: 6.2. „Blízké zahraničí“ II: Anglie a Irsko (1714—1742), p. 196f.

Black, Hayton and Kovar

I have compared the works by the authors for the purpose of determining the extent of the copying from either of the other authors by Prof. Kovar.

### **Paragraphs with the exact same information**

Starting on page 198 – Professor Kovar’s text is almost verbatim from the English text (97-98). Even the paragraphing is the same for the next several pages. This is not picking up some details from another author. This is very clear and extensive copying from the other man’s work.

### **Footnotes**

The footnotes follow the English with some additions for explanation for the Czech reader. However, this cannot be justified as not being plagiarism – the flow of information is exactly copied from the English original. Even if he had cited the work, he would have needed to use some broader explanation that this was a mere translation and not original research. The argument that two researchers in the same field would find the same information in the archives AND serve it in the exact same order is impossible to believe. Anyone who has seen Professor Hilsky teach Shakespeare and Jiri Josek teach the exact same play by Shakespeare knows that they have approached the work in different ways. Josek’s translations are set for being performed on stage. Martin Hilsky’s are much more for the academic audience with historical notes and commentaries. Just based on that, one could not expect a Czech to approach Irish history in the same way a person in Britain would. Rohrback’s approach to Henry James and Spinoza is another good example of an original approach that does not rely on another text’s entire structure down to the paragraphing. This does not require any special knowledge of Stuart England to judge. Nor does it require a historian in general. The text has been stolen as the whole cloth and

merely adjusted in minor places. This is what I saw in December in the reports from the students who originally brought up the issue – he starts with a general introduction and then borrows extensively from the other source. There is no attempt to admit the borrowing. The fact he takes the footnotes from the original author and does not mention that merely provides the clues to prove he has stolen the work.

### **Is it plagiarism?**

There is no way not to be convinced that he has plagiarized the work. To imply that this is normal in any academic setting is to defame history as a field or Charles University as an institution. Neither is acceptable. This must be denounced and rectified in some way. Sweeping it under the rug does not help the academic community in any way, shape or form. It is a scandal to face and resolve.

The fact is that even if we were to say this was science popularization and not science as such, he should have said this section was taken from Black's book. I cannot come up with any justification for how this even happened. The text had to have been read, copied in some form and translated almost verbatim including the footnotes. I cannot imagine a situation in which this would have been accidental, because he had to go back and add other information for his audience. This was also not the only case where he started with a general introduction and then took the ideas from Coward.

I think the metadata was absolutely clear on this case. In December, I looked at Coward's work and found extensive copying, just as the students had presented to the Academic Senate. These texts follow that same pattern of explanation followed by copying. This might work in a lecture hall, but it does not work when presented as your own work. I do not know Professor Kovar at all. I do not believe I have ever met him in person. However, this case does not require any

special knowledge of the people involved. It is a purely ethical issue and this is plagiarism. What is to be done about it is not within the scope of my authority and so I will finish with merely restating that no ethical codex anywhere that I ever studied or taught would allow this to pass without punishment of the offender. It is a clear violation of the ethical standards of the field of history and any institution that provides higher education.

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