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The History Of Tom Jones, A Foundling

In Four Volumes

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Chap. I. Shewing what is to be deemed Plagiarism in a modern Author,
and what is to be considered as lawful Prize.

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THE
HISTORY
OF A
FOUNDLING.

BOOK XII.

*Containing the same individual Time with
the former.*

CHAP. I.

Shewing what is to be deemed Plagiarism in a modern Author, and what is to be considered as lawful Prize.

THE learned Reader must have observed, that in the Course of this mighty Work, I have often translated Passages out of the best antient Authors, without quoting the Original, or without taking the least Notice of the Book from whence they were borrowed:

This Conduct in Writing is placed in a very proper Light by the ingenious Abbé. Bannier, in
his

his Preface to his Mythology, a Work of great Erudition, and of equal Judgment. "It will be easy," says he, "for the Reader to observe, that I have frequently had greater Regard to him, than to my own Reputation: For an Author certainly pays him a considerable Compliment, when, for his Sake, he suppresses learned Quotations that come in his Way, and which would have cost him but the bare Trouble of transcribing."

To fill up a Work with these Scraps may indeed be considered as a downright Cheat on the learned World, who are by such Means imposed upon to buy a second time in Fragments and by Retail what they have already in Gros, if not in their Memories, upon their Shelves; and it is still more cruel upon the Illiterate, who are drawn in to pay for what is of no manner of Use to them. A Writer who intermixes great Quantity of *Greek* and *Latin* with his Works, deals by the Ladies and fine Gentlemen in the same poultry Manner with which they are treated by the Auctioneers, who often endeavour so to confound and mix up their Lots, that, in order to purchase the Commodity you want, you are obliged at the same Time to purchase that which will do you no Service.

And yet as there is no Conduct so fair and disinterested, but that it may be misunderstood by Ignorance, and misrepresented by Malice, I have been sometimes tempted to preserve my own Reputation, at the Expence of my Reader, and to transcribe the Original, or at least to quote Chapter and Verse, whenever I have made Use either of the Thought or Expression of another. I am indeed in some Doubt that I have often suffered
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by the contrary Method; and that by suppressing the original Author's Name, I have been rather suspected of Plagiarism, than reputed to act from the amiable Motive above assigned by that justly celebrated *Frenchman*.

Now to obviate all such Imputations for the future, I do here confess and justify the Fact. The Antients may be considered as a rich Common, where every Person who hath the smallest Tenement in *Parnassus* hath a free Right to fatten his Muse. Or, to place it in a clearer Light, we Moderns are to the Antients what the Poor are to the Rich. By the Poor here I mean, that large and venerable Body which, in *English*, we call The Mob. Now, whoever hath had the Honour to be admitted to any Degree of Intimacy with this Mob, must well know that it is one of their established Maxims, to plunder and pilage their rich Neighbours without any Reluctance; and that this is held to be neither Sin nor Shame among them. And so constantly do they abide and act by this Maxim, that in every Parish almost in the Kingdom, there is a Kind of Confederacy ever carrying on against a certain Person of Opulence called the Squire, whose Property is considered as Free-Booty by all his poor Neighbours; who, as they conclude that there is no manner of Guilt in such Depredations, look upon it as a Point of Honour and moral Obligation to conceal, and to preserve each other from Punishment on all such Occasions.

In like Manner are the Ancients, such as *Homer*, *Virgil*, *Horace*, *Cicero*, and the rest, to be esteemed among us Writers, as so many wealthy Squires, from whom we, the Poor of *Parnassus*, claim an immemorial Custom of taking whatever

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we can come at. This Liberty I demand, and this I am as ready to allow again to my poor Neighbours in their Turn. All I profess, and all I require of my Brethren, is to maintain the same strict Honesty among ourselves, which the Mob shew to one another. To steal from one another, is indeed highly criminal and indecent; for this may be strictly stiled defrauding the Poor (sometimes perhaps those who are poorer than ourselves) or, to see it under the most opprobrious Colours, robbing the Spital.

Since therefore upon the strictest Examination, my own Conscience cannot lay any such pitiful Theft to my Charge, I am contented to plead guilty to the former Accusation; nor shall I ever scruple to take to myself any Passage which I shall find in an antient Author to my Purpose, without setting down the Name of the Author from whence it was taken. Nay, I absolutely claim a Property in all such Sentiments the Moment they are transcribed into my Writings, and I expect all Readers henceforwards to regard them as purely and entirely my own. This Claim however I desire to be allowed me only on Condition, that I preserve strict Honesty towards my poor Brethren, from whom if ever I borrow any of that little of which they are possessed, I shall never fail to put their Mark upon it, that it may be at all Times ready to be restored to the right Owner.

The Omission of this was highly blameable in one Mr. *Moore*, who having formerly borrowed some Lines of *Pope* and Company, took the Liberty to transcribe six of them into his Play of the *Rival Modes*. Mr. *Pope* however very luckily found them in the said Play, and laying violent Hands