

plagiarism —or recycling the

MA1 course study pack

we have not all intended to write this essay, though it is composed of our own words and ideas.

We can not oppose the ecstatic recycling that leaves us jumbled together in a relatively small space,

a crowd in descent, entering into conflict with the web based plagiarism machine: plagiarism,

a misrepresentation that urns sameness, and turns on the misallocation of credit is its *raison d'être*; without

plagiarism this essay could not exist. woven from separate conclusions, our web is in place to

trap the binary logic of a tool that seeks to defend the authentic author from becoming ventriloquist,

though we know very well it may be left "and ... and ... and ..." in the process. It is, after all, an insti-

tutional insect, delineated, aroused, and employed by this and many universities. And though

it purports to establish the originals, the real power of the web based plagiarism machine — its practical

function — is to uproot students who sign their own name to someone else's work, to reveal those who

commit Literary kidnapping, so it is here that we find ourselves, in a sedentary position, on the

wrong side of Greater Logic, our words loaded and leveled at the thought police.

But first things first, permit us to back up a bit for the kick-off and investigate the crime.

plagiarism: offender of original thought. offender of what, then? original thought like

original sin? The "purity" of middle ages 'theological' meaning derived from God; The
transmission of perfect knowledge known first By its omnipotent Creator; his word recycled and represented
passing from ear to ear and mind to mind UNTIL EVENTUALLY, with the mutation of reproduction and contextual
change, it is metamorphosed in to the great mythical book of history. We know what has happened to
religion, but the unraveling of tradi-
tion means its further evolution. In its mythic structure, the events of a
world before bailouts and stock options shrivel up and become ab-
sorbed in the text. So too, in the absence of an origin, eighteenth century philosophy chose to
question man's capacity for originality. standing in the shadow of the Enlightenment, it is clear that
Mind can only know OF THINGS we capture in the slow, coarse net of our senses and We submit that Everything
we think now is either a replica or variant or assemblage of something thought before. Yet the repetition-
compulsion that "led" all of us to Make thought AVAILABLE THROUGH THE PRINTED PAGE is not plagiarism. may be
the elusive victim of this particular crime is in fact an organizing principle, a construction of language;
original work as a unique code that can be identified and arrested by the web based plagiarism machine.

By this Definition, Borges' famous description of a contemporary French writer rewriting

the Quixote word for word into entirely original frag-

ments is precisely the description of a fiasco. Nevertheless, his invention is a "useful" tool For our purposes.

On the one hand it nourishes a seed of thought, Embedded by the Bible, which is this: when

we write (and read and write) Everything counts Because historical factors limit the available options.

And If it is more than a mere stringing of Words that makes up the code — if the original idea is the captive

of its context — then the text instantaneously escapes its Author-God as its meanings blend and clash with

a world that exists anew every mo-

ment. To follow this logic to its inevitable conclusion, plagiarism is not really A possible crime.

But logic is bound by its situation, and this notion is not simply alien but antithetical to the

web based plagiarism machine. His story would never have an accusation leveled against it (even were this

eminent scholar subject as We are to lexicostatistical analysis) because by relating and not committing

the act of reproducing Cervantes' text, Borges inscribes a stamp of individuality. so,

On the other hand, this is an invention which shows us a reflection. In the distance Borges

puts between himself (as Author and illusory critic) and his fictive writer; in the space

between the work within the work; in the gap from its structural persistence and conceptual

disruption of order, we occupy a position:

with one hand, we conduct the text: that multi-dimensional space of "mental

culture" with hazy coast lines which ebb and fade toward the ever-receding peripheries of the universe.

The other — an index finger raised in warning — grasps the center, increasing its gravitational

force.

As new mechanisms for the dissemination of knowledge are woven into the old, our

writing (literary identity) is hurled towards mys-

terious uncharted regions. And further, the same tools which are made desirable for COLLECTING INFORMATION become

Things OF fear; tools that threaten to open the door to external enemies or even worse, Literary dilettantes.

In the portion of Our past when supervision and justice WERE the responsibility of God, those oldest surviving

books might contain A malediction to safeguard them from people who pillage. our purged thoughts

are also inscribed for their defense, But There has been a shift in the gravitational system. the Technological

development of book production created a market requiring defense. and Thus, by the middle

of the eighteenth century the malediction transformed into ©. this process of transformation

required sovereign power, cir-

cumscribed by its borders, bent on generating forces and ordering them. now that the web

detrterritorializes geographical borders by lines of flight with multiple entryways (every one a terminal) the

surveillances and statistical assessments of the web based plagiarism machine are sold to us as the only

strategies able to maintain the market value of original thought In *The Ivory Tower*.

it is from within these rules that we speak.

In occupying a fear created by the marketplace, the University holds the machinery of power For in-

dividualizing and specifying bodies of students, but its force is strong and the risk is a

final, implosive, hugely desirable collapse. of course, the economic **Commitment**

necessary to hold up the final product of student LEARNING to literary excavation indicates a concern to uphold

the "value" of that institutions' marks. But This concern is MISPLACED — coming from the fashion for

classifying LEARNING in terms of external features instead of internal relations — and in fact in conflict with education.

(marks "frame" the experience of LEARNING. But The experience alone is what matters.) so we stare on

anxi-

ously as students in their pack form escape the grasp of The professorial authority by unknown

networks of automata, indeed, ^{WADDLING SO} far into their own technified world that only mechanisms

of that world have the reach to drag them back. most of the time

the majority of people live by borrowed ideas and upon tradi-

tional accumulations and we are comforted by this sameness. **A** society of students who

while plugged into an immense outside, forgets the expectations of the professor places the established

professorial authority in jeopardy, which is to say, the perception of the omnipresent web-based Plagiarist

perhaps displaces a fear of change. After all, the imitator creates the model for a generation that has

found rather surprising forms in recycled language, music and images. by comparison, the

web-based plagiarism machine merely collects the dust of statements that have become inert once more.

until, that is, the code is breached by a copy-copyist and language that had been

left high and dry is borne as in a current upon the sea. because, you see, the mys-

terious power of the web-based plagiarism machine is of those students compelled to submit to its

"hierarchical relaying", as if words were ever going to constitute a real threat. its energy channels from

the Plagiarists, degenerated into usurpers of author-

ity, and its logic is destroyed in the flames of that gesture. It has taken the accumulation of student

writing to describe a de-

structive virulence, to eliminate every effect that might conceivably be borrowed it has consumed

that original work.

The web based plagiarism machine opens its mouth wide and, with these words ready to hand,

We hope to fill it with something nourishing. We know that, with every text carried off by forces

which erode, the less freedom it will permit. But this is corrupt: We

have used certain remarks in contexts for which they may not have been intended; "constructed" ideas they

do not share. We are no longer ourselves. between the idea and its realization, thought becomes aware of its

fragmentary character — breaks up, recrystallizes, frag-

ments again — but the web based plagiarism machine has no consciousness of this interplay:

its rationality remains irrational, and diligently serving the dominant interest. It might well decide that

what we have created is entirely below grade: a monstrosity. Or else it will not, and This will

be the scandal.