

TWOL: The Well of Loneliness

paula roush

banished plagiarised novel book sexology
inversion vs gender performance installation

constrained edition
2014

For more information about the novel and the circumstances surrounding its original publication and subsequent banning by the English courts (which included an order to the publisher to destroy remaining copies), see Wikipedia.

The first issue of the first edition consisted of only 5 copies, which were sent out for review. There is no known surviving copy.



stephen gordon super invert, velvet, fibreglass and plywood, 148 x 64 x 60 cm

pictures may not reflect exact colour
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AUTHOR'S NOTE All the characters in this book are purely imaginary, and if the author has used names that may suggest a reference to living persons, she has done so inadvertently. A motor ambulance unit of British women drivers did very fine service upon the Allied Front in France during the later months of the war, but although the unit mentioned in this book, of which Stephen Gordon becomes a member, operates in much the same area, it has never had any existence save in the author's imagination.

**All characters appearing
in this work are fictitious.
Any resemblance to real
persons, living or dead, is
purely coincidental.**

Generic version of an all persons fictitious disclaimer title card.

There was a time when artists placed an all persons fictitious disclaimer after the Introduction and before chapter One. The author's note was placed there in order to underscore what the artist had to say about the truth status of their creation. A reminder that "Any Resemblance to Persons Living or Dead" poses in Art the Challenge of Authenticity.

Clearly, the "coincidence" and "fictitious" disclaimers are in some cases adequate summaries of the truth status of the works to which they are appended. However, plagiarised works have given or can give more complex and dramatic indications of their truth status than the poles of "coincidental resemblance" and "the simple truth."

There was a time when there was a policy of ZERO TOLERANCE for plagiarism. In order to prevent artists from using words from other sources such as another artist's work. Or to include biographical elements such the facts of another's life. Today we must ask. Why is some plagiarism art, and other plagiarism is a crime? What does it mean to take someone else's identity and write her story as your own? What is the relationship between Kathy Acker's literary experiments and the original Don Quixote? How do we decide what is intellectual property; how do we know when to cite someone else's words or ideas?

E633 Writing and Ownership takes an historical view of patterns of plagiarism, notions of intellectual property, and conventions of autho-

rial attribution and borrowings since the passage of the first copyright statute to the new Access to Knowledge Movement. Moving chronologically from *The Well of Loneliness* and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* to Cunningham's *The Hours*, Bechdel's *Fun Home*, and Hollinghurst's *The Stranger's Child*. The answer to the question is that plagiarism of a life is not at issue any longer.

Rather, the question becomes: When an artist affixes her name to an auto-biographical novel, is she claiming ownership of that life? What if the life and the words are demonstrably not hers, that is, wholly borrowed from someone else? The artist walks this precipice knowingly. She intends to disconcert her audience and prompt worries about the relationship between persona and artist. She is also well aware of what today's readers are apt to do when confused by a text—turn for help and clarification to an Internet search engine.

When the artist excerpts and relineates passages from a well-known novel, this is a highly self-conscious act of recontextualization that relies on its readers' cultural literacy and technological competency for maximal effect. Careful control is exercised over a source text while remaining aware of its sociohistorical and literary associations. The devices used to create a fictional character are laid bare. In the new millennium, novels like these have multiplied. Instead of striving to compose well-crafted verse that conveys their unique insights, emotions, and experiences, many artists have resorted to redirecting



all passion spent (detail), plaster cast of vintage sony ericsson on iphone 5 with construction workers
rubber cover on chocolate foil, 25,5 x 20 x 2 cm

language: appropriating others' words, redacting them, and presenting them as their own.

They write—if one can call it writing—what look like lyrics and long poems yet, when compared to canonical verse from Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784) to Louise Glück's *The Wild Iris* (1992), appear to pursue different ends. They limit the range of their vocabulary and the variability of their stylistic level, making it highly unlikely that they will be able to treat a topic by putting “the best words in their best order” (Coleridge 46). Unless they happen to ventriloquize or plagiarize a particularly talented or eloquent source, they rarely provide audiences with opportunities to admire “the current language heightened, to any degree heightened and unlike itself” (Hopkins 89). Instead, they invite readers to think about the relationship among authorship, medium, genre, context, and meaning. They reward, even require, seeking out and scrutinizing other texts. Above all, they tend to downplay self-expression in favor of documentation, especially of the demotic, vernacular, and popular.

What explains the current popularity of the poetics of redirected language? Although these writers often defy common post-Romantic expectations about the nature and the function of the lyric, I will suggest that their fundamental shared motivation is not avant-garde provocation. Rather, they tell us something profound about psychology and sociality in the new millennium. Even in fantasy it might no longer

That evening Sidonia said thoughtfully:

'Frances, I've found a new friend.'

Frances looked startled.

'Already, Sidonia?'

'Yes, it was love at first sight.'

'Well, who is it?' inquired Frances, trying to speak brightly, but feeling a little resentful.

'You'll never guess.'

'I'm not going to try. Where and when did you meet them?'

'In the Piazza Signoria.'

'This afternoon?'

Sidonia nodded.

'A male or female?' asked Frances.

'A male.'

'Very old; I expect she's really older than she seems. She has something a little dour about her, a little gloom. She makes me think of the queerest thing I ever saw—sudden death. Yet she's tender, too, she's terribly tender, her tenderness makes you afraid. And, above all, Frances, she's the symbol of home; of home that's been fought for and died for.'

Frances

'Doesn't that sound quite mad. Supposing you try to explain this creature? I don't think I like her.'

'Frances,' said Sidonia gravely.

Florence! Of course, an entrancing city—still, one must be moderate in all things.

'But Sidonia's never been moderate in her life,' Frances argued with herself as the days slipped by.

But this reflection could not alter the fact that Sidonia was doing no work. In vain did Frances remind her of the scholarship, she merely shrugged her shoulders and smiled.

a saturday life, book, plaster casts of artist's thumb and mid fingers, rope, 26x 20 x 5 cm (collaboration with anna odrich)

be tenable to separate our sense of ourselves from the information that we take in—or the manner in which we do so.



Le Temple de l'Amitié, velvet and plaster, 21x 17x 4 cm

EXHIBITION

This exhibition has been made possible by the provision of insurance through the Government Indemnity Scheme. I would like to thank H.M. Government for providing government indemnity and the Department for Culture Media and Sports and the Arts Council England for arranging the indemnity. Photography is not allowed in the exhibition. Let us know what you think. Claire Marie's appropriation of Marie Claire is a reversal. One of the lessons she learnt during her post-graduate degree in fine art was to adapt a stratagem of dichotomy, ie making dramatic shifts of subject matter, style and facture from one group of works to the next. A deliberate volte-face.