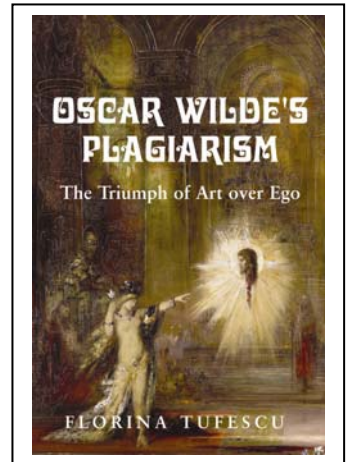


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Oscar Wilde's Plagiarism

The Triumph of Art over Ego

Florina Tufescu, University of Exeter



'An immensely enjoyable read'

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Why did a genius like Oscar Wilde rely on plagiarism from the beginning to the end of his career? Why did Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Baudelaire or Walter Pater do this as well? And how should teachers, critics and editors deal with the evidence of plagiarism at the heart of the canon? This book offers

- A compact history of the meanings and uses of plagiarism from antiquity to the present
- An interpretation of Oscar Wilde's plagiarism and of its impact on Joyce, Borges, Gide et al
- The revelation of a plagiaristic, counter-romantic tradition from Poe to Ackroyd

Oscar Wilde's plagiarism practices across genres are seen as part of a neo-classical tradition. His allegory of plagiarism in *An Ideal Husband* is compared to those created by fellow playwrights, including Ibsen and G. B. Shaw. Wilde's polemical imitation of Shakespeare's cut-and-paste method in *The Portrait of Mr. W.H.* inspires Joyce to experiment with the erasure of quotation marks in *Ulysses*. The blatant collage of Wilde's poetry anticipates T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, just as it recalls Manet's paintings, which provocatively assert artistic status by drawing attention to their flatness. The mosaic-like structure of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is akin to that of other anti-individualist masterpieces, notably Goethe's *Faust* and D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel*. The extent of sophisticated plagiarism in the canonical works and the impressive list of its apologists from Ackroyd to Zola indicate the need for new models of authorship and intellectual property, models that would benefit scholarly and artistic creativity and solve the paradox of plagiarism as simultaneously one of the most serious and most common of literary crimes.

November 2007 244 pages 978 0 7165 2904 0 cloth ~~€45.00~~€36.00 / ~~£30.00~~£24.00 / ~~\$55.00~~\$44.00

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