Theses and Dissertations (All)

7-17-2015

Aesthetic Plagiarism and its Metaphors in the Writings of Poe, Melville, and Wilde

Sandra M. Leonard
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Follow this and additional works at: http://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd

AESTHETIC PLAGIARISM AND ITS METAPHORS IN THE WRITINGS OF POE,

MELVILLE, AND WILDE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Sandra M. Leonard

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

August 2015

Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of English

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Sandra M. Leonard

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

_____   _____
                                     Christopher Kuipers, Ph.D.
                                     Associate Professor of English, Chair

_____   _____
                                     Kenneth Sherwood, Ph.D.
                                     Associate Professor of English

_____   _____
                                     David B. Downing, Ph.D.
                                     Professor of English

_____   _____
                                     James M. Cahalan, Ph.D.
                                     Professor Emeritus of English

ACCEPTED

_____   _____
Randy L. Martin, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: Aesthetic Plagiarism and its Metaphors in the Writings of Poe, Melville, and Wilde

Author: Sandra M. Leonard

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Christopher Kuipers

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Kenneth Sherwood
Dr. David B. Downing
Dr. James M. Cahalan

In this dissertation, I address the tension in identifying plagiarism in the texts of canonical authors. Because plagiarism is a compositional act of unattributed repetition as well as a censure, there is both something fully appropriate, and something crucially inaccurate, in calling what respected authors such as Melville and Wilde do "plagiarism." I argue that this problem can be resolved by understanding some instances of plagiarism as evoking conceptual metaphors as an aesthetically motivated strategy, and, in so doing, reinforce themes of the text in instances of what I will term "aesthetic plagiarism."

My central argument is that the conceptual metaphors authors use when committing plagiarism can exert an aesthetic influence on the text by reinforcing themes within the narrative. The aesthetic effects of plagiarism can emerge from its arrangement within the text and in its interaction with historical context. I demonstrate that understanding these underlying conceptual metaphors, which evoke metaphors more complex than today's conventional understanding of plagiarism as stealing, provide an enriched interpretation, one that uncovers larger literary strategies and explains the puzzling presence of plagiarism in otherwise well-respected literary texts. In developing this idea of "aesthetic plagiarism," I investigate the work of three well-respected authors in the Western canon—Poe, Melville, and Wilde—and uncover what conceptual metaphors govern their use of plagiarism as the topic of each of my chapters.

Furthermore, I discuss how each author uses and at times clashes with prevailing conceptual metaphors of authorship, originality, and intellectual property within his culture.

Finally, I implore that scholars understand plagiarism's whole definition in any author's historical context, including its pejorative and ethical components that, as I show, contribute to the cognitive metaphors of composition. Unlike so many critics who argue that a new word, clean of historical connection, is needed, I call for the aesthetic condemnation to be lifted from the word "plagiarism."