



Literary Half-Lives: Doris Lessing, Clancy Sigal, and Roman à Clef

Roberta Rubenstein

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It is a commonplace that writers draw on their personal experiences in myriad ways. However, it is decidedly uncommon for writers to reciprocally transform versions of their relationship with each other into fiction. While Doris Lessing was composing *The Golden Notebook* during the late 1950s, she was intimately involved with Clancy Sigal, then an aspiring American writer, in a relationship that decisively influenced the literary methods of both writers. Elements of the now-classic *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and Lessing's *Play with a Tiger* (1962) have direct sources in her relationship with Sigal. In turn, Clancy Sigal fictionalized Lessing, himself, and others in *Zone of the Interior* (1976) and *The Secret Defector* (1992) as well as in a number of unpublished pieces examined for the first time by Rubenstein. Focusing closely on multiple literary transformations of autobiographical materials, as reflected in the oeuvres of these two writers, Rubenstein also offers compelling insights into the ethical implications of disguised autobiography and *roman à clef*.

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