

# Acker, Kathy (1948-1997) Encyclopedia Article

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In a process she described as "piracy," Kathy Acker appropriated the plots and titles of works such as *Treasure Island*, *Great Expectations*, and *Don Quixote* and rewrote them in her own novels to reflect a variety of feminist, political, and erotic concerns. Critics and readers praised these techniques, but after she took a sex scene from a Harold Robbins novel and reworked it into a political satire, Robbins threatened to sue her publisher. When her publisher refused to support her, Acker was forced to make a humiliating public apology. Although her work is marked by an insistence that individual identity is both socially constructed and inherently fragmented, Acker herself became perhaps the most recognizable member of the literary avant-garde since William S. Burroughs, whose work she deeply admired.

### Further Reading:

Friedman, Ellen G. "A Conversation with Kathy Acker." *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1989, 12-22.