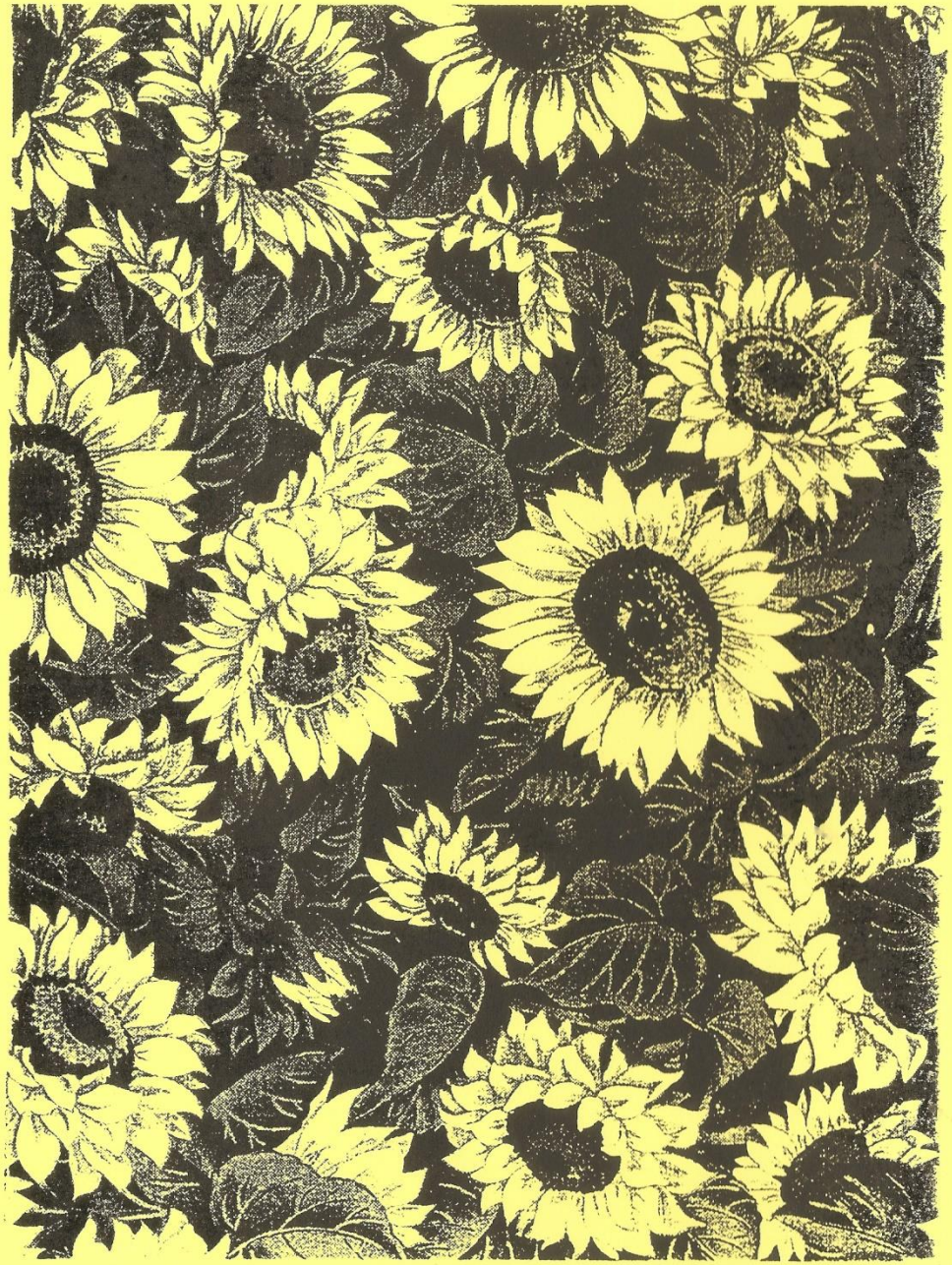
PUBLISHED TWICE YEARLY SINCE 1986:
19th MAY (WILDE'S RELEASE FROM GAOL)
16th OCTOBER (WILDE'S BIRTHDAY)



Wild About Wilde

Newsletter

October 16th 1996 *ISSN :1068-9737*

Celebrating 10 Years of Publication

Number 21

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde

WILD ABOUT WILDE

10th YEAR OF PUBLICATION
1986 - 1996

ISSN: 1068-9737
16th October 1996

Dear Wild Wildeans,

I apologize for the late arrival of this issue but owing to a death in my family and an unexpected journey to Ireland I am late in getting the issue together. I also regret to tell you that with this issue I have to suspend publication for the present time as other commitments are weighing too heavily to allow me to continue. Should it be possible for me to resume publication at some later date I shall do so.

This has been a rewarding and personally satisfying ten years since I began publication of *Wild About Wilde* back in 1986. Wilde has become a much more appreciated literary figure in that time with societies dedicated to his memory formed in London and in his native Dublin, Ireland. But most importantly, the performance of his plays has seen a resurgence with the highly successful run of *An Ideal Husband* which is still playing in New York having opened in May 1996. We are also looking forward to no less than two movies due out sometime next year on the life of Wilde. Barry Levy (page 7) takes a look at some previous cinematic interpretations of the same subject.

Thanks to everyone for the 10 years. I hope I contributed in some way to the appreciation of Wilde and his art.

All the best,

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Against Nature? Science and Oscar Wilde

John Wilson Foster

The Decay of Lying (1889) begins: "the more we study Art, the less we care for Nature. What Art really reveals to us is Nature's lack of design, her curious crudities, her extraordinary monotony, her absolutely unfinished condition." The study of Nature is therefore a third-rate occupation; indeed, it is a baneful one. Wilde praised Poe's "Sonnet--to Science," in which science is a prying daughter of old Time who steals from the poet "The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree."

We would expect such hostility to science from the man who, in Camille Paglia's words, "projected himself internationally as the ultimate aesthete." And as she reminds us, aestheticism "is predicated on a swerve from nature." But in reality, Wilde's relationship to science was far more complicated. Wilde first knew that the "marvels of design" achievable by decorative art were often absent from Nature, not through studying Art but through reading students of Nature, including William Kingdon Clifford. 'Design' was a word used not only by decorative artists but also by pre-Darwinian naturalists.

Clifford was only one of the major scientific thinkers Wilde read assiduously while a student at Oxford; others included Huxley, Tyndall and Spencer. We discover in *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks* (ed. Philip E. Smith and Michael S. Helfand) a surprising pleasure in science, witness his delight in Shelley's "passionate enthusiasm for science" and in the claim that Goethe, "a devoted pupil of science," was the first Darwinian. Ignorance of Darwin was enough to condemn a thinker in Wilde's eyes; "unscientific" remained for the mature Wilde an indictment, "scientific" a term of praise. He had correspondents with scientific interests, and of course his father was a practicing scientist through whom Wilde would have absorbed the scientific element of Anglo-Irish culture and an implicit respect for it.

After reading his Oxford notebooks, we can no longer view Wilde as a supreme exponent of one, and only one, of what were once called the Two Cultures, as an artist blithely contemptuous of the other, scientific 'culture'. Science remained influential in Wilde's mature aesthetic works. To the hero of the book that poisons Dorian Gray (A *Rebours* by J.-K. Huysmans, translated by Robert Baldick as *Against Nature),* Nature has had her day: "artifice was considered by Des Esseintes to be the distinctive mark of genius." But he does not rebuff the modern sciences by which Nature has been studied. The narrator of *Dorian Gray* tells us that Des Esseintes was one "in whom the romantic and the scientific

temperaments were so strangely blended," as in Goethe, Dorian Gray-- and Wilde himself.

Wilde's novel, like Huysmans', is among other things a natural history of sensations, and includes a description and taxonomy of the hero's cabinets of collected exotica, all reminiscent of both the Victorian collections of exotic natural specimens and the Victorian mania for cataloguing and classification. The artistic connoisseur and the scientific collector meet in taxonomy and nomenclature. Lord Henry Wotton too is a collector (of people, of epigrams) but also an experimenter who "had been always enthralled by the methods of natural science, but the ordinary subject matter of that science had seemed to him trivial and of no import ... It was clear to him that the experimental method was the only method by which one could arrive at any scientific analysis of the passions; and certainly Dorian Gray was a subject made to his hand, and seemed to promise rich and fruitful results." Lord Henry's literary forebears are Victor Frankenstein and Dr. Jekyll, but it is Dorian Gray who pays the price they pay, for he is Jekyll as well as Hyde, Frankenstein as well as the Monster, Lord Henry as well as himself.

Books by Shelley, Stevenson, Wells and Wilde indicate a nineteenth-century cultural anxiety about science, not merely about its apparent objectivity and amorality, but also about its potential ability to create life that rivalled and therefore mocked God and Nature. But despite the novel's moralistic conclusion, and the Faustian underpinning, science is important to the conception of *Dorian Gray* and to Wilde's world view and artistic vision.

Dorian Gray sets out Wilde's "Hellenic ideal," its "new Hedonism" that he pits against what he calls in *The Critic* as *Artist* the "new Puritanism" abroad in England. In his Oxford notebooks Wilde thought it worth recording that "the Greek attitude can only be gained by a recognition of the scientific basis of Life," that "in early civilizations science is found intimately blended with poetry," that "in modern science, the fourth dimension of space, infinity, eternity, &c are poetical conceptions," and that "the early Greeks had mystic anticipations of nearly all great modern scientific truths." Through Hellenism, Wilde associated science not with pessimism or glum materialism but with optimism and progress.

Individualism, which is a perennial virtue in Wilde's writings, is implicit in his concept of the Greek attitude. "The longer one studies life and literature," Gilbert claims in *The Critic* as *Artist,* "the more strongly one feels that behind everything that is wonderful stand the individual, and that it is not the moment that makes the man, but the man who creates the age." Wilde seems quite serious in having Gilbert claim that "The nineteenth century is a turning point in history simply on account of the work of two men, Darwin and Renan, the one the critic of the Book of Nature, the other the critic of the books of God." "Progress in thought," Wilde wrote in his Commonplace Book, drawing on Clifford, "is the ssertion of individualism against authority."

At times Wilde called individuality "self-preservation," a term that Darwinism would have suggested. He wrote in his Commonplace Book: "The instinct of self-preservation in humanity, the desire to affirm one's own essence": these are the engines of progress, whereas puritanism, philistinism, sensualism and fanaticism are forces that seek to inhibit "higher freedom." In a Wildean paradox, Lord Henry - practitioner of influence for whom the natural is the greatest pose of all - is a disbeliever in nurture and a believer in nature; he practices fervently, that is to say, what he does not believe in. "The aim of life is self-development. To realize one's nature perfectly--that is what each of us is here for." When Dorian Gray at the end of the novel accuses Lord Henry of having poisoned him with a book *(Against Nature),* Lord Henry replies: "You and I are what we are, and will be what we will be."

It was by his Oxford reading that Wilde discovered the evolutionary foundation of his belief in individuality. Clifford defines individuality as differentiation from other organisms, and individuality in thought as differentiation from surrounding minds. He goes on to identify sharp mental differentiation as one of the characteristics of genius, which must have impressed the young Wilde. The evolutionary process of developmental differentiation, the evolutionary mechanism of natural selection, and the evolutionary concept of hierarchy in the organic kingdoms - all by analogy became Wilde's notion of cultivation, and gave a biological foundation to his aestheticism.

There is a suggestive analogy between Wilde's over-cultivation as an aesthete (a too great differentiation from his moral environment and other, hypocritically moral individuals) and the fate that natural selection visits upon those organisms that exhibit unadaptable and self-damaging over-specialisation). It is tempting to see Lord Henry as another specimen of over-cultivation but Dorian Gray as one of devolution; that is, of the descent rather than ascent of man.

Certainly Dorian is a specimen of flawed heredity as well as of malign nurture: he is realising himself through reversion while seeming to re-make himself according to Lord Henry's blueprint. Dorian Gray's parentage (the quarrelsome, mean grandfather, the beautiful, romantic mother, the socially insignificant father) is for Lord Henry merely a fascinating tragic background, but it is also an influence, even a determinism, beyond Lord Henry's evil tutelage. What befalls Dorian Gray befell his mother, and what Lord Henry wishes to happen does, not just for reasons of sinister supervision, but also for reasons of heredity. "The men were a poor lot," says Lord Fermor of Dorian's family, "but, egad! the women were wonderful."

Dorian has inherited only his mother's wonderful beauty: otherwise he has inherited the character poverty of his male forebears. Uke Des Esseintes, Dorian suffers from an inherited sickness, and both Wilde's novel and Huysmans' are studies in pathology, indeed of that pathological condition we call monstrosity and that so fascinated the Victorians in that age of moral and medical obsession.

But the record of Wilde's reading at Oxford (1874-79) proves that his interest in heredity and pathology predated the publication of A *Rebours* in 1884. In one entry Wilde wrote: "neither in the world of thought or in that of matter is the past ever annihilated." From the pages of H.T. Buckle, Wilde thought it important to enter the names of William Cullen (1710-90) and William Hunter (1718-83), "the earliest pathologists: their object was to show that there is a science of the abnormal." And such a science is possible because "even animal monstrosities," he writes down from Buckle, "are now known not to be capricious but essentially natural; a new science is thus produced, that of Teratology .... " Surveying his collection of fantastic musical instruments, Dorian Gray is delighted “that art, like nature, has her monsters.”

A refrain in *De Profundis* is the flawed heredity of the Douglases; he tells Lord Alfred: "[Your mother) saw, of course, that heredity had burdened you with a terrible legacy, and frankly admitted it, admitted it with terror: he is 'the one of my children who has inherited the fatal Douglas temperament,' she wrote of you"; "Through your father you come of a race, marriage with whom is horrible, friendship fatal, and that lays violent hands either on its own life or on the lives of others"; "the fact that the man you hated was your own father, and that the feeling was thoroughly reciprocated, did not make your Hate noble or fine in any way. If it showed anything it was simply that it was a hereditary disease." An irony attaches to Wilde's belief in the power of heredity. Seven months before he began *De Profundis,* Wilde petitioned the Home Secretary for release from Reading gaol, on the grounds that his misdeeds were due rather to a curable sexual pathology than to criminality, citing in evidence Max Nordau, author of *Degeneration* (1892), a work which discussed Wilde as an example of "a pathological aberration of a racial instinct . . . a malevolent mania for contradiction ... the ego-mania of degeneration."

Yet beyond his petition, and Douglas' behaviour, he preferred to consider inheritance as a good. In Wilde is argued out the comparative forces of nature (or heredity) and nurture (including self-nurture, or self-cultivation) that so preoccupied his contemporaries. Self-realization could be the product of either, and nurture was not necessarily superior in this regard. Whereas for many of those contemporaries the weight of the past was a bleak proposition, for Wilde it was, on the whole, just the opposite (perhaps in part because he was immensely fortunate in, and immensely proud of, his own parentage and lineage). "By revealing to us the absolute mechanism of all action," Gilbert says (as though fresh from Wilde's own scientific reading), "and so freeing us from the self-imposed and trammelling burden of moral responsibility, the scientific principle of Heredity has become, as it were, the warrant for the contemplative life."

For Wilde, Darwinism did not undermine the uniqueness of humanity or the freedom of the individual: rather it sponsored both by explaining the origin and direction of art (the product of imagination or recessive contemplation) and thereby vindicated art and the aesthetic life against the deluded claims of practicality and progressivism. Wilde was the aesthete who, in one of the larger paradoxes of his career, gave aestheticism a scientific foundation. Early in his career Wilde underwent serious conversion to aestheticism, but Nature and its scientific understandings stayed with him, translated rather than abandoned.

John Wilson Foster was born in Belfast. He is *now Professor of English at the University of British Columbia, Canada. He* is *the author of* Colonial Consequences *(1991) and* The Achievement of Seamus Heaney *(1995).*

Extracted and summarized by John Foster with permission from the *University of Toronto Quarterly* from a longer article of his previously printed by them in 1993.

Re: Views of Two Films About Oscar Wilde

by Barry A. Levy

The Trials of Oscar Wilde
UK (1960) 123 mins Color

Director: Ken Hughes
Cast:
Peter Finch - Oscar Wilde
John Fraser - Lord Alfred Douglas
Emrys Jones - Robert Ross
Yvonne Mitchell - Constance Wilde
Lionel Jeffries - Queensberry
James Mason - Edward Carson

Oscar Wilde
UK (1960) 96 mins B&W

Director: Gregory Ratoff
Cast:
Robert Morley – Oscar Wilde
John Neville – Lord Alfred Douglas
Dennis Price – Robert Ross
Phyllis Calvert – Constance Wilde
Edward Chapman - Queensberry
Ralph Richardson – Edward Carson

Only a scant sixty years after being laid to rest, Oscar Wilde was again given life, in a variety of shape and form, by the same country whose narrow laws and fickle attitudes contributed most generously to his demise. A film version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was produced in 1945. *The Importance of Being Earnest* was brought to the screen in 1952. Yet it wasn't until 1960 that not one, but two films were produced not to tell the story of dear Oscar's life, but to resurrect the tortured years of his scandal and shame. With some insight, a somewhat specious sense of sympathy, and a dash of absurdity, in one more so than the other, the years of his trials unfold like the pages of the local tabloids that once exploited both his fame and his folly.

The source material differs for each production. The makers of *The Trials of Oscar Wilde* based the telling of their tale on the play *The Stringed Lute,* by John Furnell, and a non-fiction tome *The Trials of Oscar Wilde,* by Montgomery Hyde. *Oscar Wilde,* released six months later, was based solely on the eponymously-titled play by Leslie and Sewell Stokes. Not being a Wilde expert or scholar, or familiar with these source works, I will discuss the merits, or mayhem, of what each film attempted.

The physical representation of the man himself is what one notices first of all. I suspect Robert Morley was chosen less for his bearing any real resemblance to Oscar (although he is the closer of the two), but more for his grand, sonorous voice; which I believe does bear a resemblance to Oscar's round and resonant tones. On the other hand, Peter Finch must have been selected more for his splendid dramatic acting ability than capturing the look and sound of him. Both gave excellent, and more or less, gracious performances considering the material with which they worked.

At least *The Trials of Oscar Wilde* was aptly titled, for that was the focus of the film. The title *Oscar Wilde,* on the other hand, leads one to believe a biography is being told: not so. This film, not bothering with any exposition to speak of, dives almost immediately into the trial period dispensing with the life that came before and led up to it. Giving one the impression this is all one needs to know about the man. This is what defines him and for what he is to be remembered.

Both films do suggest very strongly it was Bosie goading Oscar to trial to get back at his volatile and demented father, the Marquis of Queensberry, and Oscar, unwisely relenting. Yet, at the same time, suggesting Oscar being guilty of the ancient curse of hubris: his arrogance and pride, not the hypocrisy and persecution of a repressed society, which led to his sad and tortured downfall. One thing puzzles me though, why should a note in an envelope be construed as being a "public" condemnation and accusation? The clerk at the club and the Marquis were the only ones who had seen it. Any attempt to defend oneself in this situation would seem a sure sign of guilt. The response outweighed the offense. Yes, it is true, however, the enraged Marquis was unyielding and might have done something more public, and on a larger scale, eventually. But why not wait for the attack before deploying a defense by a system of laws designed not to protect the artist and those with non-conforming lifestyles? But I sound naive and, I digress ...

In both films Lord Alfred Douglas is portrayed as an androgynously beautiful, vain, manipulative, very nearly cold-blooded fop. Outrageously self-indulgent, given to tantrums and fully aware of the spell he cast, draining Oscar to the last emotionally and financially. Only towards the end of the last trial, after Oscar has been convicted, do we see Bosie showing any concern for him, any real emotional support. In the end, Oscar turns his back on him primarily to ensure his receiving the allowance that Constance had provided for him.

On the whole, it is the *Trials of Oscar Wilde* that contains the more touching and dramatically satisfying performances. The film is a full twenty-seven minutes longer, and manages the added time more economically. There's

more of Oscar with his close friends and family, and with his children. Something of the private man, not just the infamous persona, is shown. A fuller, more human portrait is drawn as compared to *Oscar Wilde.* However, in fairness to Robert Morley, it was his reading of the famous speech Oscar makes at the first trial in defense of Bosie's poem, *Two Loves,* that is far more stirring than Mr. Finch's. The acting of the cast, as a whole, is more convincing in *The Trials of Oscar Wilde.* Especially that of James Mason, as the aggressively unrelenting, almost obsessed prosecutor, who brings an immediacy, a sense of a brutally conformist society, replete with powdered wigs, closing in for the kill. You can almost feel Oscar in the grip of something far larger and more unforgiving than he had ever imagined.

The closing scene in *The Trials of Oscar Wilde* is actually quite moving. After his release from Reading Gaol, Oscar is at the train station with Robbie, Ada & Constance. He looks shattered & forlorn. They all hug and kiss Oscar before he boards the train on his way to exile in Paris. Just as he is about to turn and board, Bosie appears, smiling and smug, swinging his walking stick. Oscar looks at him and says goodbye without speaking. Bosie's smile drops from his beautiful face. Oscar turns away to board the train. As we watch him walk through the steam to his car, Constance turns to Ada and says in a deeply pained, confused, yet tender, voice, "I never understood... I just never understood." The final words are Oscar's in a voice over as the train pulls out of the station.

Compare this to the final scene from *Oscar Wilde.* Robbie and Oscar at a table in a dingy bistro in Paris. Oscar is drunk, depressed, and looks like he is about to jump out of his sallow skin. Robbie is suggesting he'll kill himself with drink. Oscar looks at him, throws back his head and laughs and laughs like a madman in Bedlam. The camera pulls away with Oscar laughing maniacally, and Robbie staring at him piteously: not a very generous close. Evidently, for these film makers this was their little morality play. A cautionary tale for those who do not conform to the mores of the day.

Basically, both films seem to capture the period rather well. The horse-drawn carriages, the elegant street lamps, and the period dress decorate the screen most persuasively. As for the look of them, the black and white cinematography of *Oscar Wilde,* usually my preferred choice, doesn't hold a candle to the soft, muted color of *The Trials of Oscar Wilde.* In fact, it looks like a single candle was used for the lighting in *Oscar Wilde.* It's not so much black & white, as it is a somber, melancholy gray. Shapes and forms move in and out of each frame almost indistinctly, as if a huge, dark cloud hovered over the set. As for the accuracy of the events depicted there are those far better versed than myself to attest to their verisimilitude. These are not films one can "enjoy"

viewing. The story is far too painful and infuriating to watch as it unfolds. Yet, they are both curiosity pieces at best.

However, if only one is to be seen, let it be *The Trials of Oscar Wilde,* and not the other. *Oscar Wilde* is a shade too effusive in its rushed and facile depiction of what are, ostensibly, historic events.

I look forward to the day when a motion picture is made that does justice to the life and crimes of Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde. Word has it that two new films are in the works, one starring Christopher Fry *(Peter's Friends)* and the other Liam Neeson *(Schindler's List, Michael Collins).* Until then, let the master of paradox speak for himself.

Barry Levy lives in New York and is, among other things, a *movie buff and* a *Wildean.*

Gribsby and Moulton Join Jack and Algy in New York

Vito A. Lanza

A chance to see a reconstruction of the original four act version of *The Importance of Being Earnest* is not to be taken lightly. It is now almost common knowledge that when Sir George Alexander bought the rights to the play he "insisted that Wilde cut it from four to three acts to allow time for a one act curtain raiser, a common custom in the London theatre of that period." So states the Shaw Project's artistic director, David Seatter, who offered "a rare opportunity to see Wilde's original intentions for his most famous play" in the Manhattan Plaza's Ellington room before an invited audience on August 27 and 28, 1996.

Using Richard Bell's version - there will probably never be a definitive reconstruction because the manuscripts conflict radically - which was privately printed a decade ago, the show ran somewhat over three hours and thirty minutes even with eliminating one intermission between Acts III and IV (which run continuously anyway). The most common version, the one everyone knows, is much shorter and eliminates the witty Gribsby episode which deals with some financial difficulties between the two male leads. There are also brief interchanges between Cecily and Moulton, a gardener, in Act II which do not appear in the more famous version. Algy and Cecily also have more to do because, according to Seatter, the original producer played Jack and wanted a true star part.

The Shaw project, which has performed all of George Bernard Shaw's plays in staged reading, now also does those of his contemporaries. The current event was part of a summer festival which also included W.S. Gilbert's *The Wedding March* and John Whiting's *Penny for* a *Song*. Seatter played Chasuble with his usual degree of professionalism and also directed. Alan Gilbert enacted Lane, Moulton, Gribsby, and Merriman with great versatility. Lisa-Marie Dowler, the only non-Equity cast member, was a fine Cecily. Others included Kevin Connell (Algy) David Kroll, (Jack), Joanna Brown (Bracknell), Elizabeth Atwater (Gwendolen) and Frances Peter (Prism).

To find out more about the Shaw project contact David Seatter at 90 Park Terrace, Apt 2B, NY, NY 10034 Tel: (212) 569-0129.

Vito A. *Lanza lives in New York and is* a *frequent contributor to this publication.*

Wilde Apocrypha

Eric Bentley writes:

Teleny is what would generally be called a "pornographic" novel, dating back to 1890. Oscar Wilde is known to have known it and there is brief scholarly account of it in that important book *Sexual Heretics,* edited by Brian Reade (Coward-McCann, New York, 1971).

In my library I have a copy of *Teleny* published by Greenleaf Classics Inc. San Diego, California, in 1968. The cover announces that the book's "literary excellence [befits) the pen of Oscar Wilde" and an Introduction by "Douglas H. Gamlin, Ph.D." tells us Dr. Gamlin feels "there can be little doubt that Oscar Wilde wrote *Teleny"* - there is a "similarly of style" and there are "a hundred and one other small clues."

While I feel there can be little doubt that Oscar Wilde did NOT write *Teleny,* I wonder if any of your erudite readers can cast further light, if not on the authorship of the book, then on its publishing history and its continued presence on the same shelf as the collected works of Oscar Wilde?

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Upcoming book on Wilde:

Patrick Horan is about to publish his work on the maternal influence in Wilde's work. The title of the book is: *The Importance of Being Paradoxical: Maternal Presence in the Works of Oscar Wilde.* It will be published in the spring of 1997 by Associated University Presses. In dealing with the influence of Wilde's mother on him, Dr. Horan also discusses the character of Speranza and her very rooted views on, among other topics, Ireland and the family.

A NEW BOOK ON G.B SHAW OF INTEREST TO WILDEANS

Sally Peters has sent me an extract from her new book on George Bernard Shaw. Shaw's relationship with Wilde is examined at some length in this book as can be seen from her excerpt.

An extract from *Bernard Shaw: The Ascent of the Superman*

Earlier, art played a role in a male relationship of a different sort. From 1885 to 1888 unsigned reviews by Oscar Wilde, William Archer, and Shaw sometimes were credited to the wrong man. To sort things out, Shaw declared either Wilde or himself the author of the distinctly Irish reviews. Meanwhile, though he preferred to get credit for his own brilliancies, Shaw apparently was not disturbed at being mistaken for Wilde, whom he thought "exceptionally finished in style, and very amusing." Even though he found Wilde a terrible liar, Shaw felt that the playwright had a "touch of genius." Shaw defended that genius when reviewing *An Ideal Husband,* mocking those who laughed angrily at Wilde's epigrams and protested that the "trick" was obvious. The reviewer [Shaw) appeared to be the only one in London who could not write an Oscar Wilde play.

In spite of his appreciation of Wilde's talent, Shaw harboured ambivalences toward the man. He thought it a "very handsome thing" that after the Haymarket Riots in Chicago in 1886, Wilde was the only person other than Socialists willing to sign a petition supporting the anarchists. Shaw had denigrated Max Nordau as the "dupe of a theory" that "the world is going to the dogs," and he dredged up the second phrase and used it against Wilde. Writing Frank Harris, the self-described heartless man attributed a heartless quality to *The Importance of Being Earnest.* In is original review of the play, Shaw had been amused by the "force and daintiness" of the play's wit, but he still thought that he had wasted an evening.

Published by Yale University Press. *Bernard Shaw: The Ascent of the Superman* by Sally Peters.

July 1996 Sotheby's of London Sales Results

Lot 237. Wilde, Oscar. Wilde's first known letter to Robert Ross ("Bobbie"), entirely autograph and signed "Oscar Wilde", congratulating him on going to university (... "University life will suit you admirably ... "), saying he will miss him in town.

3 Pages, 8 vo. corner torn away just touching signature, accompanying leaf inscribed "for Norman from Leslie and Saville October 1938", framed and glazed, 16 Tite Street, Chelsea [c.13 October 1888].

This is Wilde's first recorded letter to his lifelong friend Robert Ross whom he met two years earlier and who went up to King's College, Cambridge on 13 October 1888. The letter is published in *The Letters*, ed R. Hart- Davis (1962) p. 225.

Estimate £2,000 - £2,500. Sold for £3,680 including fees.

Lot 238. Wilde, Oscar. *Poems*. Author's edition, limited to 220 copies signed by Wilde, decorated title page and endpapers designed by Charles Ricketts, slight damp-staining to outer margins of preliminaries, original violet cloth boards with gilt designs by Ricketts (some Slight water damage to boards, small tears to cloth on the spine), 8vo. [Mason 309]. Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1892

Estimate £600 - £800. Sold for £1,380 including fees.

Lot 239. Wilde, Oscar. *Poems.* First edition, one of 250 copies, offsetting to endpapers, original white parchment gilt (soiled). [Mason 304). 8vo. David Bogue, 1881.

Estimate £500 - £600. Sold for £460 including fees.

Lot 240. Wilde, Oscar. *Salomé. A Tragedy in One Act*, translated from the French of Oscar Wilde: pictured by Aubrey Beardsley. First English Edition. One of 100 copies. 10 full page illustrations and title colophon designs etc. by Beardsley, title. List of Pictures and illustrations printed on Japanese vellum. [Mason 351). Elkin Mathews and John Lane and (Boston) Copeland & Day 1894.

The first English edition was also issued in an ordinary edition of 500 copies bound in blue canvas boards.

Estimate £800 - £1,000. -Sold for £862 including fees.

Lot 241. Wilde, Oscar. *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* by C.3.3., second edition, one of 1,000 copies. [Mason 373). Leonard Smithers, February 1898. *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*. First edition. [Mason 313). David Nutt. 1888. *A House of Pomegranates*, first edition one of 1,000 copies [Mason 347). James Osgood, McIlvaine 1891.

Estimate £500 - £600. Sold for £632 including fees.

Lot 242. Wilde, Oscar. A Collection of approximately 50 works on or about Wilde, including: *Intentions*, first edition one of approximately 1,500 copies 1891. *Salomé*, Paris 1906. another edition 1918. *Sebastian Melmouth*, 1905. *The Poems of Oscar Wilde,* one of 750 copies Portland, Thomas Mosher, 1905. *The Duchess of Padua,* 1907.

The Importance of Being Earnest, French's Acting Edition n.d. *Lord Arthur Saville's Crime and other stories*, first edition, 1891; *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, first illustrated edition, Paris 1908; *Wilde & Whistler An Acrimonious Correspondence* ... ,privately printed, 1906. Together with over 40 others, by or about Wilde, including several newspapers, original cloth or wrappers, 8vo.

Estimate £500 -£700. Sold for £1 ,495 including fees.

Editor's notes: All information per Sotheby's of London.

All prices are in pounds sterling.
At time of printing U.S. dollar approximately: $1.65 = £1.

I hope to be at least a month with my friends, and to gain, in their healthful and affectionate company, peace, and balance, and a less troubled heart, and a sweeter mood. I have a strange longing for the great simple primeval things, such as the Sea, to me no less of a mother than the Earth. It seems to me that we all look at Nature too much, and live with her too little. I discern great sanity in the Greek attitude. They never chattered about sunsets, or discussed whether the shadows on the grass were really mauve or not. But they saw the sea was for the swimmer, and the sand for the feet of the runner. They loved the trees for the shadow that they cast, and the forest for its silence at noon.

Oscar Wilde: *De Profundis*

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https://carmelmccaffrey.com/

Wild About Wilde Newsletter is listed in the *Modern Language Association [MLA] International Bibliography* and the *MLA Directory of Periodicals* under the acronym WAWN.