

William
Andrews
Clark
Lecture
on

on car wilds





In 1920 William Andrews Clark Jr. purchased a number of Wilde's letters and working drafts. In 1928, he bought even more books, manuscripts, photographs and other items which had belonged to Wilde's family and close acquaintances. Many of these had become available for sale when Wilde, imprisoned for "gross indecency" and deep in debt, had been forced to sell his possessions. Clark had many collecting interests, and he tended to buy items for his library one by one; the Wilde acquisition was a rare *en bloc* purchase, suggesting it had special meaning for him. Although Clark did not leave documentation articulating a personal connection to Wilde, a gift from Harrison Post, Clark's lover, expresses one. Post acquired a nearly life-sized portrait of Wilde that had been commissioned as a wedding gift for Wilde and his wife Constance and he gave it to Clark.

These acquisitions, along with those made by subsequent forward-thinking librarians, have helped make the Wilde holdings at the Clark Library arguably the most comprehensive in the world. They include nearly every edition of every printed book by and about Wilde; a large number of literary manuscripts and correspondence; his works in translation in as many languages as possible; and materials related to his wider social circle and the generations of artists, writers and activists who influenced and were influenced by Wilde. For almost 100 years, they have supported an immense range of study, from dissertations to documentaries, and we look forward to the next century of use.

As the contributions to this commemorative volume convey, the character of the Wilde collections is unusually wide-ranging. Its resources have spawned new questions and research in manifold directions—across diverse media and geographies. The collections generate creative thinking and foster collaboration, weaving together personal histories and bringing researchers together. In this spirit, we are delighted to welcome Merlin Holland, Wilde's grandson, back to the Clark for the seventh *William Andrews Clark Lecture on Oscar Wilde* and to celebrate the inaugural *Wilde-Holland Fellowship*. In 2007, when the lecture series was founded by Dr. William Zachs, Merlin was the inaugural speaker. Another generous endowment from Bill has made the annual *Wilde-Holland Fellowship* possible, and we are grateful to him for his support and enthusiasm for the

Clark. The fellowship honors Wilde's contributions to literature and to the world, and also those of Merlin by commemorating his scholarship and stewardship of his grandfather's enduring legacy.

Anna Chen & Bronwen Wilson

Head Librarian

Director



I am delighted to offer a few reflections and provide some background to the now well-established *William Andrews Clark Lecture on Oscar Wilde*, as well as the newly founded *Wilde-Holland Fellowship*. How wonderful to return to the Clark in person to celebrate Wilde and his legacy and mark the occasion with this keepsake.

Although heroes to me now, Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) and William Andrews Clark Jr (1877–1934) were far from my thoughts when I was growing up in Hartford, Connecticut in the 1960s and 70s. In 1983,

after attending the University of Pennsylvania and UC Berkeley, I arrived as a graduate student in Edinburgh, where my 'education' continues to this day. Scotland's capital is the location of my own library. Partly inspired by Mr. Clark's bibliophilic and aesthetic vision, it contains an ever-growing collection not only of books and manuscripts but of art, photographs and objects. The core collection tells the story of Scotland in the very long eighteenth century – from the 1640s to the 1840s. However, on either side of these dates, you could find a medieval manuscript in its original binding or a special copy of *Harry Potter*, with unique illustrations and annotations by the author, or a copy of Dürer's *Apocalypse* or a Conan Doyle manuscript of a Sherlock Holmes story (acquired a few days ago). Like the Clark Library and its associated Center for 17- & 18th-Century Studies (if on a far smaller scale), I host scholars and students, mount exhibitions, publish catalogues, and sponsor lectures and events of all descriptions, from musical and dramatic performances to Scottish country dancing and queer tango classes.

It has been argued that a collection is defined by what is *not* acquired. Oscar Wilde and the *fin de siècle* are areas in which I do *not* collect. That field is best left to the Clark, where librarians past and present actively pursue material worthy of a place on the shelves. They do this so well – not only with Wilde but also in their other principal collecting fields – that one can simply stand back, admire, and hope to be able to contribute to their worthy endeavours.

How did I develop this enduring affection for the Clark? Towards the end of 1999 my partner, Martin, and I, together with our three-year-old daughter, Sarah, relocated to Del Mar, north of San Diego. As a scholar and bibliophile, the Clark Library was a natural destination. There for the first time I, like so many others, discovered the jewelled cabinet of curiosity and inspiration that defines this sparkling and quirky star in the vast UCLA constellation. There, too, I met Bruce Whiteman, the Clark Librarian. It was due to his friendly welcome and his deep commitment to the Library – to its collections and programs – that I myself became involved.

Mr. Clark's visionary, indeed radical, decision in the late 1910s and through the 1920s to collect Oscar Wilde and his circle was, as Bruce remarked in a revelatory article about Clark, "a brave and unusual choice" (*Grolier Gazette*, 2008). A genius to be sure, Wilde was also notorious. Like Wilde, Clark discovered that he felt strong romantic attachments to men. Both lived in times when overt expressions of same-sex love were far from acceptable, if not illegal. In his infamous trial, Wilde defied convention, indeed society, in declaring the legitimacy of his love. In doing so he would become a hero to more people than even he could perhaps have imagined.



Was collecting and preserving the record of Wilde's literary and personal life a defiant act for Clark in some similar way? While the archival record would seem to be silent on this point, it seems all too obvious, at least to me. Nor can we forget that Clark had



the image of his lover, Harrison Post, repeatedly painted in the vault of his library's entrance hall.

Clark's most significant acquisition of Wilde manuscript materials came in 1928 from Wilde's son, Vyvyan Holland. These were purchased through the London dealer Dulau & Co. and also included books and manuscripts from others closest to Wilde: his executor, Robbie Ross, and Stuart Mason, his bibliographer. What a landmark and poignant moment it must have been for Clark when these unique artefacts were unpacked and inspected.

I don't remember whether it was Bruce's idea or mine to establish a lecture on Wilde. We both agreed it was a plan which filled a glaring programmatic gap and offered an opportunity to advance the important role the Clark's Wilde collection could play for scholars, members of the UCLA community, and a wider public. It will always be a matter of great satisfaction to me that Merlin Holland, Oscar's grandson, agreed to give the inaugural lecture in 2007. To me, it felt as if Wilde himself was in the Library on that day – and with William Andrews Clark Jr. (and perhaps Sr.) gazing down on the proceedings.

It was thanks to my friend Christopher Fletcher, then curator of literary manuscripts at the British Library, that I first met Merlin over a pint of beer in a London pub. That Merlin has once again agreed to travel all the way from France (and in the face of a global pandemic) to lecture at the Clark is equally a matter of delight. While he would shy away from the thought, Merlin, too, in my book is a true hero.

To mark this occasion and moreover to acknowledge Merlin's enduring commitment to the legacy of his grandfather, it seemed fitting to do something more. Establishing a research fellowship at the Clark – the *Wilde-Holland Fellowship* – seemed to be the solution, no less the perfect complement to the *Wilde Lecture*.

Perfect things do not happen without effort. Many people at UCLA have put a great deal of commitment and kindness into the process of establishing the fellowship and of keeping the lecture at the high standard which Merlin first set. While recognising Bruce Whiteman's

key role, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of former members of the UCLA community, in particular the late Peter Reill, and my good friend Tim Dolan. In addition, I am delighted to thank David Schaberg, Bronwen Wilson, Joseph Bristow, Helen Deutsch, Candis Snoddy, Kathy Sanchez, Sarah Murphy, Lindsey Walton, Matthew Daines, Erich Bollmann, Jeanette LaVere, Anna Chen, and the Clark's superb team past and present. No doubt others behind the scenes have contributed to achieve a result in which Mr. Clark himself would take pride.

William Zachs

Director of the Blackie House Library & Museum, Edinburgh

When I became the Clark's Manuscripts & Archives Librarian in 2008, I expected to attain a certain level of closeness to the library's Oscar Wilde collection in the usual way all librarians become enmeshed in their collections over time. I did not, however, anticipate the closeness that would come with chaperoning Oscar's work and likeness on multiple transatlantic trips.



But that is indeed what happened when I was asked to manage the loan of 23 items from the Clark – including R.G. Harper Pennington's 1884 portrait of Wilde – to the Petit Palais in Paris for the 2016 exhibition "Oscar Wilde: L'impertinent Absolu," co-curated by Merlin Holland. This was a brand-new role for me and for the Clark itself – the library did not loan materials beyond UCLA until the early 2000s, and had done so only sparingly since then. The exposure this exhibition (and others at Tate Britain in 2017 and Met Costume Institute in 2019) brought to our collections was beyond anything I'd been prepared for in my library school education. There I was often told I'd likely always work in a basement and not that I'd get to escort priceless collection materials through airport freight warehouses, refrigerated trucks, and museum storage rooms around the world.

Rebecca Fenning Marschall

Manuscripts & Archives Librarian



It is not a fabrication to say that Oscar Wilde has been on my mind almost every day for about twenty years. I am responsible for reference and digital requests at the Clark Library, and over fifty percent of those have involved the Wilde archive. After reading many of his letters over the years, I have experienced his wit, happiness, fears, and losses. I was brought closer to Oscar in January 2017 when I escorted the 1884 painting of him by Harper Pennington from Paris' Petit

Palais to London's Tate Britain. The trip included rising before sunrise, hours of wait on a loading dock, a fast and furious ride through Paris, BREXIT talk with my driver, and yet all of it seemed fitting for an Oscar Wilde adventure. My journey ended at Tate's warehouse in Westminster. As the gentleman put Oscar's painting into the storage locker, he asked, in a hushed voice if I wanted to see the "door." Ignorant of what he meant, and at the same time not enjoying my ignorance, I nodded yes. As he removed the cloth from a neighboring artwork, my eyes landed on the door from Oscar's prison cell from Reading Gaol. I couldn't speak because, to my surprise, my heart was in my mouth.

Scott Jacobs

Reading Room Supervisor

Oscar Wilde was terrible with money. He usually lived beyond his means. Not long after he began his two-year jail sentence on 25 May 1895, the court issued a receiving order that showed his debts amounted to a staggering £3,591. If we are to trust the sums computed through the Measuring Worth site, Wilde owed sundry creditors something like \$3 million in our own day. So, you can imagine my surprise when, in December 2019, Scott Jacobs handed me one of several uncatalogued boxes of Wilde-related material. As I reached inside, I unearthed a previously unknown account book, with a lightly decorated blue and burgundy cover. There

I saw the name "Melmoth": part of the ingenious incognito under which Wilde traveled after his release from prison on 19 May 1897. Inscribed in Wilde's fine Greek hand, his carefully devised new name – taken from his great-uncle's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) – indicated perhaps that the liberated Irishman was about to try to live within his budget. As I turned the opening leaves, it was clear that Wilde – for the first time I'd ever seen – made a bold attempt to balance the books. On the left hand side, there is a list of those people who have ensured he has "credit," while on the opposite "debit" page there is a list of individuals on whom he wished to bestow modest sums. It is this short list that matters far more than Wilde's efforts at economy. Most of the names relate to warders and fellow prisoners in H.M. Prison Reading to whom he felt he owed certain debts, not least for their kindnesses toward him. Ada Leveson, who remained such a loyal friend to Wilde, recalled him as the "most soft-hearted, carelessly-generous and genial of men." This document, which contains little else besides these two columns, is testament to that fact. Moreover, this small but significant item reminds us that there are treasures still awaiting discovery in the Clark's magnificent collections.



Joseph Bristow

University of California, Los Angeles

My work with the Wilde archive has been devoted to devotion – to the impassioned and richly varied ways in which Wilde's friends, both actual and self-fashioned, came together after his death in 1900 to remember him and to bring him back to life.

One day in 2008, as I sifted through the Clark's physical card catalog, I found an entry for *Silence*, by Charles Ricketts. "Silence," the catalogue card read, was an "original bronze statue [...] submitted for the Oscar Wilde Memorial in Pere Lachaise. It was not used." I was fascinated, certainly, by this card's implication that there had been other designs besides the now-iconic Jacob Epstein monument considered for Wilde's

tomb. But I was even more compelled by the poignancy that one such design had been submitted by a bereaved friend and fellow artist, one for whom designing a public memorial to Wilde in 1906 would have stood as a dangerous act of queer solidarity. I requested the object, and, as I began to dig into its history, the Clark's then-Head of Reader Services, Carol Sommer, asked whether I might like to see the plaster cast made from the bronze statue, a polychrome cast, it must be noted, that was at the time uncatalogued.



The pigments used for this small painted plaster cast strikingly echo those Ricketts used five years earlier in a miniature portrait of his friend Edith Cooper, one half of the lesbian literary partnership known under the collective penname “Michael Field.” Cooper was likely the model for *Silence*, and this painted plaster cast of Ricketts’ bronze memorial to Wilde seems also to have served as a memorial to Cooper. Ricketts is recorded as having brought Cooper a small painted plaster statue on her deathbed in 1910. Because I asked to see the Clark’s plaster cast of *Silence*, damaged but beautiful, I was able to follow and illuminate a hitherto unexamined, complexly entwined history of early-twentieth century queer memorial.

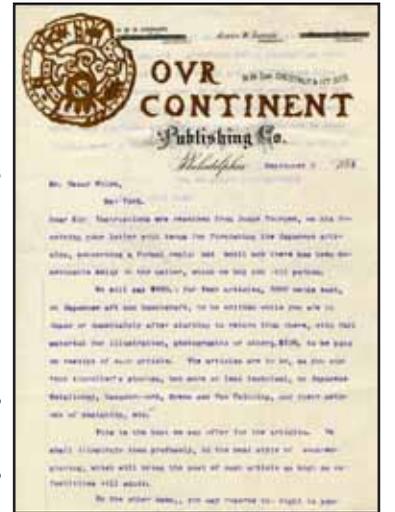
Such moments of strange serendipity happen again and again at the Clark. Through the Wilde Archive we connect across time and space to gather around Wilde in fascination, solidarity, and love.

Ellen Crowell

St. Louis University

To me, one of the most fascinating things about Oscar Wilde is the way that he fashioned an international career for himself. Among the gems of the Clark’s collections are a couple of seemingly inconspicuous documents to which I was originally alerted by Joseph Bristow. These are intriguing because they provide evidence that, after his 1882 lecture tour of America, Wilde seriously planned to travel on to Japan. One of the documents is a letter of introduction to the pioneering historian of Japanese art, Ernest

Fenollosa, then residing in Tokyo. The other is a letter from a new American periodical, *Our Continent*, which commissioned Wilde to write four illustrated articles on Japanese art and handicraft. Nothing came of this ambitious plan, since Wilde sailed directly back to Britain. But it is fascinating to speculate on how the trip to Japan might have affected Wilde’s career. The articles for *Our Continent* would have been among his major early works. And he might have gone on to write about Japan more extensively, maybe alongside Whistler, whom he invited to accompany him on his Japanese trip. In any case, it is very likely that he would have put his direct experience of Japan to very good use.



Stefano Evangelista

Trinity College, University of Oxford

Like many Wilde scholars, my books are rooted in research that I have undertaken at the Clark. I have many memories of sitting quietly in the reading room, communing with the ghosts who seemed to rise up from the manuscripts and typescripts. Three document-sets stand out for me in particular. One is the typescript of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* – hand-amended by Wilde and also inscribed with its editor’s censorious cuts – that Wilde sent to *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine* in the spring of 1890, in blissful ignorance of the firestorm that would erupt in the wake of its publication. An amazing album of prison-related manuscripts is the second example: called “a unique, important and intensely interesting collection” in the catalogue of the auction at which Clark acquired it, the album was gathered and bound in three-quarter morocco by Zaehnsdorf at the behest of Wilde’s son Vyvyan Holland. This album narrates the story of Wilde’s conviction and imprisonment from the inside, placing us in the shoes of Wilde and his close associates at some of the most critical moments of his life. It includes all of Wilde’s letters to Robbie [or “Robert”] Ross from Reading Prison, as well as the illicit notes that Wilde passed to Warder Martin and the handwritten list of books (subsequently vetted) that Wilde

requested permission to have in his cell midway through his sentence. The letters and notes authored by Wilde at least have long been in print. But it's incredibly moving to see these documents in sequence alongside others by Ross and Wilde's jailers – penned on prison notepaper, on stationery from the Avondale Hotel, and on hastily torn bits of envelope



and other scraps. The album's binding and careful arrangement tell their own story: as Merlin Holland once wrote to me, "my father took a lot of care over the material that Robbie bequeathed to him. He was forced to sell much of it for financial reasons in 1929 but having these [documents] bound up was a sort of double tribute to Robbie's friendship... and to Oscar." A third document stands out from my research for *Oscar Wilde: The Unrepentant Years*: the unpaid bill from the *Parfumerie Jules et Roger* for eau de cologne (bought by Wilde on credit a few weeks earlier) that arrived on the day of Wilde's

death. Wilde famously suggested that it was the wallpaper that killed him, while Merlin Holland and Ashley Robins have more recently detailed Wilde's deadly final illness (meningo-encephalitis). I can't help wondering, however, if it was the bill for eau de cologne that delivered the fatal blow!

Nicholas Frankel

Virginia Commonwealth University

Some of my best moments in the Clark Library have been looking through the photographs, caricatures, and ephemera in the boxes of "Wildeiana," always with the generous assistance of the knowledgeable library staff. I was leafing through the correspondence between William Andrews Clark and Christopher Millard – Wilde's first bibliographer, who eventually sold his collection of Wildeiana to Clark. Millard's obsessive collecting of Wilde and policing of the Wilde canon (sometimes at high personal cost) arguably made the field of Wilde studies possible, and (at the very least) contributed greatly to the archive we currently enjoy. I came across one letter from May 26, 1927, in which Millard enclosed a draft of his "Iconography of Oscar Wilde" – the first formal Iconography produced of Wilde.

Millard never published the Iconography, and not only had I never seen it mentioned, but it referred to images I had never come across before. If, at times, the boxes of Wildeiana can feel overwhelming and chaotic, Millard's Iconography tries to create an orderly visual narrative. More importantly, he was attempting to use Wilde's life in pictures to counter the unflattering image and narrative about his life that (as Wilde laments in *De Profundis*) had already passed into "serious history." If the trials still loom large in accounts of Wilde's life and work – embedding to a lesser or greater degree a tragic arc to these narratives – Millard's Iconography ignores them altogether. Millard's pictorial biography differs so radically because it doesn't end – at least, not with Wilde's death. Millard presents Wilde's image as always already embodying his future literary legacy and triumph. The story the Iconography tells is, in a sense, the story of the Clark Library Wilde Collection; like the archive, its focus is on Wilde's afterlife, the end of which is still in the process of being written and rewritten, framed and reframed by scholars inspired by its still-yet-to-be-discovered treasures.

Daniel A. Novak

The University of Mississippi

I first visited the Clark Library in the spring of 2009 to conduct research on the important collection, "Oscar Wilde and His Circle." While poring over this material I learned much about the broader contexts and themes that illustrated Wilde's political beliefs. I found treasures everywhere, but one item that immediately stood out was the box, "Wilde in America." I still remember Clark librarian Carol Sommer's smile as she handed this to me on my first morning at the Clark, saying "You're really going to enjoy this!" And enjoy it I did - the box is filled with press cuttings, interviews, and other publicity materials from Wilde's U.S. tour of 1882 that provide direct evidence of his commitment to the causes of Irish independence and international socialism.



I continue to return to the Clark as my research there remains central to my career as a literary scholar and critic. Today, over a decade later,

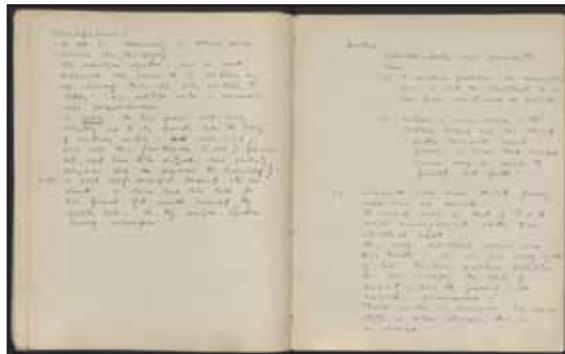
The Lectures

Oscar Wilde: Putting Music Into Words

Merlin Holland
October 14, 2007

I still become a little emotional when I give classes and public talks on the material that I have found at the library because it has given me profound insights into, and a profound personal connection with, Wilde's compassion and humanity and his dignity in the face of the tremendous violence that was done to him and his family. And, along with this, there is the sheer joy of lifelong friendships I have established at the Clark and that will always be so central to my life.

Deaglán O'Donghaile
Liverpool John Moores University



I have not been at play in the Wilde collection at the Clark for many years now. But thinking back, it is hard not to get most excited about the so-called "Philosophy Notebook" that I acquired for the library when I was the librarian. The Clark already owned more than one student notebook, but this

one, bought at a Christie's sale in 2004, was the most extensive among the existing student notebooks. It was also an exciting acquisition because it was largely unstudied, having long been in the private collection of Halstead Vander Poel (1911–2003), who lived in Rome during the second half of his life. Wilde studied classics and philosophy as an undergraduate at Magdalen College, Oxford, and kept the notebook at that time, the mid-1870s. It contains notes on a variety of writers and thinkers, including Hume, Carlyle, Spencer and others. It fit in superbly with other Wilde notebooks already at the Clark and devoted to Aristotle, Plato and other subjects. A great writer's early notebooks can be vital for tracing his intellectual development and even his writing style. Renewed thanks to the Ahmanson Foundation for helping the Clark to acquire this important manuscript.

Bruce Whiteman
Head Librarian, 1996–2010

Oscar Wilde and music? Not an obvious connection at all for an author who is best known as a writer of society comedies, his *fin de siècle* novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and for the homosexual scandal which shook Victorian London to its foundations in 1895. However, his writings are scattered with musical references, for music to Oscar Wilde was above all a mood and a metaphor and closely reflects the course of his life and with it his literary creativity. From his early writings, where it represents life-enhancement, joy and spiritual as opposed to sensual pleasure, it later becomes the strident and vulgar song of the music-hall, the cancan of the Moulin Rouge, before being transposed into the melancholy, minor key of his disgrace and poverty-stricken years in exile.



But Wilde did not just borrow from an art which was not his own; his Irish heritage and classical education provided him with the finest possible apprenticeship to becoming, as he regarded himself, a musician in his own right – a musician of words; the effects on his style and even the consequences for posterity, as Merlin Holland showed in this lecture, were sometimes remarkable.

Merlin Holland, the only grandson of Oscar Wilde, has devoted extensive research and study to his grandfather's life. He is the co-editor, along with Rupert Hart-Davis, of *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde* (2000). He is also the author of *The Wilde Album: Public and Private Images of Oscar Wilde* (1998), as well as *Oscar Wilde: A Life in Letters* (2006), and *Coffee with Oscar Wilde* (2007).

Green Carnations: Wilde, Culture, and Crime

John Wilson Foster

April 2, 2011



Oscar Wilde's fiction and criticism are laced with poison, both as theme and motif, both "real" and vicarious. Before his incarceration for criminal wrongdoing, Wilde provocatively pondered the compatibility of such a crime as poisoning with culture, and the desirability of sinfulness in the self-realization of the artist. His account of Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, the early nineteenth-century forger, painter, and poisoner, is Wilde's most concise declaration of not just the congruity of crime with culture but also the conceivably beneficial influence of crime upon art,

and art upon life. Yet for Wilde, literature embodying such beliefs as he attributes to Wainewright may itself be a poisonous (and in the case of Wilde's character Dorian Gray, fatally poisonous) influence on the reader. Robert Hichens, author of *The Green Carnation*, a novel that Frank Harris believed poisoned Wilde's reputation in the mind of the general public, later published *Bella Donna* and other romantic neo-Aesthetic novels that indeed seem to have proved lethal in the celebrated case of the alleged would-be poisoner, Edith Thompson, hanged with her young lover for the murder of her husband. Thompson was an avid reader, a woman in constant imaginative traffic with popular romance novels of the day (which she passed on to her lover), including the works of Hichens, Wilde's erstwhile disciple and recorder. Thompson lived and died at a fatal intersection of poison and romance, culture and crime, giving a curious retrospective currency to Wilde's pre-prison writings.

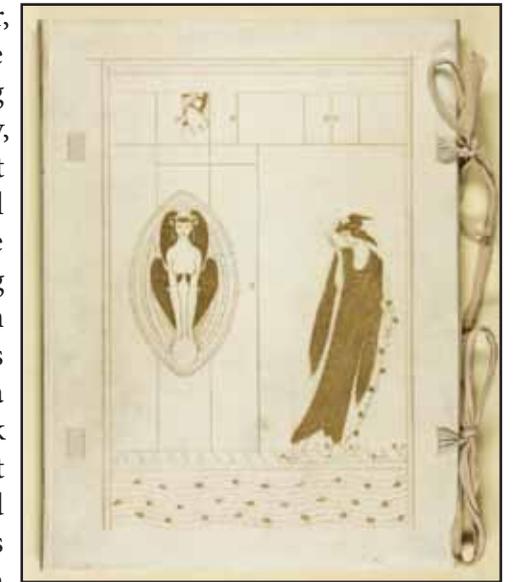
John Wilson Foster is a freelance writer and literary critic and an honorary research fellow at Queen's University Belfast, where he earned a B.A. and M.A. He has published books and articles on natural history, folklore, and Irish and English literature, and on RMS *Titanic*. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Oscar Wilde in the Marketplace

Rick Gekoski

January 13, 2013

From the very start of his career, Oscar Wilde wanted to be noticed. He was the leading literary celebrity of his day, honed his epigrams, and ensured that his books were issued in beautiful limited editions, which would be attractive to collectors. Following his death an enormous market in Wilde books, manuscripts, letters and memorabilia developed, and a number of unscrupulous forgers took advantage of the burgeoning market for Wilde items. In the 1920s and 1930s a number of major collections were formed, of which William Andrews Clark's holdings were the most significant. Oscar is still avidly sought after, and Gekoski, as a rare book dealer, has helped several collectors put together significant collections.

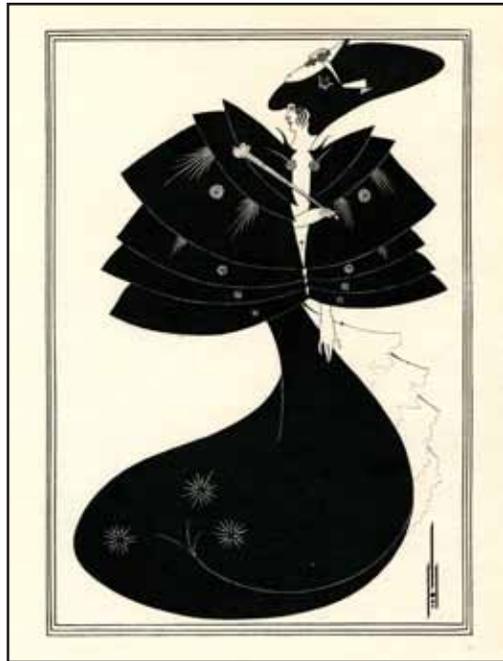


Dr. Rick Gekoski is one of the world's leading bookmen: a writer, rare-book dealer, broadcaster and academic. He is the author of three books which trace his major enthusiasms, *Staying Up*, *Tolkien's Gown* and *Outside of a Dog*, as well as a critical study of Joseph Conrad and the Bibliography of William Golding. He has established two private presses, The Sixth Chamber Press and The Bridgewater Press, which issue finely printed editions of leading writers, novelists and poets. As a broadcaster he has written and delivered three series of Rare Books, Rare People for BBC Radio 4, which he followed with two series of Lost, Stolen, or Shredded: The History of Some Missing Works of Art. He was a Man Booker Prize judge in 2005, and Chair of the Man Booker International Prize for 2011.

Oscar Wilde and the Visual Arts

Nicholas Frankel

March 31, 2015



Oscar Wilde had much to say about the visual and decorative arts. His relationships with leading figures in the art world – notably Whistler, Beardsley, Burne-Jones, and Ricketts, as well as the critics Ruskin, Pater, and Symonds – were integral to his ideas, and he was himself the subject for several important visual artworks, including the Clark's own Pennington portrait. For students of literature, Wilde's direct engagements with art and artists are important chiefly for their effects upon his practice as an imaginative writer. This lecture traced the influence of fine art upon Wilde's poetry, fiction, and

criticism, and demonstrated the centrality of the decorative and book arts to his published work. Increasingly Wilde came to see language itself as something iconic and inherently visual, and it is in his books of the early 1890s – *Dorian Gray*, *The Sphinx*, and the famous English edition of *Salome*, illustrated by Aubrey Beardsley – that we see the full flowering of Oscar Wilde's interest in the visual arts.

Nicholas Frankel is Professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University and the author or editor of a number of books relating to Oscar Wilde, including *The Invention of Oscar Wilde* (Reaktion Books, 2021) and *Oscar Wilde: The Unrepentant Years* (Harvard University Press, 2017). He is the recipient of fellowships from the National Humanities Center, The National Endowment for the Humanities, the Bibliographical Society of America, and the Yale Center for British Art.

Oscar Wilde, Rachilde, and the *Mercure de France*

Petra Dierkes-Thrun

February 1, 2017

This talk explored the little-known literary and personal relations between Oscar Wilde and notorious French Decadent writer, publisher, and salon hostess Rachilde (Marguerite Eymery-Vallette, 1860-1956), who played a crucial role in channeling Wilde's intellectual impact for the 20th century. Through her work at the Parisian literary magazine *Mercure de France* in the early 1890s, Rachilde provided Wilde with a network of avant-garde writers and journalists, including Wilde's longtime translator Henry Davray. The literary admiration between Rachilde and Wilde was mutual: traces of Rachilde's 1884 novel *Monsieur Vénus* can be found in a typescript of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* held at the Clark, and Wilde's *Salomé* impacted Rachilde's own work in Symbolist theater and her novel *La Jongleuse* (1900). After Wilde's 1895 trials and death in 1900, Rachilde also wrote articles defending homosexual love, reviewed and advertised Wilde's work in the *Mercure*, and commissioned translations that helped recuperate Wilde's artistic reputation in France and beyond.

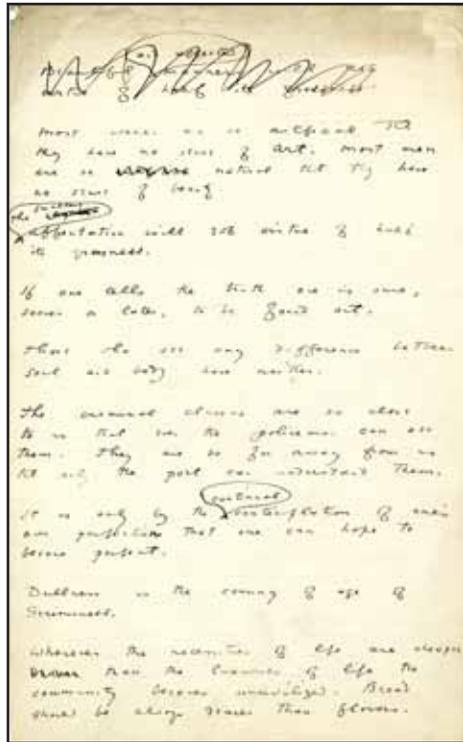


Petra Dierkes-Thrun is Lecturer in Comparative Literature and Assistant Vice Provost at Stanford University, where she teaches 19th- and early 20th-century British and Western European literature and culture, as well as feminist, gender and sexuality studies. Publications include an essay collection co-edited with Michael F. Davis entitled *Wilde's Other Worlds* (Routledge, 2018) and *Salomé's Modernity: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetics of Transgression* (University of Michigan Press, 2011). She is an editorial board member of *Volupté: Interdisciplinary Journal of Decadence* and was one of the founding editors of *The Latchkey: Journal of New Woman Studies*.

Wilde and the Law

Simon Stern

February 20, 2019



The legal dimensions of Wilde's writing and his life have often been explored through research on his trials; however, in his penchant for epigram and paradox, we might find another way to consider the legal dispositions of his work. Wilde's epigrams strive not so much to be true, as to reveal a kind of truth that the careful and measured cadences of argument, exposition, and evidence cannot. Similarly, the legal fiction (the *fictio legis*) produces a certain kind of truth, within the legal domain, that dispenses with these paradigmatically legal requirements. By placing various Wildean aphorisms in dialogue with legal fictions, we may find similar concerns with the importance of style and the power of artifice.

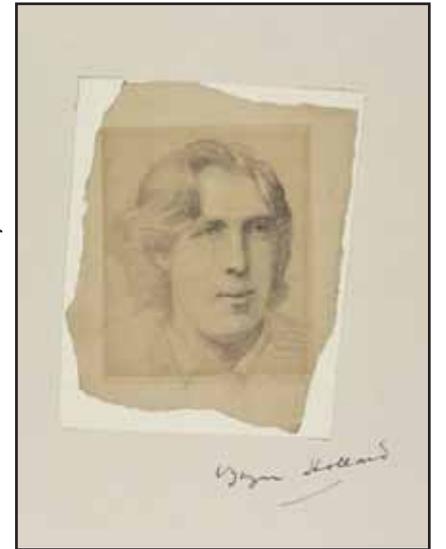
Simon Stern is Associate Professor of Law and English at the University of Toronto. His recent and forthcoming publications include articles on authorship and copyright law in 18th century England, the narrative features of judicial opinions, and the ironized treatment of Victorian obscenity law in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. He is co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Law and Humanities* (2020) and, with Robert Spoo, he edits the book series *Law and Literature* for Oxford University Press.

Confounding the Critics, Surviving the Scandal: The Remarkable Reputation of Oscar Wilde

Merlin Holland

April 28, 2022

Confounding the Critics, Surviving the Scandal: The Remarkable Reputation of Oscar Wilde, examines Wilde in the context of the 1890s and addresses the question of why he is so enduringly popular and why his work has such resonance for readers and playgoers of the new millennium, despite long periods in the last 120 years when he was considered something of a second-rate author. A sexual, political and literary rebel, he is as popular now as he was often unpopular then. A catalogue of lies and hypocrisy, shocking stories of homophobia, and underhand dealings, it covers some of the more bizarre aspects of the 'posthumous life' of Oscar as well as all the quarrels and squabbles among the friends and the enemies, in fact a sample of everything which has been an echo of that disastrous libel trial of 1895.



Merlin Holland writes, lectures and broadcasts regularly on the subject of his grandfather's life. His publications include *Irish Peacock and Scarlet Marquess*, the first complete record of the libel trial which ultimately brought Oscar Wilde to ruin and social disgrace, and *The Wilde Album*, a pictorial biography of Oscar Wilde. He is also the co-editor of *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde* and author of *Conversations with Oscar Wilde*, a series of imaginary conversations between him and his grandfather. At present he is working on an account of Oscar's 'posthumous life' which will show that his grandfather has caused even more trouble after his death than when he was alive. After Oscar's conviction in 1895, his wife, Constance, and their two sons were forced to move abroad and change their name to Holland. The family has never reverted to the name Wilde.

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