

Wild About Wilde

Newsletter

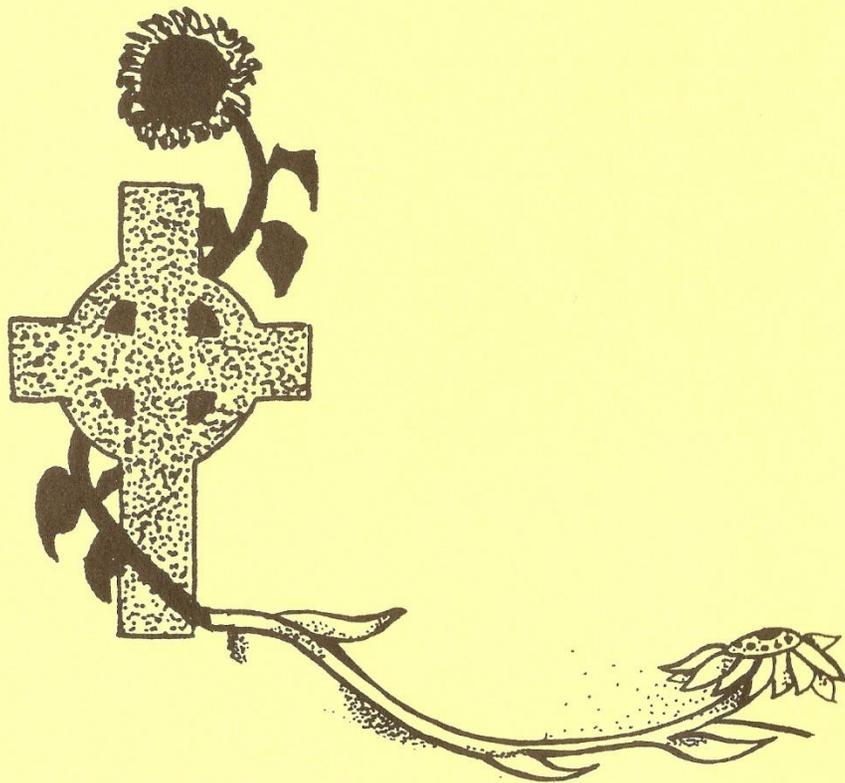
16th October 1990



Numbers 8 & 9

ISSN :1068-9737

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Mills Wilde



PUBLISHED TWICE YEARLY

WILD ABOUT WILDE

Dear Wild Wildeans,

There seems no end to the variety of interest that Oscar Wilde's work and life can generate. From London comes news that Donald Sinden has performed in a production of Oscar's life written by American John Gay. Not well received, one reviewer described the production as "thoroughly inept." From The Clayton County Bar Association in Jonesboro, Georgia, comes word that to celebrate Law Day 1990 (May 1st) they performed *The Cross Examination of Oscar Wilde* written by James W. Studdard. The drama was performed at the Clayton County Courthouse and must have been astonishing judging from Press reports which were positive and supportive. I understand that a video of the show will be available soon for purchase.

Something that ought really to be addressed here is the question of Wilde's works and the many bastardizations that we have to endure from the egos of both writers and directors who want to use Wilde for their own purposes. Gordon Blackwell's review of *Dorian Gray* is an excellent example of what can and does happen in the name of Oscar Wilde. One really has to ask - do these people actually understand Wilde and aestheticism? Or do they simply think that a work like *Dorian Gray* is 'just a good story' or a 'bad story' as the case may be? From Ken Russell's *Dorian Gray* to some even more bizarre productions they display an entire lack of knowledge of Wilde's art and place in literature. In fact they display an entire lack of knowledge of literature and reduce it to the level of Tales with a Message. The very antithesis of what Oscar Wilde stood for. Also in this issue Sylvia Day defends the Fairy Tales from similar ignorance. When Oscar said that "Art should never try to be popular, it is the public who must try and become artistic," he was not aware of what was to happen in this century in the name of art. Or indeed, in the name of Oscar Wilde.

We have some very interesting submissions in this newsletter. Patrick Horan a doctoral student at Rutgers University has sent in a very full account of his foray into researching the works of Oscar Wilde. It is very comprehensive and should prove of enormous value to anyone who, having long been in ignorance, finds that he wishes to initiate an investigation into Oscar. An irresistible and interminable impulse once curiosity has been aroused!

Of special interest also is a poem by Jack Kinsella in which he makes use of Irish mythology to bring expression to the last years of Oscar's life. For those who may not know, in Irish mythology Oscar is the son of Oisín the fascinating yet pathetic hero who was charmed into going to *Tír na nÓg* the Land of Youth. The poem is moving. Oscar Wilde's mother, who named him Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde, described his name as "grand, mystic and Ossianic." I think this poem captures both the spirit of her statement and the tragedy of Oscar's final years.

As is well known, Richard Ellmann's *Oscar Wilde* carried a substantial number of errors and a pamphlet, just published, checks up on the book page by page and also adds new information. The book is by Horst Schroeder and called *Additions and Corrections to Richard Ellmann's OSCAR WILDE* and may be ordered from Technische Universitat Braunschweig, Fachbereich 9, Abteilung Englisch, Bultenweg 74, 3300 Braunschweig, West Germany. 82 pp., DM 12.00.

Now to descend into more material aspects of Oscar's legacy we have some news from Sotheby's in London. On July 19th of this year eight items of Wildean interest went up for auction and the results were quite staggering. I have published a list of these items and the prices fetched on page 15. Oscar of course, would never approve of this and would rightfully declare that we were becoming concerned with "the price of everything and the value of nothing." His works and his contribution to art are, of course, beyond price.

Enjoy this issue!

All the best,



Carmel



IN THIS EDITION

Page 3.....	Researching Oscar Wilde: Patrick Horan
Page 7.....	The Fairy Tales: Sylvia Day
Page 10.....	Melmoth, The Wanderer: Jack Kinsella
Page 11.....	The Artist: Oscar Wilde
Page 12.....	Dorian Gray as Entertainment: Gordon Blackwell
Page 15.....	The Sotheby Sale Results
Page 16.....	Contact Information

RESEARCHING OSCAR WILDE

PATRICK M. HORAN

Due to the massive amount of criticism about Wilde and his literary works, the task of researching him may at first appear to be a monumental undertaking. I believe, however, that the student of Wildean literature must not forego the rewarding experience of researching this literary genius even if the task of sifting through library volumes of criticism appears overwhelming. The amount of research information available in American libraries is manageable, if one begins research in a systematic and practical way.

The difficulty with comprehensively researching Oscar Wilde is compounded by the following facts: Wilde moved in many different literary and social circles, he wrote in French as well as English and one of his favourite pastimes was writing numerous letters to people, many of whom did not realize how valuable these letters would be for future literary scholars. In any event, the surviving information available in our nation's libraries is plentiful enough to provide researchers of Oscar Wilde with interesting and useful insights into the personality and literary technique of this charmingly unconventional writer.

This article aims to provide the reader with an overview of the most comprehensive reference material available on Oscar Wilde and suggest possible research strategies that will ensure maximum productivity and minimum frustration because, as Wilde himself has said, "Time is waste of money" (*Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young*).

I would suggest consulting the general reference works discussed in this article before attempting an actual examination of specific biographical or literary criticism. These reference works (which are not the only ones available) compile listings of books, journals, and newspapers, and they are among the most useful bibliographies which state what books are available on Wilde, periodical indexes which list what journals are available and book reviews indexes found in libraries today which list where the reviews of Wilde's plays and other literary works may be located. The two bibliographies that I recommend contain information only about Wilde. The indexes, however, although recommended because of their thoughtful treatment of Wilde criticism, also contain useful information about other literary greats.

Bibliographies

There have been several bibliographies published on Oscar Wilde. However, the two most useful and comprehensive are:

Mason, Stuart (Christopher Millard). *Oscar Wilde. A Bibliography*. London: Bertram Rota Ltd., 1967. (Reprint of 1913 edition).

Mikhail, E.H. *Oscar Wilde. An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism*. NJ: Rowan & Littlefield, 1978.

Mason's book was the definitive Wilde bibliography of books published prior to 1967. It is extremely comprehensive (605 pages) and, according to Mason, it took him over ten years

to compile. Mason divides his work into two sections: Part One lists periodical publications and the remaining four hundred pages list works that were issued in book form. His listings are clearly organized and categorized by titles of literary works and subjects of Wilde.

The chief frustration with Mason's book is that it is difficult to locate a copy as Mason later published under his own name, Christopher Millard, and there have been several editions of the work issued under both names and published by two publishers. Probably the most accessible edition of the several reprinted ones is the reprinted 1967 edition which is printed under both names. Approximately 110 libraries claim to house this work (there is at least one in every State), and among these libraries are: University of Washington (Seattle), Duke University, Rutgers University, University of Wisconsin and the University of Georgia. The library of Congress call number is Z8975.M481914. The ISBN # is 0838313787.

E.H. Mikhail claims that Mason's research is not as comprehensive as Mason would have the reader believe. Mikhail is well aware of the difficulty with gathering comprehensive information about Wilde and suggests that perhaps this is why Mason's research may appear a bit incomplete. Rather than criticizing Mason's earlier compilation, Mikhail's 235 page bibliography is concerned with presenting more recent (pre-1978) information in a more carefully delineated manner. Mikhail's work is structured in three sections. Part One lists bibliographies about Wilde, Part Two lists published books by Wilde, and Part Three lists available criticism on Wilde. Mikhail also supplies a thorough listing of pre-1978 dissertations that deal (either in whole or in part) with Oscar Wilde. Mikhail's bibliography is considerably easier to locate than Mason's work, and approximately 275 libraries claim to house the 1978 edition of this carefully updated bibliographical work. The Library of Congress call number is Z8975.M541978. The ISBN # is 0847660141.

The most comprehensive bibliography for post-1978 Wilde information is the MLA (Modern Language Association) Bibliography. The 1979 and 1978 compilations list approximately 20 Oscar Wilde citations each, and the years 1981-1989 list 185 citations. Fortunately, MLA has compiled these recent years on CD-ROM (computer disc) which is used in many libraries and provides a quick and easy way to examine existing up-to-date references.

Indexes

Many researchers will be interested in locating works by Wilde which are not necessarily in book form. There are many varied indexes (works which list what journals and periodicals contain articles about Wilde and his writing) in the libraries across the country. To locate post-1978 periodicals (not listed in Mason or Mikhail), I would suggest the following three indexes; *The Humanities Index*, *British Humanities Indexes*, and *Essay and General Literature Index*. These indexes are useful because they are rather comprehensive and very easy to locate. They also cite a number of articles from many different literary journals.

Since all three indexes have editions that range from years much earlier than 1978, it might be profitable for the researcher who is interested in these earlier years to examine some of these indexes in conjunction with the Mason/Mikhail MLA bibliographical listings. If you are searching for post-1978 articles, however, these three indexes should be among the first

that you examine. They all contain listings of writings about Oscar Wilde, even though each index has a somewhat slightly different format and focus.

Each yearly issue of *The Humanities Index* (between April, 1977 and March, 1984) begins in April and lists citations of articles from that April to the following March. There are approximately 45 Oscar Wilde citations listed in the indexes between April of 1977 and March of 1984. The years 1984- 1990 list 37 citations, and these, like the recent *MLA Bibliography*, are compiled on CD-ROM (computer disc) for easy access. Obviously, with 82 citations listed between the years 1977 - 1990, *The Humanities Index* provides perhaps the most complete listing of recent available articles and should therefore be consulted early on in the research process.

The British Humanities Index is very similar to *The Humanities Index*, but as its name suggests, focuses only on British Literature. Although the number of Oscar Wilde citations listed in *The British Humanities Index* is considerably less than *The Humanities Index*, this compilation includes articles that are not included in *The Humanities Index*.

The Essay and General Literature Index compiles titles of essays analysing literary topics and authors. This compilation would be an interesting reference source to use in addition to *The Humanities Index* and to examine not so much because it is comprehensive (between the years 1975-1990, it lists approximately only 40 citations), but because its varied collection of titles suggests some interesting ways to analyze writers like Wilde.

Book Reviews

Book reviews on Wilde are plentiful and help to document the fact that he was and remains a very controversial literary figure. The two book review indexes which should be examined first are *The Book Review Index* and *The Book Review Digest*. They are both readily available in almost every American library. Although *The Book Review Digest* is certainly not as comprehensive as *The Book Review Index*, it is a source that effectively describes the published book reviews for any given year. *The Book Review Index*, on the other hand, is perhaps the most convenient and comprehensive source for identifying where the periodical reviews that have been published for any given year are located. Once again, the locations of pre-1978 reviews can be found in the bibliographies, but these two indexes may provide extensive additional information regarding Oscar Wilde reviews.

There is one very interesting and useful work (even though it is about several writers and deals only partly with Wilde) that should be mentioned. It is a collection of different essays which discuss what research information is available about some of the more famous Irish writers and is cited:

Finneran, Richard J., ed. *Anglo-Irish Literature. A Review of Research*. N.Y.: MLA, 1976.

Pages 48 - 137 contain an essay entitled "Oscar Wilde" by Ian Fletcher and John Stokes who supply succinct annotations about available Oscar Wilde research information and categorize their information into the following thirteen areas; 1. Bibliographies 2. Editions 3. Letters 4. Manuscripts 5. Biographies 6. Major Critical Studies 7. Shorter Critical Studies

8. Plays 9. Fiction 10. Criticism 11. De Profundis 12. Poetry and 13. Wilde among his contemporaries and later writers.

The Fletcher and Stokes bibliographical overview is a good starting point for the researcher who is interested in getting a general idea of what Wilde criticism has been written. Because it is not as comprehensive as Mason or Mikhail, it is an excellent supplement rather than an alternative to the bibliographies. Furthermore, because this work has a publication date of 1976 it does not uncover recent information available about Wilde. It would be useful for the researcher who is primarily concerned with pre-1976 research information. Its ISBN# is 0873522524.

In conclusion, I am certain that Wilde himself would want his researchers to enjoy the experience of exploring the many and varied reference materials available in today's American libraries. The massive amount of criticism about him and his literary works should not overwhelm the researcher, but rather direct him or her towards a manageable topic which will prove to be both an intellectual and emotionally rewarding experience. Wilde wryly notes in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, "Genius lasts longer than Beauty. That accounts for the fact that we take such pains to over-educate ourselves." Needless to say, education, let alone over-education about this controversial genius and his brilliant literary creations cannot occur until we take the necessary "pains" to first become educated and skilled in researching him.



THE FAIRY TALES

SYLVIA DAY

"in the entire sphere of human relations that imaginative sympathy ... in the Sphere of Art is the sole secret of creation."

De Profundis

It is grievous that the genius of Oscar Wilde had so long failed to make its impact not only upon the reading public but upon scholars who routinely search out appropriate subjects upon which to vent an academic assault. Wilde was often mocked, treated with condescension, and too frequently misunderstood. Happily that trend is somewhat reversed, and his reputation as an indisputably major writer is gaining recognition. But sufficient homage is not being paid to a body of work that for brilliance, inventiveness, beauty of expression and a profound sense of the human condition is peerless.

Though there is familiarity with Wilde's plays, the novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (admittedly long celebrated,) the essays and poetry, and the tragic *De Profundis*, his exquisite stories in the collection entitled *The House of Pomegranates* are little known. It is fitting that Wilde harked back to his Celtic tradition as he did in several of the stories especially "The Fisherman and His Soul", "The Star Child" and "The Selfish Giant". Other stories in the group, "The Nightingale and the Rose", "The Birthday of the Infanta", although not typically fairy tales, with "The Young King" and "The happy Prince", linger long in memory. All are deeply, uncommonly moving.

In our modern, dehumanized time it is unseemly to feel deeply. We have ousted tragedy and have instead elevated the commonplace together with a shallow sentimentality. Melpomene had been replaced by a specious realism that leaves everything of importance unexplored. Too many, believing they are modern and mistaking the definition of modernity, gullibly accept a form of literary and artistic expression so boring it is speedily replaced with other strikingly similar manifestations. Afraid of feeling, limited by a narrow exposure to the great body of fine writing and art of the past, we find ourselves suffering an aridity of thought and creativity.

Even in so respectable a publishing house as Penguin, *The House of Pomegranates* is referred to as "several stories for children," a description as bald as claiming that the Parthenon is an old building. It is only necessary to read "The Fisherman and His Soul" or "The Young King" to realize that these are not "children's stories" alone but timeless tales of lapidary beauty, affecting young and old alike. One falters in attempting to describe the incomparable prose and its virtual incandescence. The longest of the group, "The Fisherman

and His Soul” depicts the great love of a fisherman for a mermaid he has caught in his net. He seeks to join her but must first divest himself of his soul. The fisherman is enabled to do so with the aid of fearful occult powers. The soul remonstrates with the fisherman at this rejection and pleads for the fisherman's heart at the very least.

"But with what will I love my love?" the canny fisherman replies.

As he is ready to descend into the sea the soul extracts a promise that they will meet on the shore every year. On parting the soul travels widely and sees many wonders which he enthusiastically describes to the fisherman in the hope he may be persuaded to leave the mermaid. It is not successful.

At the end of the third year the soul paints a vivid picture of a dancing girl with "pretty, little feet." The fisherman recalls that the mermaid has no feet and he is overcome with a desire to see the little dancer. Thereupon he joins the soul and they depart. As soon as his curiosity is satisfied, the fisherman returns and calls to the mermaid. Alas, his soul is now within and may not be sent away again. The resolution of the tragic tale can only be told by the author.

Wholly unlike “The Fisherman and His Soul” are “The Young King” and “The Happy Prince”. In these stories Wilde exhibits a compassion for the poor that belies the character ascribed to him as a mere flamboyant aesthete. In *The New York Review of Books* (1/18/90) Professor Stuart Hampshire of Oxford University, reviewing a biography of J.B. Ackerley, is critical of both Wilde and Waugh who he claims " ... triumphed on the genteel pretenses, not for the sake of an ideal aristocratic extravagance ... but for the sake of the ideals of spontaneity and freedom from inhibition."

I'm afraid that Professor Hampshire merely echoes the unfortunate stereo-type that has too long been extant, one that a knowledge of Wilde's work inevitably dispels. Even a casual reading of the tales in *The House of Pomegranates* reveals a writer whose encompassing vision contrasts powerfully with the false image of Wilde as uncaring and superficial.

In “The Young King”, terrifying nightmares crowd his restless dreams just hours prior to his anointment as the new king. Scene after scene depicting the harrowing and tortuous lives of those whose toil is intended to prepare the magnificent garments he is to don for the ceremony, are chillingly clear. The future king is revolted by the troubled dreams and the sacrifices made by the poor, even the supreme one of their deaths so that he may be luxuriously apparelled and he determines to dispense with all adornment and accept the crown garbed in his simple garments. Here Wilde evokes a panoramic stage on which is played out the dismay and astonishment of the Bishop and the Chamberlain, at the young man's perceived recalcitrance. He is obdurate and prevails. And as he is crowned, a radiant light streams through the windows of the church, bathing the newly crowned king in a luminous splendour. The spectators are awed and hail him with delight.

The happy prince, the hero in the story of the same name, is a statue adorned with jewels. When a little swallow, on her way south rests at his base, intending to do so briefly, he

detains her, pleading with her to remove his jewels and bring them to the poor. Here too, a tender sympathy for them suffuses the tale.

Where, one cannot help but wonder, did Oscar Wilde, who shared with his peers a sheltered life, learn to portray with such accuracy the dark lineaments of poverty? The answer may lie in an intuitiveness described by Terrence, "What is human is not foreign to me." This aptly characterizes Wilde who much like a fisherman, netted the multiple emotions that comprise the human heart. Irony was not excluded as we note in "The Nightingale and the Rose" and "The Birthday of the Infanta". In both the cruelty of the young is stunningly portrayed. The little nightingale, pouring out her heart's blood so that the student may bring a red rose to the young girl who makes it a condition of accompanying him to the ball or the tender evocation of the little dwarf who mistakes the interest of the Princess in him as the manifestation of love, are heart breaking. But never do they descend into sentimentality. Sorrow informs them, not bathos.

Though Wilde needs no defense, in stating that he felt the need of "the compulsion to shock the principal source of uninhibited comedy," one cannot but feel that Professor Hampshire's knowledge of Wilde is cursory. Surely the stories in *The House of Pomegranates* reveal no such propensity. But if wit abounds in Wilde's plays, it is only one facet of them. He had an uncanny prescience of the tangled strands of emotion that twine our lives. This is clearly present in *Lady Windemere's Fan* where more than wit gives the play its greatness. Mrs. Erlynne may indeed be a notorious, flippant woman but the pain she suffers at having abandoned her daughter is real. Similarly the banter of Viscount Goring in *An Ideal Husband* is only a foil that deepens the play's denouement as Lady Chiltern's rigid, puritanical morality is appropriately shattered on learning how feeble it is as an active ingredient of love.

Wilde's erudition alone would fit him to be hailed with admiration, but it is only one aspect of the many-faceted genius. If he remains inexplicable to some, it is only because he is judged superficially and not on the basis of his singular body of work. It is only necessary to listen as he "tells" the lovely tales to realize that his great gifts are infused with a tender nature. Toward this end nothing more aptly conduces to such an understanding of him and his literary expression than his own words: " ... the imaginative sympathy ... in the Sphere of Art is the sole secret of creation."

MELMOTH, THE WANDERER

Sebastian Melmoth walked
a wandering walk,
lead-footed steps on rainy boulevards
clicking solitary time.

"My grief is to be living. "

Bereft of strength or gift of dreams,
suddenly old and limping,
seeing in his own face
in the bread shop window
a stark white hunger,
the look of all exiles.

"My grief is to be living. "

His Niamh with golden hair
had loved him and caressed him
and made his heart young
and called him King of the Young
in shirt of yellow silk.

"My grief is to be living. "

Wrapped in Oisín's mantle,
his crooked old back
leaning on a bare walking stick,
waiting in vain for Patrick of the Bells
to make the barren stick bloom.

"My grief, my grief, my grief."

JACK KINSELLA

THE ARTIST

(From Poems in Prose)

One evening there came into his soul the desire to fashion an image of *The Pleasure that abideth for a Moment*. And he went forth into the world to look for bronze. For he could only think in bronze. But all the bronze of the whole world had disappeared, nor anywhere in the whole world was there any bronze to be found, save only the bronze of the image of *The Sorrow that endureth for Ever*.

Now this image he had himself, and with his own hands, fashioned, and had set it on the tomb of the one thing he had loved in life. On the tomb of the dead thing he had most loved had he set this image of his own fashioning, that it might serve as a sign of the love of man that dieth not, and a symbol of the sorrow of man that endureth forever. And in the whole world there was no other bronze save the bronze of this image.

And he took the image he had fashioned, and set it in a great furnace, and gave it to the fire.

And out of the bronze of the image of *The Sorrow that endureth for Ever* he fashioned an image of *The Pleasure that abideth for a Moment*.

OSCAR WILDE



DORIAN GRAY AS ENTERTAINMENT

GORDON BLACKWELL

The Picture of Dorian Gray has a long history of being dramatized, perhaps because as Oscar Wilde said of his novel, "Each man sees his own sins in Dorian Gray. What Dorian Gray's sins are no one knows." (letter to *The Scots Observer*).

A forgotten silent film was made in 1913 by Ideal Films. In 1945 a credible adaptation was made at MGM with George Sanders as lord Henry, Hurd Hatsfield as Dorian and Angela Lansbury as Sibyl Vane; in black and white, it is available now on home video and well worth viewing. Television appropriated the plot in 1973 (ABC) and in 1976 (BBC) with John Gielgud as Henry from teleplay by John Osborne. The latter is reputed to be the best adaption.

The novel has been staged as a drama several times, the most recent one in New York by Mary Wolford and Andrew Arnault, with music by Barbara Benary. It was performed Off Broadway for a few weeks last April. The text of *Dorian*, the novel, abridged or complete, has been on BBC radio (1988) and several times on audio tapes (best reader: Peter Egan).

This year, Wilde's story inspired two different musical plays performed Off Broadway, where creativity still thrives.

(1) Faithful in Tone if Not in Tune

Dorian, the first of these musicals, had a strong book by Nana Barcan, music by Michael Rubell and lyrics by them both, with direction by Robert Petito. The American Ensemble Company undertook it. Some of the scenes were drawn almost directly from Wilde's inimitable dialogue. Minor alterations of the plots were acceptable.

William Broderick, who had stage presence and a good singing voice, starred as a charismatic, troubled Dorian. Hank Schob was less impressive as a spineless, effete Lord Henry. Joel Briel portrayed a sympathetic Basil Hallward, unfortunately a small role here. We saw his portrait only once. The initial close bond between Basil and Dorian was poorly established, providing little motivation for Basil's murder. Here Dorian might more logically have knifed lord Henry.

Paula Newman played lady Victoria with an unVictorian licentiousness that the audience relished. Few of the cast bothered with an accent except the fine singer-actor Dan Frank who played James Vane. With over 25 songs, *Dorian* encompassed many musical styles in a score that was more energetic than evocative of nineteenth century England. "Dissipation"

humourously quoted the opening notes of Handel's Hallelujah chorus. In a rowdy "Prince Charming," dockside characters babbled as if they were in a monolithic musical of today.

I liked the nostalgic waltz, "Since We Were Young" and Dorian's final Confession." Other compelling songs included "I love Him," sung by sprightly Kyle Waters as Sibyl; it was not an old-fashioned ditty like the one Lansbury sang in the movie, but a love ballad. "The lady Can't Act," referring to Sibyl's histrionic fiasco, was a catchy trio for male voices. Victoria belted out the bawdy "Men on My Mind" and a nifty tango, "Marriage," which was divorce-oriented.

Variety kept the evening with *Dorian* buoyant. This well done musical play deserves a revival.

(2) Melodious Melodrama

Robert Cioffi composed many rich melodies for the other new musical, *Dorian Gray*. However, over half of Joseph Bravaco's script for this was not based on the novel. His lyrics were serviceable except for obscuring Dorian's crucial wish to let his portrait age and having him sing instead "If I were the Picture," which was not the same thing.

Oscar Wilde appeared at the beginning and end of the show to authenticate the quasi-Wildean proceedings. Here are some of the changes. Lord Henry was already divorced at the start and lusted for Dorian briefly with "A Love that Dares (sic) Not Speak." Dorian confronted James Vane and asked him to introduce his sister Sybil (as spelled here) who was a barmaid. Dorian seduced and abandoned her, apparently from boredom since he lacked the excuse of her bad acting. Dorian joined an ensemble of men and women at the Parlour of Sin in an arm-waving symbolic orgy.

The second act took place 20 years later and consisted largely of invented business to reveal Dorian's evil. He wooed Henry's new fiancée away from him. He stabbed James and a woman to death. He accidentally shot a second woman and sneered at her demise. He mutilated a third woman's face. He tried to choke at least one other person (I lost count). By then only a murderer in the audience was seeing his own sins in this unmasked monster.

Minor puzzles arose in the plot alterations. Why did Dorian go around the world? Why did Basil's niece, one of several new characters, distrust Dorian? Why did James, who knew Dorian well in Act I, let himself be convinced in Act II that Dorian was another man? Had 20 years at sea fogged James's eyesight?

One successful innovation dramatized the death of Basil. The painter stalked Dorian with a concealed handgun, intending to shoot this fiend. They fought, the gun went off and Basil fell. In the finale, Dorian slashed the horrid old face in the canvas, which we could also see, and fell dead.

The more than 20 songs were likeable. Dorian's ex-girlfriends harmonized in the lovely quintet, "Who Is Her A lilting lay worth repeating was" A Perfect Kind of Love." Dorian gave out a soaring melody for "The Seduction." Sybil sang a melting "What Price Happiness." A

chorus of seven, men and women, remained on stage during most of the action, acting as London gossips, tavern customers or transition singers.

The cast of this musical included the fine singers Doug Welty (Dorian), Gary Reed (Henry; Wilde), Stephen Newport (Basil), Ann Leenay and Marie Vitalo. Margaret Wehrle (Sybil) had a clear if thin soprano voice. Michael Griffo (James) had trouble controlling his voice the night I attended.

The woman next to me said, "It's years since I read the book but I think this play is true to it." I told her to read the novel again.

I recommend Cioffe's score for *Dorian Gray* which would delight amateur or professional singers. I wish Bravaco had used more of Oscar Wilde and less of his own fabrications.



RESULTS FROM THE JULY 1990 SALE AT SOTHEBY'S OF LONDON

- Lot 86 *Oscar Wilde Works*, 15 volumes, limited to 1000 copies. Methuen and Co., 1908 - 1922. Sold for £2,000
- Lot 87 *The Gadfly*. Periodical in large part published by Robert Ross in his first term at King's College. Included in the lot was a caricature of Wilde. Sold for £450. .
- Lot 88 *A House of Pomegranates*, first edition, presentation copy, inscribed by the author to Alfred Douglas "Bosie from Oscar". 1891. Sold for £3,000.
- Lot 89 *Oscar Wilde. The works*. 14 volumes, limited to 80 copies. Methuen and Co., 1908. Unsold at £2,400.
- Lot 90 Series of autograph notes sent to "The Pall Mall Gazette" in defence of his review of Harry Quilter's "Sententiae Artis". 18-23 November 1886. Sold for £3,000.
- Lot 91 Oscar Wilde fine autograph letter signed to Mrs. Singleton "Violet Fane", about vegetarianism. Apparently unpublished. Sold for £2,800.
- Lot 92 A collection comprising twenty-five finely bound works by or relating to Oscar Wilde. Included Newdigate Prize Poem, *Ravenna*, first edition, 1878. *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, 1902. *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* by C.3.3. 1898. *The Importance of Being Earnest*, first edition, 1899. *De Profundis*, first edition, 1905. *Intentions*, copyright edition, 1891. Sold for £8,500.
- Lot 93 Autograph letter signed, to Mrs. Singleton, accepting her invitation to visit. Sold for £2,400.



from **The Rise of Historical Criticism ...**

His (Aristotle's) own method is essentially historical though by no means empirical. On the contrary, this far-seeing thinker, rightly styled "*il maestro di color che sanno*" may be said to have apprehended clearly that the true method is neither exclusively empirical nor exclusively speculative, but rather a union of both in the process called Analysis or the Interpretation of Facts, which has been defined as the application to facts of such general conceptions as may fix the important characteristics of the phenomena and present them permanently in their true relations. He too was the first to point out, what even in our own day is incompletely appreciated, that nature, including the development of man, is not full of incoherent episodes like a bad tragedy, that inconsistency and anomaly are as impossible in the moral as they are in the physical world, and that where the superficial observer thinks he sees a revolution the philosophical critic discerns merely the gradual and rational evolution of the inevitable results of certain antecedents.

*The master of those who know

Oscar Wilde

Copyright © 1990 Carmel McCaffrey
Editor and Publisher

Except for reference purposes no reproduction of any kind without the permission of the publisher

<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.