
WHEN WORDS FAILED EVEN OSCAR WILDE

Oscar Wilde's wooing of a magazine editor shows that everyone is vulnerable when passion is involved, says Jenny McCartney

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/jennymccartney/8011000/When-words-failed-even-Oscar-Wilde.html>
Time: 03:57

By Jenny McCartney
Published: 7:00PM BST 18 Sep 2010



There was something curiously touching about Oscar Wilde's letters, revealed for the first time last week, to a young male magazine editor whom he evidently hoped to get to know rather better. In 1887, Wilde wrote numerous times to Alsager Vian, perpetually attempting to hook him for tea or something stronger, with promises of talks about a "journalism article". In one letter, he suggests a dinner "at Pagani's in Portland Street on Friday 7.30pm. No dress, just ourselves and a flask of Italian wine. Afterwards we will smoke cigarettes and talk over the journalism article. Could we go to your rooms? I am so far off, and clubs are difficult to talk in." The hint to posterity that talk was not the priority was given by the flustered phrase: "Till Thursday night. This is all wrong, isn't it."

Wilde was known for his flamboyant public polish, but nowhere is the human animal more fully revealed than in the vulnerable act of attempted seduction, making urgent use of clumsy and transparent ruses.

But the excitement generated by this epistolary find is also a reminder of how indebted historians, and the rest of us, are to the vanishing form of the letter. A reawakening of a long-buried frisson can be transmitted even by the smell of old paper and the sight of inked, faded words snaking across the page.

What would future historians discover in the now-ubiquitous text message, imagining such things were even preserved? "UR hot. CU @ 7.30 in Pagani's? Xxx, Oscar."

WHY OSCAR WILDE IS TO BLAME FOR TV'S FIXATION WITH HOME IMPROVEMENT

When television makeover shows began appearing on our screens a decade ago, they were credited with starting a home improvement revolution.

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/news/8003099/Why-Oscar-Wilde-is-to-blame-for-TV-fixation-with-home-improvement.html>
Time: 05:11

By Anita Singh, Showbusiness Editor
Published: 7:00AM BST 15 Sep 2010

Last year alone, Britons spent £20 billion on decor and furnishings, according to the latest figures. Yet the idea of making a house a beautiful place to live stretches back a little further than Changing Rooms and Grand Designs.

A new exhibition at the Victoria & Albert museum celebrates the Aesthetic Movement, the late 19th century 'cult of beauty' which transformed Britain into a nation of design lovers. It includes works by the painters Whistler,

Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones, the writer Oscar Wilde and the textile designer William Morris.

Aestheticism prized beauty above all else and was the first artistic movement to inspire an entire lifestyle, encompassing interiors, fashion, sculpture, painting and literature. Where once the notion of decorating one's house with beautiful pieces was the preserve of the upper classes, Aestheticism introduced it to the masses.

Today's glut of makeover shows and magazines devoted to home decor can be traced directly to the Aesthetic movement, according to Stephen Calloway, curator of the exhibition.

"It was a style adopted across every level of society. At the start of the 1860s and 1870s there were a few rich people with wonderful houses. By the 1890s it had reached the suburbs," Mr Calloway said. "Certainly in the 1870s and 1880s a whole slew of books came out telling you how to recreate it.

"The key to the Aesthetic ideal was about not just individual pieces of art or furniture but the complete effect. The way people think now about interiors as a place of comfort and delight at being surrounded by beautiful things comes from Aestheticism. It was the beginning of the lifestyle movement."

The poster boy for the movement was Oscar Wilde, who popularised Aesthetics in the early 1880s by writing and lecturing on the notion of "art for art's sake". Mr Calloway said: "He was the original celebrity style guru who promoted the idea of beauty in the home. In many ways, the story of Aestheticism ends with the trial and fall of Oscar Wilde. Once he was imprisoned, the Aesthetic movement began to totter."

The Cult of Beauty: The Aesthetic Movement 1860-1900 opens in April next year and is the most comprehensive exhibition ever staged on the subject.

An intriguing mystery surrounds one of the exhibits: the designs for a 23-foot frieze exquisitely decorated with peacocks. The frieze was commissioned in 1872 by Frederick Lehmann, a wealthy businessman, for his house at 15 Berkeley Square in central London.

Architect George Aitchison came up with the design and artist Albert Moore painted the frieze, which adorned the front drawing room in what was then one of the most celebrated Aesthetic houses in the capital. Moore's original etchings and Aitchison's design drawing are on public display for the first time as part of the show.

Yet the fate of the original frieze is unknown. The Berkeley Square house was bombed in the Second World War and Mr Calloway said: "There is no record of what happened to the frieze from around 1900 onwards. If it was still in the house, then it was destroyed in the bombing. But there is an outside chance that the frieze was removed before that and it would be wonderful if someone came forward now to say they know what happened to it."

DOESN'T STEPHEN FRY KNOW THAT OSCAR WILDE DIED A CATHOLIC?

URL: <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/willheaven/100053764/doesnt-stephen-fry-know-that-oscar-wilde-died-a-catholic/>
Time: 05:22

By Will Heaven Society Last updated: September 16th, 2010



A curt and unfriendly letter appeared in yesterday's Guardian, denouncing the Pope's state visit to Britain. First it pilloried Benedict XVI as a "head of state", in charge of an "organisation" responsible for things like the size of families in poor countries and segregation in schools. Then it finished, quite perversely, with a hands-on-hip tone: "In any case, we reject the masquerading of the Holy See as a state and the pope as a head of state as merely a convenient fiction to amplify the international influence of the Vatican."

The first signatory caught my eye: it was not The Spleen himself, Richard Dawkins, but Stephen Fry. And for some reason - I think because of his newly discovered love letters - I had Oscar Wilde on my mind. So I wondered: does Stephen Fry, who practically worships Oscar Wilde, know that his idol had converted to Catholicism by the time he died?

I'm fairly sure Stephen Fry won't have read further than the headline of this blog post. But if he is reading this, he'll be tearing his hair out in great clumps about now. Not only because he dislikes journalists, but because I think he probably feels a personal connection to Oscar Wilde - he even refers to him as "Oscar" - and would refuse to accept the conversion as genuine.

Oscar Wilde and Stephen Fry have a lot in common. Both gay, obviously, but much more than that: in their own times, they have been very public and culture-changing figures. They have

both craved fame in an almost unhealthy fashion. As Fry admitted in a Twitter interview with Johann Hari yesterday, from a young age he "really did ache to be a star. I want to be famous, admired, stared at, and known." Wilde perhaps felt the same - which would explain his dandyish costumes and also, to some extent, his demise. (He was arguably quite foolish to take on a bigoted oaf like the Marquess of Queensbury in a court of law.)

But when it comes to religion, the similarities end. Stephen Fry is an outspoken atheist and frequently appears in debates arguing, for example, that the Catholic Church is not "a force for good in the world". Wilde, on the other hand, was fascinated by Catholicism, in particular (like the present pope) with the aesthetics of the liturgy and significance of the ritual. He took to attending Mass while at Oxford University and even, when he travelled to Rome, attended an audience with Pope Pius IX.

Much later on in life, just after he had been released from Reading Gaol in 1897, Oscar Wilde begged the Jesuits at Farm Street to take him in for a six-month retreat. Cruelly, they refused. He left Britain altogether and ended up in Rome where, again, he attended papal audiences and soaked up Roman Catholicism, especially Catholic art.

Wilde was a dying man by the time of his conversion in Paris in 1900. I suspect Fry would presume that he was in some way "broken", too. But it was Wilde's most loyal friend Robbie Ross who - having spent months with him in Rome and Paris - called the priest. And it was he who witnessed the baptism of Oscar Wilde and his entry into the Roman Catholic Church.

It's a tragic story really - and one that says a lot about the cruelties of the time. But Wilde's profound appreciation of Catholicism does at least counterbalance the crass anti-popeery espoused by Stephen Fry today.

RUPERT EVERETT RELIVES OSCAR WILDE'S

LOUCHE FINAL YEARS

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/celebritynews/8025262/Rupert-Everett-relives-Oscar-Wildes-louche-final-years.html>
Time: 05:24

Rupert Everett checks into London hotel where Oscar Wilde was arrested for gross indecency.

By Richard Eden
Published: 7:11PM BST 25 Sep 2010



Few, if any, actors would appear to go to the lengths that Rupert Everett does when it comes to getting into character. As part of the preparation for his forthcoming film about Oscar Wilde's final years, Everett has checked into the Cadogan Hotel in Chelsea, where the Irish playwright was arrested in 1895 and charged with "committing acts of gross indecency with other male persons".

Everett has the same room, No 118, where Wilde stayed and has, somewhat eccentrically, been communing with Psychic Sally to see if he can get in touch with Wilde himself for inspiration.

Everett's film about Wilde, which he wrote and plans to star, is to be called Sebastian Melmoth, which was Wilde's pen name.

The film has been a long-held passion and now

the financing has finally been agreed with a German company and shooting scheduled to begin next year.

"All the films about Oscar end when he goes to prison," Everett tells Mandrake. "For me, the interesting part is the last three years. Oscar was the last great vagabond of the 19th century."

In June, Mandrake reported that Everett, the star of St Trinian's, had learnt that his grandfather had an "alternative family" in Africa.

The existence of Jacob Everett, the actor's 84-year-old uncle, who lives outside the Nigerian capital, Lagos, was uncovered by researchers on the television programme Who Do You Think You Are ...?

OSCAR WILDE LOVE LETTERS DISCOVERED

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/8004271/Oscar-Wilde-love-letters-discovered.html>
Time: 06:15

A collection of affectionate letters written by Oscar Wilde to a young male magazine editor have been revealed for the first time.

Published: 9:01AM BST 15 Sep 2010



The letters written by Oscar Wilde at the height of his fame are expected to fetch £10,000

A collection of letters written by a love-lorn Oscar Wilde to a young male magazine editor have been revealed for the first time.

One of the letters Wilde wrote to fellow editor Alsager Vian Photo: CATERS

A collection of letters written by a love-lorn Oscar Wilde to a young male magazine editor have been revealed for the first time.

One of the letters Wilde wrote to fellow editor Alsager Vian Photo: CATERS

Penned in his own hand, the revealing letters appear to show the poet struggling with his homosexuality at a time when it was punishable by prison.

In one he muses: "This is all wrong isn't it."

In fact eight years after he wrote these letters Wilde began his famous two years in HMP Reading for "gross indecency" with the son of a lord.

The intriguing collection is now expected to fetch £10,000 or more when it goes to auction later this month.

During his time writing and editing for Society Magazines in London Wilde wrote a series of letters in 1887 to fellow editor Alsager Vian inviting him for 'cigars and Italian wine'

The letters are expected to fetch more than £10,000 at auction.

The main content relates to the business that would take place between an editor and his writers.

However, after the first letter Wilde continually invites Vian to visit him: "Will be at home tomorrow afternoon, so glad if you come down for tea.

"We must have an Evening together soon over our

journalism article."

In the final letter Wilde goes to great lengths to encourage a meeting.

"Come and dine at Paganini's in Portland Street on Friday 7.30pm. No dress, just ourselves and a flask of Italian wine.

"Afterwards we will smoke cigarettes and Talk over the Journalistic article, could we go to your rooms, I am so far off, and clubs are difficult to Talk in."

"Till Thursday night. This is all wrong, isn't it. Truly yours, Oscar Wilde"

The small but revealing group of letters sent are to be sold by Fine Art Auctioneers Bamfords of Derby on the September 24.

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born in 1854 and after leaving Oxford Magdalene College seemed to lack direction in his career.

From 1886-89 he wrote for and edited Society Magazines.

In 1895 he was accused by the Marquess of Queensbury of corrupting his son, Lord Alfred Douglas.

Wilde sued and lost, the court declared that Queensbury's accusation was justified, 'true in substance and in fact'.

On May 25, 1895 Wilde and Alfred Taylor were convicted of gross indecency and sentenced to two years' hard labour.

Wilde was released on the 19 May 1897 and left England the next day for the continent never to return and to spend his last three years under the name Sebastian Melmoth.

His final address was the Hôtel d'Alsace in Paris and he died there of cerebral meningitis on 30 November 1900 aged 46.

Today fans from across the world come to visit his grave and statue in the Père Lachaise cemetery, in Paris.

WHY OSCAR WILDE IS TO BLAME FOR TV'S FIXATION WITH HOME IMPROVEMENT

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-news/8003099/Why-Oscar-Wilde-is-to-blame-for-TV-fixation-with-home-improvement.html>
Time: 06:17

When television makeover shows began appearing on our screens a decade ago, they were credited with starting a home improvement revolution.

By Anita Singh, Showbusiness Editor
Published: 7:00AM BST 15 Sep 2010

Last year alone, Britons spent £20 billion on decor and furnishings, according to the latest figures. Yet the idea of making a house a beautiful place to live stretches back a little further than Changing Rooms and Grand Designs.

A new exhibition at the Victoria & Albert museum celebrates the Aesthetic Movement, the late 19th century 'cult of beauty' which transformed Britain into a nation of design lovers. It includes works by the painters Whistler, Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones, the writer Oscar Wilde and the textile designer William Morris.

Aestheticism prized beauty above all else and was the first artistic movement to inspire an entire lifestyle, encompassing interiors, fashion, sculpture, painting and literature. Where once the notion of decorating one's house with beautiful pieces was the preserve of the upper classes, Aestheticism introduced it to the masses.

Today's glut of makeover shows and magazines devoted to home decor can be traced directly to the Aesthetic movement, according to Stephen Calloway, curator of the exhibition.

"It was a style adopted across every level of society. At the start of the 1860s and 1870s there were a few rich people with wonderful houses. By the 1890s it had reached the suburbs," Mr Calloway said. "Certainly in the 1870s and 1880s a whole slew of books came out telling you how to recreate it.

"The key to the Aesthetic ideal was about not just individual pieces of art or furniture but the complete effect. The way people think now about interiors as a place of comfort and delight at being surrounded by beautiful things comes from Aestheticism. It was the beginning of the lifestyle movement."

The poster boy for the movement was Oscar Wilde, who popularised Aesthetics in the early 1880s by writing and lecturing on the notion of "art for art's sake". Mr Calloway said: "He was the original celebrity style guru who promoted the idea of beauty in the home. In many ways, the story of Aestheticism ends with the trial and fall of Oscar Wilde. Once he was imprisoned, the Aesthetic movement began to totter."

The Cult of Beauty: The Aesthetic Movement 1860-1900 opens in April next year and is the most comprehensive exhibition ever staged on the subject.

An intriguing mystery surrounds one of the exhibits: the designs for a 23-foot frieze exquisitely decorated with peacocks. The frieze was commissioned in 1872 by Frederick

Lehmann, a wealthy businessman, for his house at 15 Berkeley Square in central London.

Architect George Aitchison came up with the design and artist Albert Moore painted the frieze, which adorned the front drawing room in what was then one of the most celebrated Aesthetic houses in the capital. Moore's original etchings and Aitchison's design drawing are on public display for the first time as part of the show.

Yet the fate of the original frieze is unknown. The Berkeley Square house was bombed in the Second World War and Mr Calloway said: "There is no record of what happened to the frieze from around 1900 onwards. If it was still in the house, then it was destroyed in the bombing. But there is an outside chance that the frieze was removed before that and it would be wonderful if someone came forward now to say they know what happened to it."

OSCAR WILDE'S PRE-EMPTIVE RETALIATION AGAINST RADICAL ORTHODOXY

URL: <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/culture/christopherhowse/100008161/oscar-wildes-pre-emptive-retaliation-against-radical-orthodoxy/>
Time: 06:21

Christopher Howse
Christopher Howse writes leaders and features and reviews for The Daily Telegraph, which he joined in 1996 as obituaries editor. His Saturday column, Sacred Mysteries, is on religion. He lives in Westminster.

I once tried to read a book called After Writing, a fashionable work of radical orthodoxy when it came out in 1997. I failed and ended up holding it to the light and shaking it to see if any sense emerged.

Now I find the perfect partner for that volume. The agreeable John Hart, from his Norfolk bookshop, is offering for sale After Reading. This first edition of Oscar Wilde's letters to Robert Ross, one of 75 numbered copies printed on

Japanese vellum, published by the Beaumont Press in 1921, is going for £500.

It's hard to know which is worse: a Reading Gaol or a Writing Gaol.

VATICAN RECONCILES WITH OSCAR WILDE

OSCAR WILDE, WHOSE FLAMBOYANT HOMOSEXUALITY SHOCKED BRITAIN IN THE 19TH CENTURY, WON AN UNLIKELY ENDORSEMENT FROM THE VATICAN ON THURSDAY.

BY NICK SQUIRES IN ROME
PUBLISHED: 7:00PM BST 16 JUL 2009



Oscar Wilde, whose flamboyant homosexuality shocked Britain in the 19th century, won an unlikely endorsement from the Vatican on Thursday.

In a surprise act of reconciliation with the playwright, the Holy See's official newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, praised the poet as a "lucid analyst of the modern world".

Wilde, who was sent to prison for acts of gross indecency with Lord Alfred Douglas and later converted to Catholicism, has been regarded by

the Roman Catholic Church in the century since his death as a dangerous degenerate and dissolute nonconformist.

But in an article published on Thursday, L'Osservatore declared that the author of The Importance of Being Earnest was more than "an aesthete and a lover of the ephemeral".

The playwright was, instead, "one of the personalities of the 19th century who most lucidly analysed the modern world in its disturbing as well as its positive aspects", the Vatican newspaper said in a review of a new book about Wilde by an Italian author.

While acknowledging that Wilde, who died in 1900, was a rebel who delighted in shocking Victorian England, L'Osservatore said he was a profound thinker who spent his professional life asking "what was true and what was false".

The move towards rehabilitation builds on a softening of the previously hardline Vatican stance two years ago, when some of Wilde's best known aphorisms were included in a book of witticisms for Christians collated by the Vatican's head of protocol, Leonardo Sapienza.

Father Sapienza said that although Wilde lived "somewhat scandalously", he penned some "razor-sharp maxims" which carried an important moral message.

Wilde married Constance Lloyd in 1884 and they had two sons, but in 1891 Wilde began an affair with Lord Alfred Douglas.

OSCAR WILDE LETTER TO LOVER LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS RESURFACES AFTER 50 YEARS

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3681293/Oscar-Wilde-letter-to-lover-Lord-Alfred-Douglas-resurfaces-after-50-years.html>

Time: 06:47

Private letters written by Oscar Wilde and 'lost' for more than 50 years, including a note to his lover, have been presented to a library.

By Stephen Adams

Published: 8:20AM GMT 08 Dec 2008



Oscar Wilde: his lover burnt most of the letters he received

Among more than 50 handwritten pages of the collection is an 1892 letter from Wilde to Lord Alfred Douglas, whom the writer called Bosie.

Lord Alfred was an undergraduate at Magdalen College, Oxford University, at the time.

Wilde wrote: "Dearest Bosie, I am so glad you are better and that you like the little card case. Oxford is quite uncomfortable in winter: I go to Paris next, or in the next 10 days or so ... I should

awfully like to go away with you somewhere where it is hot."

The letter is believed to be the first surviving poem in the correspondence that charted their homosexual relationship, which ended in Wilde's conviction for gross indecency. His younger lover burnt most of those he received.

Ironically, the letters fell into the hands of Lord Alfred's father, the ninth Marquess of Queensberry, who had pressed for Wilde's criminal trial.

They were later put into a leather-bound collection by the 11th Marquess of Queensberry, Lord Alfred's nephew.

For more than 50 years its whereabouts has been a mystery. It was donated to the Morgan Library in New York by Lucia Moreira Salles, a Brazilian philanthropist who had owned them for more than 20 years.

It also contained nine manuscripts of Wilde's poems.

William Griswold, director of the Morgan, said of the collection: "The contents are remarkable."

OSCAR WILDE'S BLUE PLAQUE TURNS WORTHING'S GENTLEFOLK RED

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4108724/Oscar-Wildes-blue-plaque-turns-Worthings-gentlefolk-red.html>

Time: 07:04

Oscar Wilde's links with the genteel south coast town of Worthing should be severed because he was a child abuser, say campaigners.

By Stephen Adams, Arts Correspondent

Published: 4:05PM GMT 04 Jan 2009



Oscar Wilde's association with the West Sussex town of Worthing is not celebrated by all its residents Photo: ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS

In 1894 he lived in the resort, penning The Importance of Being Ernest there and naming character Jack Worthing in its honour.

For years a blue plaque has boasted of his time at Esplanade Court on the seafront, but now some want to rid the town of the honour.

Feelings have become heated since Chris Hare, a local historian, raised the question of Wilde's relationships with teenage boys in a new book, Worthing, a History: Riots and Respectability in a Seaside Town.

He said there was documented evidence that Wilde seduced boys there. A 14-year-old, called Alphonso, had to leave the town as a result.

Mr Hare said: "People often think of Wilde as a martyr, but it's a bit unsavoury cruising around looking for sexual favours from young boys, isn't it? Even today people would not find that acceptable. It reminds me of Gary Glitter."

He did not personally think that the plaque should be taken down, because "his talents in literature stand aside from his personal behaviour".

But after years of embarrassment about its link

with the man, Mr Hare believed Worthing now celebrated Wilde too enthusiastically.

Steven Stevens, a veteran local campaigner who spearheaded a fight against a lap dancing club last year, was more strident.

He said: "I myself would fight tooth and nail for any campaign to erase a link between Worthing and a child abuser."

Wilde was jailed in 1895 for gross indecency following an affair with an Oxford University undergraduate, Lord Alfred Douglas, becoming a cause célèbre for those seeking sexual freedom in the process.

Michael Sceney, of the Oscar Wilde Society, said: "Whatever one's view about Wilde's life, he is indisputably famous and widely honoured."

OSCAR WILDE LOVE LETTERS AMONG THOUSANDS OF LITERARY ORIGINALS IN NEW COLLECTION

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/5411881/Oscar-Wilde-love-letters-among-thousands-of-literary-originals-in-new-collection.html>

Time: 08:36

Love letters written by Oscar Wilde during his clandestine relationship with the young Lord Alfred Douglas are to be made available to the public for the first time.

By Chris Hastings, Public Affairs Editor

Published: 9:00PM BST 30 May 2009



The original letters laying bare the playwright's love for the young "Bosie" give a rare insight into the relationship that resulted in scandal and eventual imprisonment.

The handwritten, intimate correspondence is among 600,000 pages of manuscripts and original documentation in a new online resource called British Literary Manuscripts Online c1660-1900.

The collection is the first of its kind and could revolutionise the study of English literature.

Until now, the material, which includes letters, diaries, sketches and early drafts of works by such literary greats as Charles Dickens, William Blake, the Brontës, Robbie Burns, Walter Scott and Wilde, has been scattered across the globe in different libraries and has been impossible to source in a single place.

Highlights of the collection, being launched on Tuesday by "e-research" specialists Gale-Cengage Learning after 10 years of development, include handwritten versions of Blake's *The Four Zoas*, Emily Brontë's Gondal poems, and complete drafts of Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, *David Copperfield* and *Oliver Twist*.

As well as the Wilde letters, the collection also includes heartbreaking correspondence by Charlotte Brontë as she struggles to come to terms with the death of her sister, Emily, and the poor

health of her younger sister, Anne.

But it is the inclusion of the Wilde letters to Bosie and to other male lovers including Frank Miles and Robert Baldwin Ross that is likely to provoke most interest.

In one letter to Bosie dated 1894 he wrote: "My own dear boy – "It's really absurd – I can't live without you – you are so dear, so wonderful – I think of you all day long – and miss your grace, your boyish beauty, the ... sword play of your wit, the delicate fancy of your genius so surprising...

"London is a desert without your dainty feet ... take all my love – now and for ever, always and with devotion – but I have no words for how I love you – Oscar."

In another letter Wilde, having just returned from a trip to a fashionable barber, informs Bosie that "sonnet like allusions are made to your gilt silk hair".

Bosie's furious father, The Marquess of Queensberry, made several attempts to break up the relationship and even planned to humiliate Wilde by throwing turnips onto the stage during the opening performance of *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

In one letter to Bosie written in 1895 Wilde delights in telling his muse how he got wind of the plot and successfully foiled it by calling in the police. He wrote: "Yes the Scarlet Marquis made a plot to address the audience on the first night of my play!

"He left a grotesque bouquet of vegetables for me! This of course makes his conduct idiotic – robs it of dignity."

But later that year, Wilde was sentenced to two years hard labour after a libel action he brought against the Marquess collapsed and led to being convicted on indecency charges.

In a letter to a friend from Reading Gaol, a much less happy Wilde writes: "I admit I look forward

with horror to the prospect of another winter in prison: there is something terrible in it: one has to get up long before day break and in the dark cold cell begin one's work by the flaming gas jet ... And days often go without one being once out in the open air ... If I could be released before the winter comes it would be everything ..."

Merlin Holland, Wilde's grandson, who is preparing a new study about the author and his work called *After Oscar*, welcomed the new archive.

"This is absolutely fantastic news," he said. "It is thrilling.

"I know how excited I have been working with a just a fraction of his original manuscripts and I know its going to be a huge boom for people who are studying him.

"Interacting with the original manuscripts of any writer allows you to get inside their mind. There has been talk of this happening before but a lot of libraries have always been reluctant to give up their collections in this way."

Mr Holland added that there was little doubt that prison had contributed to Wilde's early death.

"There is undoubtedly a link between Oscar's imprisonment and his premature death. Oscar went to prison at the worst possible moment in British history.

"If he had gone ten years earlier or ten years later he might have been all right.

"I think the governor of Reading prison said at the time that any man who had served two years hard labour, like Oscar had, would be lucky to survive five years once released.

"It wasn't the denial of liberty which affected Oscar so much, it was the removal of his pen and his voice."

Other highlights of the collection include

correspondence from Charlotte Brontë and a letter from Robbie Burns in which he recounts his family's poverty and work as a ploughman.

Brontë wrote: "If there were no hope beyond this world – no eternity – no life to come Emily's fate and that which threatens Anne would be heartbreaking.

"I cannot forget Emily's death-day, it becomes a darker, a more frequently recurring idea in my mind than ever."

In another letter to a friend, Charlotte talks about editing Anne and Emily's work for a posthumous edition: "I found the task at first exquisitely painful and depressing – but regarding it in the light of a sacred duty.

"I went on and now can bear it better – It is work however that I cannot do in the evening for if I did, I should have no sleep at night."

Burns, in his letter, plays tribute to an unexpected source of inspiration for his ideas. "In my infant and boyish days too, I owed much to an Old Maid of my mother's, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity and superstition – She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, contraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons and other trumpery. This cultivated the seeds of Poetry."

Experts have welcomed the new collection, which will, at first, be available to the public through institutions such as schools, colleges and libraries that have subscribed to the service, and later to the public directly through a pay-per-view service.

Professor Henry Woudhuysen, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University College London who has advised on the project, said: "The great thing with this new collection is that you can sit in the comfort of a chair and look at an actual manuscript several thousand miles away.

"These are all manuscripts and by their very nature are unique. The collection allows you to study the act of creation because it allows you to chart the progress of particular literary works."

DORIAN GRAY, REVIEW

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/filmreviews/6169378/Dorian-Gray-review.html>
Time: 08:41

Oliver Parker uses handy digital effects in Dorian Gray, his adaptation of Oscar Wilde's novel with Ben Barnes.

By Tim Robey
Published: 5:41PM BST 10 Sep 2009

The painting is the star of Oliver Parker's Dorian Gray. It looks suggestively blurred, almost out of focus. Wait – are those bags under its eyes? Suddenly, they look bloodshot. Then a maggot wriggles out from behind one to be stamped underfoot, and everyone's favourite Victorian libertine, Dorian (Ben Barnes), decides it might be better off in the attic.

Parker has some handy digital effects at his disposal, and a sterling Lord Henry in the shape of Colin Firth, whose barked advice makes him come over as caddish and envious, like a bitter Mephistopheles. I agree with the novelist Jeffrey Eugenides that Lord Henry is the "real engine" of Wilde's book.

There are good things here, good scenes, and more than we might have expected from Parker,

turning it in between St Trinian's films.

Toby Finlay's screenplay pumps up the homoeroticism – Dorian has a pretty clear idea how to keep the portraitist Basil Hallward (Ben Chaplin) under his, er, thumb. Beyond mildly risqué bisexual assignations, the filmmaking isn't terribly adventurous, but cinematographer Roger Pratt (Mary Shelley's Frankenstein) gives it an inky opulence, and it's quite watchable.

We could complain that Barnes is a somewhat vanilla hellraiser, and more boyishly handsome than impossibly beautiful. He's too much of an ingénu at the start. But, let's face it, it could have been worse. It could have been Orlando Bloom.

FREE BOOK – THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/promotions/6094698/Free-book-The-Picture-of-Dorian-Gray.html>
Time: 08:59

Celebrate the release of Dorian Gray, in cinemas Wednesday, September 9, with a free copy of Oscar Wilde's novel.

Published: 3:51PM BST 28 Aug 2009

Young Dorian arrives fresh on the London social scene and is taken under the wing of Lord Henry Wotton (Colin Firth, Mamma Mia!) who introduces him to the seedy pleasures of London life. When Dorian sees how incredible he looks in a newly painted picture of himself, he swears to do whatever it takes to look as young and handsome in real life as he does in the picture – forever.

His stunning good looks and charm soon attract the celebrity lifestyle and everything that it brings. Dorian finds himself slipping deeper and deeper into a world of sin, sex and celebrity, seemingly without any consequences. But as his actions become increasingly evil, for how long can he hide the secret behind his eternal youth?

Dorian Gray is released on Wednesday, September 9. For more information, visit www.orange.co.uk/doriangray.

Other Oscar Wilde publications and classic fiction is available from Penguin Books.

© 2009 Momentum Pictures. All Rights Reserved.

How to claim

To claim your free copy of The Picture of Dorian Gray, worth £7.99, collect the voucher in The Sunday Telegraph this weekend and present it at your nearest participating Waterstone's. See paper for full details. Offer subject to availability, while stocks last.

AUDIENCE WAKES SLOWLY TO WIT OF OSCAR WILDE

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3670911/Audience-wakes-slowly-to-wit-of-Oscar-Wilde.html>
Time: 09:00

By Charles Spencer
Published: 12:01AM GMT 02 Feb 2008

Charles Spencer reviews The Importance of Being Earnest at the Vaudeville Theatre

Shortly before the opening of The Importance of Being Earnest in 1895, Oscar Wilde was asked if he thought the play was going to be a success. "The play is a success," he averred. "The only question is whether the first-night audience will be."

There was a sticky moment at the Vaudeville when it looked as though the first-nighters might be about to let Wilde down. The brilliant dialogue between Jack Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff aroused barely the faintest titter. The performances were fine, every bit as polished and

elegant as they should be. The problem was that Wilde's precision-tooled frivolity and wit take a little getting used to in these days of debased language and sloppy emotionalism.

Gradually, however, the house seemed to get the measure of Wilde's peculiar paradoxical genius, and the play, surely the most perfect high comedy in this or any other language, began to work its familiar spell of enchantment and delight.

What always seems miraculous about The Importance of Being Earnest is that Wilde wrote it at a time when his love affair with Bosie was bringing him nothing but pain and trouble and he must have had strong intimations of the disaster that was soon to overwhelm him. Yet the play has a lightness of spirit, and an effervescence of wit, that encourage nothing but pleasure. Just as his own life was about to become a melodrama, Wilde finally wrote a play that avoided the sentimentality that had marred his earlier work.

Peter Gill's handsomely designed production beautifully captures this perfect illusion of innocence, even if it is now fashionable to read the text, with its male characters leading double lives of "confirmed and secret Bunburyism", as a coded account of the dramatist's own gay life.

The big draw is, of course, Penelope Keith as Lady Bracknell, a role she might have been put on this earth to play.

What's inspired about this performance is that the actress plays the role as if she has no idea that Lady Bracknell is meant to be funny. The most outrageous lines are quietly and briskly delivered as if they were self-evident truths, and there is remarkably little of the hooting outrage that has become traditional.

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/drama/3670911/Audience-wakes-slowly-to-wit-of-Oscar-Wilde.html>
Time: 09:03

The famous "handbag?" line, for instance, is almost thrown away. Miss Keith, in short, plays the character as if she were the soul of utter reasonableness, paying the audience the compliment of allowing us to discover the comedy for ourselves without semaphoring it with stagey tricks. The effect is to make this most familiar of characters seem startlingly fresh and endearing, and Miss Keith confirms herself as an actress whose art becomes more subtle, and captivating, with age.

Daisy Haggard and Rebecca Night are deliciously sexy and sparky as Gwendolen and Cecily, even if Miss Keith's immaculate vowels make their own sound a little low-rent. William Ellis has exactly the right infuriating smugness as Algernon, Harry Hadden-Paton the required earnestness as Jack, while Janet Henfrey and Tim Wylton are funny as Miss Prism and Canon Chasuble.

And that's another of this comedy's many miracles. For all its frivolity, the play is also unexpectedly affecting, as glimpses of a lost Eden always are.

OSCAR WILDE VOTED GREATEST BRITISH WIT

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1566243/Oscar-Wilde-voted-greatest-British-wit.html>
Time: 09:04

By Laura Clout
Published: 11:00AM BST 15 Oct 2007



Great minds: Oscar Wilde, Jeremy Clarkson and Liam Gallagher have been voted into list of favourite wits

One a playwright feted for his literary genius, the other a rock star renowned for his foul mouth: but Oscar Wilde and Liam Gallagher now share the accolade of being voted among Britain's greatest wits.

* Have your say: What are your favourite witticisms?

Wilde, who even on his deathbed remarked, "either those curtains go or I do", was voted number one in the list of comic masters, ahead of comedian Spike Milligan, who had engraved on his tombstone the epitaph "I told you I was ill".

Third was Stephen Fry, who played Wilde in the 1997 eponymous film of his life.

He once quoted the playwright when passing through airport customs, announcing: "I have nothing to declare but my genius."

And in reference to his homosexuality, the comedian, actor, and quiz show host declared: "My first words, as I was being born... I looked up at my mother and said, 'that's the last time I'm

going up one of those."

The poll of 3,000 comedy fans placed Liam Gallagher tenth.

The Oasis singer, famed for his drunken antics and abrasive attitude, once said of his brother Noel, "I'd do time for him. I love him. Me and him are cool. If anyone stepped on his toes, I'd cut them off."

In fourth place was the columnist and host of the motoring programme Top Gear, Jeremy Clarkson.

The self-confessed petrolhead is unafraid of stirring up controversy with his caustic comments.

"Speed has never killed anyone, suddenly becoming stationary... That's what gets you," he once declared.

Wartime prime minister Sir Winston Churchill, famed for his witty putdowns came in fifth.

Accused of being drunk by the MP Bessie Braddock he is said to have replied: "Madam, you are ugly. And I shall be sober in the morning."

Former prime minister Margaret Thatcher, more renowned for her steely personality than her roustabout humour, was the highest ranked woman in the poll, taking 12th place.

She once quipped: "Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren't."

The poll was conducted to mark the launch of a new UKTV digital television channel called Dave under the banner "The home of witty banter". Quotes from Britain's top ten wits

1 Oscar Wilde: "Only dull people are brilliant at breakfast."

2 Spike Milligan: "A sure cure for seasickness is to sit under a tree."

3 Stephen Fry: "It is a cliché that most clichés are

true, but then like most clichés, that cliché is untrue"

4 Jeremy Clarkson: "We all know that small cars are good for us. But so is cod liver oil. And jogging. I want to drive around in a Terminator, not the heroine in an EM Forster novel."

5 Sir Winston Churchill: "I like pigs. Dogs look up to us. Cats look down on us. Pigs treat us as equals."

6 Paul Merton: "My school days were the happiest of my life: which should give you some indication of the misery I've endured over the past twenty five years."

7 Noel Coward: "Wit ought to be a glorious treat like caviar. Never spread it about like marmalade."

8 William Shakespeare: "Being born is like being kidnapped. And then sold into slavery."

9 Brian Clough: "I wouldn't say I was the best manager in the business, but I was in the top one"

10 Liam Gallagher: "She can't even chew gum and walk in a straight line, let alone write a book." (on Victoria Beckham)

IS WILDE OR JAMES THE TRUE MASTER?

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/3641654/Is-Wilde-or-James-the-true-master.html>
Time: 09:05

By Robert Shore
Published: 12:01AM BST 05 May 2005

Something curious happens to Oscar Wilde in *A Good Woman*, Mike Barker's screen adaptation of the Irish wit's melodrama *Lady Windermere's Fan* - he turns into Henry James. The film transplants the action from the quintessentially Wildean drawing rooms of Mayfair and St James's to the Amalfi coast, and assigns new American identities to a handful of the main English characters, including Mrs Erlynne and the young heroine "Meg" (no longer Lady) Windermere.

In the process, Wilde's tale of a "fallen woman" trying to engineer a return to London society becomes a story of wealthy puritanical Americans being lured to temptation in sensuous Italy. In short, it mutates into a Henry James novel.

James would certainly be delighted with his posthumous dramatic victory. In the 1890s, when he set his hat at becoming a London playwright, he called his rival "the unspeakable one", as well as a "fatuous fool" and an "unclean beast" The two men could hardly have been more dissimilar. The Irish "High Priest of the Decadents" darted elegant epigrams while the American "Master" toiled to develop a style consisting of seemingly endless serpentine sub-clauses. Wilde's paeans to frivolity contrasted with James's more austere goal of dramatising consciousness. Most tellingly, perhaps, on the London stage, Wilde garnered triumphs while James met humiliating defeat.

Lady Windermere's Fan was Wilde's first attempt at a modern comedy. It met with a rapturous response from its first-night audience on February 22 1892, causing its author to offer a few words of thanks.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Wilde announced from the stage, "I have enjoyed this evening immensely. The actors have given us a charming rendering of a delightful play, and your appreciation has been most intelligent. I congratulate you on the great success of your performance, which persuades me that you think almost as highly of the play as I do myself."

Henry James was among the spectators that night. "The speech, alas, was stupid," he later remarked. James hadn't cared much for the play that had preceded it either ("infantine - both in subject and form"), although that was par for the course for the famous novelist, an ardent theatregoer who was nevertheless sometimes heard to leave an auditorium mid-performance with a sigh of "I can't bear it any longer."

James's contempt for the London stage's "triviality" - Wilde's highest ambition - and his delight in literary difficulty hardly augured well for his own theatrical foray. The culmination of what he had begun to call his "intolerable experiment" came in 1895 with the première of his historical drama *Guy Domville*. It was not a success and his appearance on stage was met with boos. A horror-struck James fled into the wings, and back to his career as a novelist. The play had to be withdrawn and was replaced at short notice by - of all things - *The Importance of Being Earnest*, marking Wilde's apotheosis as a dramatist. The triumph of "the unspeakable one" seemed final.

Cinema has since brought about a reversal in the two men's dramatic fortunes. James's plays have rarely been mounted since the Master's seemingly definitive defeat at the hands of hostile London theatregoers 110 years ago. His cinematic stock, however, has never been higher. In recent years, successful films have been made of *The Golden Bowl*, *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Portrait of a Lady*.

James himself, who remained deeply ambivalent about the stage, made a distinction between "Theatre-stuff" and "Drama-stuff". Though his novels, particularly the late trilogy, remain impenetrable to many readers owing to the density of their prose style, the stories themselves have continued to exert their fascination on the screen as "Drama-stuff".

In 1999, Wilde seemed set to be the next big thing in cinematic adaptations. When two film versions of *An Ideal Husband* were in preparation, one commentator observed: "The timing of Wilde's

re-emergence could not be better - cinema has all but exhausted the works of William Shakespeare and Hollywood is on the lookout for the next great dead writer." Six years later, he is yet to fulfil this promise.

The truth is that his plays are ill-adapted to the silver screen. Wilde's sonorous paradoxes seem long-winded by contemporary standards.

It is perhaps significant that Wilde's flamboyant personality, on the other hand, has proved highly congenial to film, spawning three biopics and an appearance at the beginning of Todd Haynes's *Velvet Goldmine*. Meanwhile, Henry James remains as yet untouched by film biography (although novels have recently been devoted to him).

This difference may hinge on perceptions of the writers' sexual predilections. James was the very embodiment of conservatism and famously reticent about his private life, whereas Oscar Wilde was recently described as "probably the most famous homosexual ever". Yet, if current trends continue, the Irishman may soon find himself yielding his title to his American rival in this domain too.

James died in 1916, certainly a bachelor and very likely (or so it used to be thought) a virgin. Facts about the Master's life have never been in short supply, but since the decriminalisation of homosexuality, biographers have become increasingly fascinated by the lack of information about James's sex life - the assumption being that a dearth of carnal activity can mean only one thing: James was secretly gay.

In the absence of proof from the life itself, it was left to literary critics, and particularly "queer theorists", to lead the way in outing James through their analyses of short stories such as *The Beast in the Jungle*, in which themes of the impossibility of marriage, the need for dissimulation and the Unspeakable Secret loom large (as do the latter two, though not the former, in the works of Wilde).

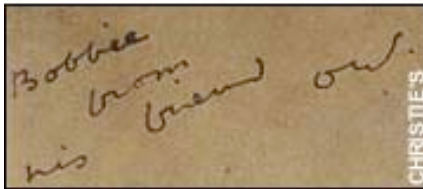
At first it was presumed that James's homosexuality was only latent. Thus, in 1992, writing of James's infatuation with the young sculptor Hendrik Andersen, biographer Fred Kaplan described the latter's complaint that the Master had become "a bit tiresome with his cocksure penetration" as "a phrase that James would have taken to be as innocent as Andersen probably meant it to be". The Master's outing has continued apace since, however, and the writer has now passed posthumously from repressed desire to the act itself, with a string of male lovers recently being attributed to him.

Barker's *A Good Woman* may have transformed Wildean theatre into a Jamesian drama, but, at the same time, slowly but surely, biographers are turning Henry James into Oscar Wilde.

OSCAR WILDE DENOUNCED AS THE DEVIL BY HIS LOVER

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1473284/Oscar-Wilde-denounced-as-the-devil-by-his-lover.html>
Time: 09:07

By Will Bennett
Published: 12:01AM BST 04 Oct 2004



A picture of Wilde on which the author has written a dedication to his friend Robby Ross

A book by Lord Alfred Douglas demonising Oscar Wilde, his former lover, that was never published because it also libelled the Prime Minister of the day will be sold at auction this month.

Wilde's affair with 'Bosie', the son of the Marquess of Queensbury, led to the Irish-born poet, playwright and author being disgraced and

jailed. The scandal was one of the biggest of the Victorian age and ultimately it contributed to Wilde's early death in a Paris hotel in 1900.

Sixteen years later Lord Douglas mounted a ferocious attack on the writer and others in a book called *The Wilde Myth*, but the printers and intended publishers regarded it as so incendiary that they even broke up the type used to produce proof copies.

Only two proofs are known to have survived, one of which, bearing Lord Douglas's final handwritten corrections and an inscription from the publisher Martin Secker, is expected to fetch £40,000 to £50,000 at Sotheby's in London on Oct 29.

It is among more than 100 letters, manuscripts, photographs, first editions and presentation copies of works assembled by an anonymous British collector expected to fetch more than £600,000 at the sale marking the 150th anniversary of Wilde's birth.

When he wrote *The Wilde Myth*, Lord Douglas was furious that his former lover had criticised him in *De Profundis*, a letter that Wilde had written in prison.

"Wilde was not a great artist, he was a small one," wrote Lord Douglas, who had by then become a Roman Catholic. "He acquired by practice the faculty of writing the sort of stuff that appeals to and tickles the minds of small people.

"He was one of the most powerful forces for evil that has happened in Europe for the last 300 years. I do not know of any man who more truly and literally sold himself to the devil than he did.

"The Wilde myth has devastated my life from every point of view. It devastated my life when I was a victim to its illusions and it has devastated my life ever since I escaped from those illusions."

The dead cannot be libelled, so the vitriolic remarks about Wilde posed no problem for the

publishers and printers, but Lord Douglas also attacked Herbert Asquith, the Liberal Prime Minister. Asquith had been Home Secretary when the scandal broke and ordered Wilde's arrest at the Cadogan Hotel in London in 1895.

Lord Douglas clearly still harboured a grudge against him in 1916, by which time Asquith had become Britain's wartime leader. "Will anyone maintain that a man who has so allowed himself to be so fooled, so tricked and so pushed into a corner with a dunce's cap on his head, has any right to be at the head of His Majesty's Government?" he wrote.

Peter Selley, a Sotheby's specialist in English literature, said: "Douglas comes across as an extraordinarily bitter man and incredibly angry. It is not surprising that the publishers were extremely wary about going ahead with his book."

Lord Douglas's opinions later softened and by the time he died in 1945 he had taken a more forgiving view of the relationship that changed his life. By then, Wilde's place in literary history was assured.

FROM OSCAR WILDE TO LADY THATCHER

URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1471741/From-Oscar-Wilde-to-Lady-Thatcher.html>
Time: 09:09

Published: 12:01 AM BST 15 Sep 2004

In the Oscar Wilde play *The Importance of Being Ernest*, the main character Jack reveals that as a baby he was found at Victoria Station in a handbag. Lady Bracknell, his formidable, prospective mother-in-law, responds with the play's most famous line: "A handbag!"

Speculation about the contents of the Queen's handbag has captivated the nation; as she has no need for cash and ladies-in-waiting carry anything else, what could she possibly put in it? Suggestions included family photographs and a meat hook for hanging the bag beneath the table

at dinners. However, last month when she dropped her handbag at Ascot, it appeared to contain nothing but a purse.

Throughout her trial for fraud earlier this year, the American domestic goddess Martha Stewart steadfastly clutched her Hermes Birkin handbag, estimated to cost £10,000. There was debate as to whether such a symbol of wealth would elicit sympathy from the jury.

Baroness Thatcher and her trademark handbag brought a new phrase to the English language: handbagging, to give someone a hard time. Her handbag later made £100,000 for Breast Cancer Care when auctioned by the women's website handbag.com