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Xavier Giudicelli

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Xavier Giudicelli

CIRLEP, Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne

Since his death in 1900, Oscar Wilde and his works have been an on-going source of discussions, appropriations and creations, a palimpsest as well as a mirror of the modern and postmodern periods. The aim of *Oscar Wilde and Modern Culture. The Making of a Legend* is to explore the posterity of Wilde and of his works in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

This volume was edited by Joseph Bristow, professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, a specialist of Victorian poetry and LGBT literary studies and a distinguished Wilde scholar. Bristow's books include *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing after 1885* (Columbia UP, 1995) and *Wilde Writings: Contextual Conditions* (U of Toronto P, 2003). He also edited both the Oxford English Texts edition and the World's Classics edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Oxford UP, 2005 and 2006).

Oscar Wilde and Modern Culture is the product of 'Wilde at 150', a conference held in 2004 at the William Andrews Clark Library, University of California, Los Angeles. It is part of a spate of recent studies focusing on the reception and reinterpretations of Wilde's life and texts, such as for instance *The Importance of Reinventing Oscar: Versions of Wilde in the Last 100 years* (ed. Uwe Böker, Richard Corballis and Julie A. Hibbard, Rodopi, 2002) or *The Reception of Wilde in Europe* (ed. Stefano Evangelista, Continuum, 2010).

It is made up of twelve essays written by authors coming from different backgrounds (literary studies, but also history, law, theatre studies and film studies), preceded by a preface and an introduction by Joseph Bristow. It also contains a chronology (xxxv-xlii) and a selective bibliography (339-342). The different chapters, arranged in a loosely chronological order, provide case studies of Wilde's engagement with, and/or impact on modern culture.

The preface sheds light on the enduring fascination for Wilde as well as on his relevance for the modern and postmodern eras. Wilde is 'one of us' writes Bristow, quoting Richard Ellmann (xi). The extremely well-documented and informative introduction traces a history of Wilde's reputation from his demise in 1900 and its aftermath, to the 1920s and 1930s. It focuses on key-figures such as Max Beerbohm, Robert Ross, Christopher Sclater Millard (Stuart Mason), Robert Harborough Sherard and Lord Alfred Douglas. It also details the publication history and reception of texts such as *De Profundis* (first published, in an expurgated version, in 1905), *Mr and Mrs Davenport* (developed by Frank Harris from an outline by Wilde and first performed in 1900), Ross's *Collected Works* (1908) or early biographies of Wilde, such as Robert Harborough Sherard's unreliable *Oscar Wilde: The Story of an Unhappy Friendship* (1902), Arthur Ransome's *Oscar Wilde: A Critical Study* (1912) or Frank Harris's *Oscar Wilde: His Life and Confessions* (1916). Bristow also mentions the various controversies and legal disputes around Wilde's biographies, as well as the myths, mystifications and forgeries to which the author and his works have given rise.

The first three chapters tackle Wilde's engagement with some aspects of *fin-de-siècle* culture. In 'Oscar Wilde, Lady Gregory and Late-Victorian Table-Talk', Lucy McDiarmid draws a parallel between these two Anglo-Irish, late Victorian figures, who both practised and wrote about table-talk. McDiarmid contends that both authors were fully aware of the power games

and political stakes that characterised the semi-public, semi-private sphere of the upper class Victorian dinner table. She goes on to show how this concern resonates in Wilde's works, notably in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *A Woman of No Importance*. In 'Sexuality in the Age of Technological Reproductibility. Oscar Wilde, Photography, and Identity', Daniel Novak addresses the question of Wilde's relationship to the modern medium of photography. The article first focuses on Napoleon Sarony's well-known photographic portraits of Oscar Wilde, true works of fiction that contributed to fashioning Wilde's identity. Taking *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as a case in point, Novak then demonstrates that photographic posing has implications for Wilde's aesthetics. In 'Salomé as Bombshell, or How Oscar Wilde Became an Anarchist', Erin Williams Hyman discusses Wilde's links with anarchism. The essay highlights Wilde's connections with the symbolist-anarchist Paris avant-garde, through an evocation of his association with artists such as Stuart Merrill and Marcel Schwob, for instance.

Chapters 4 and 5 delve into the question of Wilde's reception in France, Germany and Austria in the early twentieth-century. In 'Oscar Wilde and the Politics of Posthumous Sainthood', Richard A. Kaye convincingly discusses the representation of Oscar Wilde as a 'homosexual martyr'. He bases his analysis on three main examples, 'Sebastian Melmoth' (1905) by Hugo von Hoffmanstahl, Octave Mirbeau's *Journal d'une femme de chambre* (1900), with the character of Sir Harry Kimberly as a thinly disguised representation of Wilde, and Marcel Proust's *Sodome et Gomorrhe* section (1921-1922) of *À la Recherche du temps perdu*. His contention is that the rhetoric of sainthood has determined much of Wilde's twentieth-century afterlife. Yvonne Ivory's 'The Trouble with Oskar' deals with Wilde's reception in Germany and the different uses of Wilde and his works by the early German homosexual rights movements.

The next three essays (chapters 6, 7 and 8) are concerned with the legacy of Wilde's theatre. In 'Staking Salomé', Julie Townsend discusses the sources of Wilde's *Salomé* (Flaubert, Mallarmé, Huysmans) but also its choreographic embodiments, notably by the famous Paris-based American dancer Loïe Fuller. In 'Surely You Are Not Claiming to Be More Homosexual than I', Lizzie Thynne concentrates on the work of Lesbian surrealist author Claude Cahun (1894-1954) and on her life-long engagement with the Wilde legacy (be it in her journalism, fiction or photographic self-portraits) and in particular with the figure of Salomé. In 'Oscar Wilde's *Ideal Husband* and W. Somerset Maugham's *The Constant Wife*', Laurel Brake shows that Maugham's *The Constant Wife* (1926) both echoes and playfully inverts Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* and is similarly concerned with the question of gender relationships and of the freedom a woman could enjoy in marriage.

Chapters 9 and 10 focus on Wilde as a character on stage, or as a fictionalised character. In 'Transcripts and Truth: Writing the Trials of Oscar Wilde', legal specialist Leslie J. Moran analyses different versions of Wilde's famous trials (in particular *The Trials of Oscar Wilde* edited by H. Montgomery Hyde in 1948 and Merlin Holland's 2003 *Irish Peacock and Scarlet Marquess: The Real Trial of Oscar Wilde*, as well as two competing films produced in the 1960s, *Oscar Wilde*, directed by Gregory Ratoff and *The Trials of Oscar Wilde*, directed by Ken Hughes; Moran's essay provides a reflection on the blurred boundary between fact and fiction. In 'The Artist as Protagonist. Wilde on Stage', Francesca Coppa traces the evolution of Wilde's fictional representations on stage. She first discusses Leslie Stokes and Sewell Stokes's *Oscar Wilde* (1936), Micheal MacLiammoir's *The Importance of Being Oscar* (1960) and Eric Bentley's *Lord Alfred's Lover* (1981), then more recent works such as Tom

Stoppard's *Invention of Love* (1997), David Hare's *Judas Kiss* (1998) and Neil Bartlett's *In Extremis* (2000).

The two final chapters (11 and 12) deal with cinema. In 'Wilde Lives. Derek Jarman and the Queer Eighties', Matt Cook draws a fascinating parallel between Wilde and British independent filmmaker Derek Jarman. After dwelling on the uses of Wilde in the context of the 1980s and 1990s, Cook emphasises Jarman's ambivalent relationship to Wilde, but also the affinities between the two artists. Oliver S. Buckton's 'Oscar Goes to Hollywood: Wilde, Sexuality and the Gaze of Contemporary Cinema' is an analysis of more commercial, mainstream films, namely Brian Gilbert's *Wilde* (1997) and Oliver Parker's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2001) and their representation of dissident sexuality. Despite an original opening scene (Wilde's visit to Leadsville, Colorado), Gilbert's *Wilde* is shown to reproduce the clichés of Wilde as a gay martyr and to be based on an essentialist conception of homosexuality. Parker's film, Buckton demonstrates, erases the coded references to homosexuality in Wilde's play.

The essays in this volume are all well-researched and documented. They provide an interesting—if fragmentary—insight into Wilde's place in twentieth and twenty-first century culture and shed new light on a well-worked subject. *Oscar Wilde and Modern Culture. The Making of a Legend* is obviously of interest for Wilde scholars but also for researchers in the fields of queer theory, intermedial and adaptation studies.