The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde: Historical Criticism Intentions, the Soul of Man, Volume 4

JOSEPHINE M. GUY,
Editor

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF OSCAR WILDE

VOLUME IV

This page intentionally left blank

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF

OSCAR WILDE

General Editor: Ian Small

VOLUME 4

CRITICISM:

HISTORICAL CRITICISM, INTENTIONS, THE SOUL OF MAN

EDITED BY

JOSEPHINE M. GUY

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP
Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in
Oxford New York
Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto
With offices in
Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam
Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and in certain other countries
Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

First published 2007

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available
Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Data available
Typeset by Laserwords Private Limited, Chennai, India
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
Biddles Ltd., King's Lynn, Norfolk
ISBN 978–0–19–811961–6
1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This edition could not have been completed without the help of a number of individuals and institutions. First I should like to thank Merlin Holland, representative of the Estate of Oscar Wilde, for his support for this project over a number of years, and for permission for microfilm copies to be made of unpublished manuscripts. All quotations from unpublished manuscripts in the present edition are also published by permission of the Estate of Oscar Wilde. Extracts from Wilde's correspondence are reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers Ltd. from *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, edited by Merlin Holland and Sir Rupert Hart-Davis, © Merlin Holland 2000.

For making materials available to me on microfilm, and for answering queries, I am grateful to Chris Fletcher and Sally Brown of the British Library; Isaac Gewirtz and Robinson Gomez of the New York Public Library; and Peter Reill and Suzanne Tatian of the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library. Thanks are also due to my colleagues at the School of English, University of Nottingham, for providing a supportive research environment, and, more particularly, to Professor Judith Jesch, for arranging a generous period of research leave in 2003–4.

My largest and most important debt is to Ian Small, who has been an exemplary General Editor, generous with both his time and advice. I have also been fortunate in working with Tom Chandler at OUP, and would like to thank him, too, for the numerous suggestions he made when copy-editing this volume. Thanks are also due to Sarah Newton for her careful proofreading.

Josephine M. Guy

September 2006

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

This page intentionally left blank

ORGANIZATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF VOLUME IV IN THE OET *COMPLETE WORKS*

Book and Periodical Publication in Wilde's Oeuvre

Much of Wilde's prose writing was placed in publications which ranged from serious or 'heavyweight' literary monthlies, such as the *Nineteenth Century*, to popular penny papers like the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and to more specialized magazines such as the *Dramatic Review*. His book publications exhibit a similar kind of range from an attractively designed volume with gilt decorations by the then fashionable designer Charles Ricketts (*Intentions*) to one with cheap brown paper covers initially issued in a run of a mere fifty copies (*The Soul of Man*). When preparing his 1908 *Collected Edition* Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor and thus the first figure to attempt to shape Wilde's writing into an *oeuvre*, divided this eclectic body of work into a number of categories. In one volume—number VIII in the *Collected Edition*—he placed those periodical essays which Wilde had republished in book form; that is, the four pieces which made up *Intentions* (1891) and 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' (which had been retitled *The Soul of Man* when it was privately published in 1895). In another volume, numbered XIII in the *Collected Edition*, and to which he gave the title *Reviews* (with all the connotations of transience and ephemera which that term implied), he collected Wilde's regular contributions to the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Woman's World*. In the last volume of the *Collected Edition, Miscellanies*, Ross included a section entitled 'Essays and Criticisms' in which he placed further pieces from the *Pall Mall Gazette* which he had, for whatever reasons, omitted from *Reviews,*[1] some occasional contributions to other magazines and papers, as well as the Introduction to Rennell Rodd's *Rose Leaf and Apple Leaf* (1882). At the same time Wilde's graduate essay, usually known as *The Rise of Historical Criticism* and which (for reasons explained in the Introduction) is given the

[1] The fact that most of Wilde's occasional journalism was published anonymously obviously made the identification of his contributions difficult. Evidence that material was still coming to light after Ross's *Collected Edition* had been compiled can be found in Stuart Mason's corrected proof copy of his *Bibliography* (currently held at the Clark Library) in which he identifies Wilde as the author of two further reviews in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The OET edition of Wilde's journalism will identify yet further material also published anonymously and probably by Wilde.

title *Historical Criticism* in the OET *Complete Works*, had been distributed between two volumes, around a third of it appearing in Volume VII (*Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Prose Pieces*) and the remainder in *Miscellanies*—a decision which seems to have been determined by the fact that when he came to arrange the contents of the initial volumes in the *Collected Edition*, Ross only had the first of Wilde's three manuscript notebooks of the essay to hand.

Ross's method of organizing Wilde's critical writings has proved influential in determining both the amount and kind of consideration that this body of work has received. So for the most of the twentieth century, and for the majority of readers today, Wilde's 'criticism' means the essays in *Intentions* and *The Soul of Man*, and this is certainly the material which has received the principal share of scholarly attention, particularly when Wilde's achievements as a critic are measured against those of his contemporaries, such as John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, or Walter Pater.[2] The inclusion of a small number of his reviews in some recent anthologies, a reflection in part of a wider interest in (and revaluation of) the periodical press, particularly the burgeoning market in women's magazines in the late decades of the nineteenth century, has only slightly expanded this perspective.[3] The text of *Historical Criticism* has been available in a single volume since the 1948 Collins *Complete Works*, yet it has been routinely overlooked, described by the embarrassed editor of the most recent edition of that anthology as 'something of a dumpling'.[4]

At first glance it might seem that the organization of volume IV of the OET *Complete Works* does little to challenge the hierarchies established by Ross, in so far as it continues to make a division between what has been termed Wilde's 'journalism'—defined as occasional pieces not republished in his lifetime—and his 'criticism'—those longer essays published or republished in book form. Readers of earlier volumes in the OET *Complete Works* may find such conservatism surprising, for the editors of volumes I–III—*Poems and Poems in Prose, De Profundis*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*—present arguments about the authority

[2] A significant exception to this pattern is the critical essay which prefaces Philip E. Smith II and Michael S. Helfand, eds., *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks: A Portrait of Mind in the Making* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) in which the authors claim that the 'synthesis of Hegelian idealism and Spencerian evolutionary theory' to be found in Wilde's earliest writings (that is, in both the notebooks and his essay *Historical Criticism*) offers the basis for a 're-valuation of Wilde's significance in the history of literature and criticism' (p. vii).

[3] See, e.g., the 1994 Collins edition of the *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (Glasgow: Collins, 1994) ed. Merlin Holland, where the section entitled 'Essays, Selected Journalism, Lectures and Letters' includes fewer than twenty items of his uncollected criticism. Linda Dowling's more recent edition, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism & Selected Critical Prose* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2001), includes just eight uncollected reviews.

[4] See Holland, 'Introduction to Essays, Selected Journalism, Lectures and Letters', in the Collins *Complete Works*, 908.

and identity of the works in question which diverge significantly from those implicit in Ross's editorial practices. However, in each case those arguments proceed from a thorough re-examination of the works' textual condition. A similar kind of re-examination has also guided the editorial decisions underlying volume IV. It is therefore worthwhile explaining these decisions in some detail not least because Ross himself failed to provide his readers with any editorial apparatus, and similarities between his practice, and that of the present OET editors, are therefore more apparent than real.

It will be helpful to begin this task by first considering a possible mode of organization rejected by the editors of the OET edition: that of arranging all of Wilde's prose writing chronologically, in order of first publication. This was the method of organization used for *Poems and Poems in Prose*, a decision dictated by the fact that a significant number of Wilde's poems were unpublished in his lifetime, and because others appeared only in periodicals. If applied to the prose works, such a chronological arrangement seems at first sight to have a number of advantages. Most obviously it would exhibit, perhaps for the first time, the extent to which Wilde's composition of short (and often formulaic) reviews for the *Pall Mall Gazette* overlapped with his work on longer essays such as 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison' and 'The Decay of Lying'. By giving the reader a sense of the relationship between the various kinds of periodical pieces that Wilde composed over his writing career, it might be possible to shed new light on how his critical thinking and style developed. For example, 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison' can be understood differently when it is set alongside Wilde's contemporaneous contributions to his 'Literary and Other Notes' column for the *Woman's World*; or his engagement with Pater's ideas in 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' might become more pointed if compared with his review of *Appreciations* for the *Speaker*. Similarly, the frequent reuse of material from the short reviews in the longer essays—which is recorded in the Commentary to volume IV—would almost certainly seem more striking were the two sorts of writing read in tandem. More pertinently, perhaps, such a perspective would also provide a useful corrective to a widely-held assumption, enshrined in Richard Ellmann's biography, that Wilde's transition from 'hack' journalist, writing largely anonymously and under a commercial imperative, to 'serious' critic contesting the authority of Arnold and Pater, was just one aspect of a creative turning point motivated primarily by events in his personal life—namely his meeting in 1891 with Lord Alfred Douglas (it is worth noting that Wilde in fact published his last piece of uncollected writing as late as April 1895).[5]

[5] A short piece entitled 'Who Should be Laureate?' for the *Idler Magazine*, 7/39 (April 1895), 403.

A second advantage, for some readers, of a chronological method of organization would be that of challenging what has been seen as a pejorative element in the distinction between journalism and criticism—that is, in a distinction which appears to promote the book (as the authoritative forum for critical debate) over more popular and widely-read forms of print culture, such as newspapers and magazines. In recent years considerable stress has been placed on the vibrancy of the nineteenth-century periodical press, on the exposure enjoyed by its contributors (particularly following the use of authorial signature in the later decades of the century), and its role in initiating and setting the terms of critical debates. Such a line of argument holds that questions about literary value (often implicit in the distinction between journalism and criticism) should not be defined in relation to the media in which an author's work is published; that those critical statements which happen to be preserved for posterity in books (that is, in practice, in collections of critical essays) are not necessarily any more influential, authoritative, or 'literary', than those which appeared only in the periodical press. It also implies that where the same essay appeared in both media, an editor should not automatically give priority to the book version (even if—or perhaps especially if—it was revised or reworked by the author). Underlying such thinking there is often an implied critique of what is seen as an author-centred view of literary history, one in which the historian has become seduced by the very cult of authorship which the book is designed to promote. Put another way, the recent revaluation of the prestige of the nineteenth-century periodical press has typically appealed to what is presented as a more socially responsive concept of cultural authority in which particular critical positions are understood to proceed from the complex interactions between authors, periodical editors, and readers' expectations, rather than from the 'genius' of particular individuals.[6]

Framed in these terms, it is easy to see the appeal of a chronological arrangement of Wilde's prose writings. Yet, when put into practice, such an arrangement quickly becomes unworkable. A principled argument about the priority of periodical (over book) publication would, logically speaking, have to be applied to the whole of Wilde's prose writing, and would thus also have to include his fiction, some of which (like his critical essays) was first published in periodicals. In fact all the pieces in *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories* first appeared in magazines; but only two of the four stories in *A House of Pomegranates* were published in this way; while those collected in *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* never appeared in periodicals prior to their publication in book form. To further complicate matters, the version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* which appeared in

[6] One of the most forceful advocates for periodical (as opposed to book) publication has been Laurel Brake; see, e.g., her *Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender and Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994).

Lippincott's Monthly Magazine in 1890 is sufficiently distinct from that published by Ward, Lock & Co. in 1891 to constitute a separate work.[7]

A principled prioritizing of the form of social authority embodied by the periodical press undermines an editor's ability to deal coherently with these works. It would result in separating the two versions of *Dorian Gray,* as well versions of the same short stories. Such a practice would seriously hinder the reader's ability to trace out one of the most characteristic features of Wilde's writing: his lifelong habit, evident even in *De Profundis*, of reworking the same body of material for different contexts and audiences.[8] By obscuring this 'revising Wilde' the OET edition would also fail to give the reader any sense of Wilde's interest in working within particular genres, and would thus tend to level out a very varied body of work. And this in turn would marginalize the complex process of self-fashioning that went into Wilde's career—that is, his habit of presenting himself to particular groups of readers, as a particular sort of author, to the extent of attempting simultaneously, and not always successfully, to advertise quite different images of himself (for example, as a writer of children's stories and a decadent author of adult fiction). In order to reveal such manoeuvring, the discrete status of the book has to be conceded. And once this concession is made for one kind of book of prose (fiction), it becomes difficult to resist its application to another (criticism). In the case of this OET volume it means recognizing *Intentions* as embodying, in its selection and revision of previously published periodical articles, a particular kind of creative activity, one distinct from that which underwrote the production of an occasional essay or review.

It is important to stress that labelling such activity 'criticism'—as the OET *Complete Works* does—is not thereby to imply that the views expressed in Wilde's occasional, uncollected pieces were necessarily of a different or inferior nature to those in *Intentions*; on the contrary, as we have already hinted, the same kinds of opinions and, indeed, the same manner of expressing them, are often to be found in both sorts of work: the continuities between Wilde's collected and uncollected periodical pieces are sometimes just as striking as the differences. That said, it remains the case that for Wilde it was the publication of *Intentions,* rather than the cumulative effect of all his various periodical contributions up till 1891

[7] See Joseph Bristow, ed., *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, vol. iii, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. lxi–lxviii.

[8] In his account of the textual condition of *De Profundis*, Ian Small claims that although Wilde's 'prison manuscript [that is, the 55,000 word document held in the British Library] has usually been considered to be a letter, often a love-letter', there are nevertheless 'very strong grounds for arguing that Wilde intended his manuscript to form (in some way) a literary work, or the basis of a literary work'. The rationale which Small subsequently adopts for the production of his copy-text is designed to acknowledge these competing claims to the manuscript's 'identity'. See Small, ed., *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, vol. ii, *De Profundis. 'Epistola: In Carcere Et Vinculis'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4.

(most of which, as we noted, had appeared anonymously), which was crucial in the attempt to present himself as a critic, as a figure in possession (like Arnold or Pater) of a distinctive aesthetic sensibility. And it was to 'The Critic as Artist' in *Intentions*, rather than 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' in the *Nineteenth Century*, that reviewers responded when they publicly assessed Wilde's claim to such critical status. Likewise, the only other piece of critical writing republished in book-form in his lifetime—'The Soul of Man Under Socialism'—was also an essay which, for complex reasons explained more fully in the Introduction, was central to Wilde's need to exhibit a distinctive voice at a later stage in his career, when he was fast losing control of the public image he had so carefully fashioned. In keeping with this argument, and although it does not have the same published status as *Intentions* or *The Soul of Man, Historical Criticism* nevertheless can be seen as an early effort on Wilde's part to synthesize disparate thoughts (recorded in part in the jottings in his *Oxford Notebooks*) into a coherent thesis, one which displayed a distinctive critical persona explicitly contrived to impress a restricted but discerning public whose good opinion Wilde greatly desired. (Had the Chancellor's English Essay Prize been awarded to Wilde it would have almost certainly propelled him into a very different sort of writing career.)

In bringing together these three works—*Historical Criticism, Intentions*, and *The Soul of Man*—under the label 'criticism', volume IV in the OET *Complete Works* is thus attempting to do justice to some of the complex intentions underlying Wilde's sense of what he had to do in order to fashion himself as a critic, to be perceived as possessing the same form of cultural authority as that accorded to figures like Arnold or Pater. Such a decision also recognizes the value which Wilde himself placed on books as a form of publication. As for many writers in the late nineteenth century, the book conferred a particularly desirable form of cultural capital, one rendered especially attractive from the 1880s onwards by the growth of the 'new journalism', with its emphasis on sensation, populism, and disposability. (It is no accident that this same period also witnessed a growth in the trade in rare books and coterie publishing by houses such as the Bodley Head and William Morris's Kelmscott Press.) Some years later, when reviewing the wreckage of his life from his prison cell, Wilde lamented the loss, following the enforcement order placed on his house, of what he termed 'all my charming things . . . my library with its collection of presentation volumes from almost every poet of my time, from Hugo to Whitman, from Swinburne to Mallarmé, from Morris to Verlaine: with its beautifully bound editions of my father's and mother's works, its wonderful array of college and school prizes: its *éditions de luxe*, and the like'.[9]

[9] Ibid. 72.

As material objects, books were important to Wilde: bindings, covers, typefaces, even the kind of paper used, and the size of the margins—these were all issues with which he concerned himself. If, as Nicholas Frankel has persuasively argued, for Wilde writing was 'both a visual and a material phenomenon', then the book clearly offered him much greater creative potential than the format of the periodical page.[10] It held out the promise of conferring on his work both distinction and permanence: what greater honour than that of being the author of an '*édition de luxe*' in someone else's library? At the same time, the success of Arnold's *Essays in Criticism: First Series* (it had run to twelve British and American editions by the time of his death in 1888) and Pater's *Appreciations* (the first edition of which had almost sold out within five weeks in 1889),[11] is a useful reminder that even when considered in terms of a straightforward numbers game, the social significance of the periodical over the book is not as clear-cut as one might imagine. What mattered most for a writer such as Wilde, though, was the special kind of consideration which books, as aesthetic objects, were thought to demand; and in this respect alone, as Wilde's only volumes of criticism, one could argue that *Historical Criticism, Intentions*, and *The Soul of Man* demand particular attention.

Before passing on to a more detailed consideration of the textual condition of each of these three works, it is worth briefly considering two other pieces of critical writing which modern scholars have singled out from Wilde's uncollected prose, and which may therefore also seem to have some claim to inclusion in the present OET volume. They are: 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.' and Wilde's undergraduate essay 'Hellenism'. Wilde's failure to fulfil his plans to republish in book-form an expanded version of 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.' (which first appeared in the

[10] The phrase, taken from the front cover of Nicholas Frankel, *Oscar Wilde's Decorated Books* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), informs the argument of the entire volume. Some sense of the relative importance Wilde attached to the various elements of book design can be gleaned from his reviews of two lectures at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition in November 1888. In the first, the subject of which was 'printing and printers', he praised the speaker's comments on typefaces, line-spacing, and illustrations, referring to him as possessing a 'keen artistic instinct'; but in the second lecture, on 'book-binding', he noted that the speaker made 'an error' in 'treating bookbinding as an imaginative, expressive human art'. 'Bookbinding', Wilde continued, 'is essentially decorative, and good decoration is far more often suggested by material and mode of work than by desire on the part of the designer to tell us of his joy in the world. Hence it comes that good decoration is always traditional. Where it is the expression of the individual it is usually either false or capricious' (Robert Ross, ed., *Miscellanies* (London: Methuen, 1908), 99–105).

[11] Of the 1,000 copies of *Appreciations* published on 15 November 1889 only 120 copies remained by 23 December; this circumstance prompted George Macmillan to write to Pater suggesting that a reprint should be issued without delay. See Robert Seiler, *The Book Beautiful: Walter Pater and the House of Macmillan* (London: Athlone Press, 1999), 48.

July 1889 issue of *Blackwood's Monthly Magazine*) has provided the main reason for its omission from the present volume. Despite Wilde's best endeavours, sustained over a surprisingly long period of time (in fulfilment of a contract originally drawn up in August 1893 with John Lane and Elkin Mathews of the Bodley Head, he was still urging the publication of a revised 'Mr W. H.' as late as the autumn of 1894), the piece was never represented to the public in a manner which would lay claim to the sort of serious attention which we have described above, and which would thus contribute to that assessment of his status as a critic.

A second reason for its exclusion, which follows from the first, concerns the essay's identity. Shortly after publication, and following what Horst Schroeder has described as a 'generally favourable' reception,[12] William Blackwood had written to Wilde suggesting that 'Mr W. H.' might be included in a volume of *Tales from Blackwood*; Wilde declined this offer, indicating that he would rather republish it as a part of a 'volume of essays and studies'.[13] Blackwood may have been surprised at this response, for in earlier correspondence Wilde had clearly identified his piece as a work of fiction—a 'story'—and had explicitly asked for it to be advertised as such when Blackwood consulted him over an advance notice in the *Athenaeum*.[14] Wilde's later sense that 'Mr W. H.' might work better as a critical essay may have been suggested by some contemporary responses to the piece which had discussed it from the point of view of current developments in Shakespearean criticism.[15] It seems clear from the surviving manuscript reworking of 'Mr W. H.', currently held in the Collection of the Rosenbach Foundation in Philadelphia, and first published in 1921 by Mitchell Kennerley,[16] that Wilde's revisions were largely an attempt to draw out the critical elements of the story—to identify it more firmly as a piece of critical (rather than fictional) writing. However, as the longer version was never published in his lifetime, such an

[12] Horst Schroeder, *Oscar Wilde, 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.'—Its Composition, Publication and Reception* (Braunschweig: Technische Universität Carolo-Wilhelmina zu Braunschweig, 1984), 20.

[13] Merlin Holland and Sir Rupert Hart-Davis, eds., *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde* (London: Fourth Estate, 2000), 405.

[14] Wilde suggested the following paragraph for insertion in the *Athenaeum*: 'The July number of *Blackwood* will contain a story by Mr Oscar Wilde on the subject of Shakespeare's sonnets. We hear that Mr Wilde will put forward an entirely new theory as to the identity of the mysterious Mr W. H.' (*Complete Letters*, 402).

[15] Schroeder, for example, argues that with the exception of two reviews, 'all the other papers . . . discussed ["Mr W.H."] not from the point of view of morality, or rather immorality, but in the first place from the point of view of Shakespearean criticism'; and he goes on to add that 'here the most baffling question was . . . whether Wilde was at all serious about his Willie Hughes theory' (Schroeder, *Oscar Wilde*, 15).

[16] Kennerley's edition, of 1,000 copies, was privately published in New York, and was issued for subscribers only. Details of it are given in Schroeder, *Oscar Wilde*, 40.

intention was never properly fulfilled. Moreover, we cannot even be sure that the surviving manuscript (which consists of the corrected periodical text with new material composed on interleaved folios) represents Wilde's final thoughts on his essay, nor that it was in a state which he, or his putative publishers, ever genuinely thought worthy of publication. At any rate, the version which remained in the public domain in his lifetime was that largely identified as a 'story', rather than criticism, and it will therefore be included in the OET volume devoted to his short fiction.

In contrast to *Historical Criticism* no complete fair-copy manuscript of 'Hellenism' has survived. Nor was 'Hellenism' ever published in Wilde's lifetime, although it is possible that he may at one time have had plans to publish it. In a prefatory note to a typescript of a manuscript draft of part of an essay entitled 'Hellenism', H. Montgomery Hyde claims that the following comment in a letter to Wilde from the *Dublin University Magazine*, quoted in Stuart Mason's *Bibliography of Oscar Wilde*, refers to 'Hellenism':

> I shall be glad to see your Greek paper when ready. It might be to your interest to try Allingham of *Fraser's Magazine* with it first. You would get about 12/6 a page there, and your paper would not be subject to much more expurgation . . . .[17]

There is, however, no firm evidence to corroborate Hyde's identification of 'Hellenism', an essay probably written around 1877, with the 'Greek paper'; and even if they are one and the same piece, the manuscript fragments which have survived, and from which the typescript described above was made, are far from representing a finished piece of work. These fragments consist of nine unnumbered foolscap pages in Wilde's hand, one of which is, unusually for Wilde, written on both recto and verso. Most are heavily corrected, some to the point of illegibility. Formerly part of Lady Eccles's private collection, these materials are now held in the British Library. Another six foolscap manuscript pages (with fewer corrections) are held in the Clark Library.[18] The British Library and Clark manuscripts are not continuous with each other; and may not necessarily derive from

[17] Hyde's actual words are: 'It is most likely that the essay was written soon after Wilde returned from Greece. That he hoped to publish it when complete is evident from the following extract from a letter written to Wilde by the editor of *The Dublin University Magazine*, dated 21st July, 1877.' The six-page typescript (made by Stuart Mason) was formerly part of Lady Eccles's collection, and is now held in the British Library, along with some manuscript fragments of the essay (see n. 18 below). The letter itself is quoted in Stuart Mason [Christopher Millard], *Bibliography of Oscar Wilde* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1914), 67.

[18] See the Clark Library, MS Wilde W6721M H477. At the moment of writing the Lady Eccles bequest in the British Library has not been catalogued, and it has therefore not been possible to provide accurate references to the materials in it. The Clark Library, however, holds photocopies of the 'Hellenism' documents in the British Library—that is, of Hyde's 'Prefatory Note', Mason's six-page typescript, and the nine foolscap manuscript pages.

the same draft. The incompleteness of the manuscript fragments, coupled with the fact that in Wilde's lifetime the essay was never, to our knowledge, presented in a form intended for formal public consumption, excludes it from the present volume of the OET Wilde.[19]

Josephine M. Guy
Ian Small

[19] A version of the essay was first published in a limited edition in 1979 for subscription to the Tragara Press (see Oscar Wilde, *Hellenism* (Edinburgh: Tragara Press, 1979)). The 'Printer's Note' appended to this edition claims that the text is 'chiefly based on a typescript made by Stuart Mason' which has been 'collated with an earlier manuscript draft in the United States, the first nine leaves of which are in a private collection [i.e. the manuscript now held in British Library and described in note 18 above] and the final six leaves in the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library in California'. This gnomic comment disguises the fact that both the typescript, and the Tragara Press edition, reorder some of the material in the extant manuscript fragments in order to make sense of Wilde's prose; moreover, by some judicious editing the Tragara Press edition also erases the disjunction between the last folio of the British Library manuscript and the first folio of the manuscript in the Clark Collection, thus disguising the fact that the manuscripts represent only fragments and not a finished work.

INTRODUCTION

What may be loosely called Wilde's critical writing encompassed a variety of forms, including long essays, fictional dialogues, an introduction to a collection of poems, and letters to the press, as well as short reviews of exhibitions, lectures, performances, and contemporary books of many kinds. Volume IV of the OET edition of *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* reproduces only those critical pieces which were published in book-form in his lifetime—that is, his volume of four essays entitled *Intentions* (1891) and *The Soul of Man* (1895). It also includes the long graduate essay *Historical Criticism*. This last piece, although not technically published as a book, was presented in three fair-copy quarto notebooks, for a form of public consumption, when Wilde submitted it for the Chancellor's English Essay Prize at the University of Oxford in 1879. In bringing together these three works—*Historical Criticism, Intentions*, and *The Soul of Man*—under the label 'criticism' the present volume aims to lay before the modern reader those critical materials which Wilde himself singled out as the most representative of the kind of critic he wished himself to be; these were the works by which, at different moments in his career, he most explicitly invited his abilities as a critic to be judged. However, given that these three works were published under different conditions and at different moments in his career, it would be helpful to discuss their textual histories separately.

The Textual Condition of Historical Criticism

Wilde's undergraduate career culminated in the summer of 1878 with what he aptly described as a 'display of fireworks': that is, the award announced on 10 June of the Newdigate Prize for Poetry (for *Ravenna*) followed a little over a month later by the announcement on 19 July of his First in Greats, an achievement which, he claimed, 'astonied' (*sic*) the dons.[1] After these successes, Magdalen College renewed Wilde's Demyship for a further (i.e., fifth) year. It is not known exactly how much of that year Wilde actually spent in Oxford. He was obliged to reside there for the autumn term at least in order to resit the Divinity exam (which he had failed two years earlier). But once he had satisfied his examiners and his Bachelor of Arts had been formally conferred (on 28 November), he began planning a move to London, to make what he termed some 'literary

[1] *Complete Letters*, 70.

friends'.[2] By February 1879 he was sharing lodgings in 13 Salisbury Street, off the Strand, with Frank Miles. That same month (on 24 February) he applied to the British Museum Library (now the British Library) for a reader's ticket, with the declared purpose of studying 'Greek and Latin literature with ref. to University career'.[3] It is almost certain that those studies related, at least in part, to the writing of *Historical Criticism*, the title of the essay which Wilde submitted a few months later, in the early summer of 1879, for the Chancellor's English Essay prize.

Founded in 1768, and one of several competitive awards at the University of Oxford, the Essay prize was limited to those students who had exceeded four years but not seven of their matriculation.[4] The judges were the Public Orator, the Professor of Poetry (a position held at that time by the Scottish academic John Campbell Shairp), and three members of the university convocation; this same body also judged the Newdigate Prize. The topic for the 1879 essay competition—'Historical Criticism Among the Ancients'—had been announced in the same issue of the *Oxford University Gazette* as that which recorded the winners of the 1878 prizes, and it is tempting to think that Wilde's success with his poem had emboldened him to try for the double. His achievement in the final Greats examinations must also have provided encouragement: as he commented in a letter to William Ward, an undergraduate friend who went up to Magdalen in 1873 and took a second in Greats in 1876: 'I cannot understand my First except for the essays which I was fairly good in.'[5]

We do not know exactly how long Wilde spent composing *Historical Criticism*, although entries in his *Oxford Notebook* and *Commonplace Book*, some of which must have been made in 1879, suggest that he worked quite diligently, consolidating his reading in classical texts as well as consulting contemporary works of history, philosophy, and anthropology.[6] Such

[2] *Complete Letters*, 77. [3] Ibid. 78.

[4] Information about the Chancellor's English Essay Prize can be found in Mason, *Bibliography*, 470.

[5] *Complete Letters*, 70.

[6] See Smith and Helfand, eds., *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*. Smith and Helfand comment that in preparing *Historical Criticism*, Wilde also drew on material from two other notebooks, one (now housed at Yale University) contained 'extensive notes in ink from Theodor Mommsen's *The History of Rome*'; the other, which is 'privately owned', and which is described in the Prescott Catalogue (entry 441), 'contains notes on Greek and Roman history and philosophy. These notes are clearly related to topics in the "Rise", and there are passages which, corrected and rewritten, appear in the essay'. However, Smith and Helfand go on to add that the material in these two notebooks adds 'very little to what the Commonplace Book and the College Notebook show of Wilde's intellectual development' (222). They also note the existence of two further notebooks on philosophy, both held in the Clark Library, which they claim were 'not used in the writing of the "Rise" '. (These are 'Notebook on Philosophy' MS Wilde WS6721M3 N9112 [1874/6] and 'Notes on the Ethics of Aristotle' MS Wilde W6721M3 N911 [1874/6]). The commentary to *Historical Criticism* in the present edition has recorded only those debts to the notebooks which are

effort is probably best understood as part of an attempt to strengthen his reputation at Oxford with a view to securing a fellowship at Magdalen. That a career as a university don—as a classical scholar—was Wilde's first choice of profession on graduating is supported by other evidence from this period. For example, in March 1879 he was corresponding with George Macmillan (the son of Alexander Macmillan who made George a partner in the publishing firm that same year) on the subject of some possible translations of Herodotus or Euripides. George had also recently co-founded the Hellenic Society with A. H. Sayce, Professor of Comparative Philology at Oxford from 1876–90, a family friend of the Wildes, and another contact whom Wilde was assiduously cultivating at this time (he wrote to him at the end of March to enlist his help in obtaining an 'archaeological studentship' in Athens).[7]

Seen in this context *Historical Criticism* looks very much like a piece of self-promotion, an opportunity for Wilde to place on display to a possible future employer his scholarly credentials—that is, his familiarity with key texts on the Greats curriculum, his facility in Greek translation (large sections of the essay are paraphrases of Greek sources) and, most importantly, his ability to relate questions raised by ancient authors to contemporary issues (for example, in his linking of Polybius' historiographic method to the sociological analyses of Herbert Spencer). The alleged modernity of ancient Greek culture, and its relevance to contemporary life, had been a key element in the revival of Greek studies undertaken by Benjamin Jowett, Professor of Greek and Master of Balliol College, and an immensely powerful figure in Oxford politics in the late 1870s when Wilde was an undergraduate. More particularly, and as Smith and Helfand note, in the late decades of the century successful excavations of ancient archaeological sites (some of which are alluded to in Wilde's essay), coupled with advances in anthropological theorizing, had encouraged a more 'evolutionary' view of Hellenic civilization, in which a nostalgic model of Greek culture as a repository of timeless values was replaced by a more dynamic concept of development, whereby present theories and values were seen to be directly formed by ancient ideas.[8] Wilde's essay seems consciously designed to demonstrate his intellectual loyalty to these new scholarly traditions, to announce himself as precisely the kind of

easily available to modern readers—that is, to what Smith and Helfand identify in their edition of the *Oxford Notebooks* as Wilde's *Commonplace Book* and his *Notebook Kept at Oxford* (which is referred to in this edition simply as his *Oxford Notebook*).

[7] *Complete Letters*, 78–9.

[8] See Smith and Helfand, eds., *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, 37; their account of Greek scholarship at Oxford is in turn indebted to Frank M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). The influence on Wilde of Jowett's revisions to the Greats curriculum, and thus of what she terms 'Oxford Hellenism', has also been discussed by Linda Dowling in *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (London: Cornell University Press, 1994).

critic who would fit in with some recent trends in Oxford pedagogy. In the event, however, his ambitions for further Oxford honours were not to be realized: no essay prize was awarded in 1879 and no fellowship was offered to Wilde.

Mason claims that the withholding of the prize was unusual, happening only once previously in 1871. He goes on to quote the following comment elicited from Professor J. W. Mackail, who was Professor of Poetry from 1906–11, and thus one of the judges of the essay competition at the time when Mason was compiling his bibliography:

> The essay, young as it is, is quite up to the general level of that sort of thing and I do not know why the prize was not awarded. It would be interesting to find out—only it is now among the chapters of the treatise *de rebus deperditis* [destroyed things]—what the essays were in that year.[9]

Over a century later, the modern scholar is somewhat less well placed than Mackail to speculate on the reasons for Wilde's failure. That said, there are questions about how carefully Mackail read Wilde's manuscript, and about the standards that Oxford expected of its undergraduates at the turn of the century, for Wilde's essay is not at all easy to decipher. In places the document itself is only what can be called 'messy'; moreover, it contains numerous spelling and grammatical errors, an idiosyncratic (and often confusing) method of punctuation, a haphazard means of citation, as well as a number of marginal glosses the relevance of which to the main text is not always obvious. There are also a couple of places where blank spaces have been left mid-sentence; presumably they were to have been filled in at a later stage when Wilde remembered what it was he had wanted to say.

The manuscript in question—referred to in the present volume as *MS1*—is held in the Clark Library.[10] Although, as I have noted, it appears to be in a finished form—a fair-copy in Wilde's hand, in ink, in three morocco-bound quarto notebooks—it contains (like many of Wilde's manuscripts which were used as printer's copy) frequent deletions, corrections, and insertions. Moreover, in places pages appear to have been torn out, and new pages interleaved, suggesting that parts of the essay may have been recopied, perhaps because the original corrections were too numerous or simply illegible. However, the fact that none of the pages is numbered makes it difficult to be certain about the extent and sequence of such revisions; nor can we be absolutely sure that all of them were made at the time the essay was submitted to the panel of judges. It is possible that Wilde may have revisited and revised the essay at a later date, perhaps with a view to adapting it for publication. The

[9] See Mason, *Bibliography*, 470.

[10] MS Wilde W6721M3 R595 [1879?]. In his *Oscar Wilde Encyclopedia* (New York: AMS, 1998), Karl Beckson erroneously describes the Clark Library as holding only 'two MS. Notebooks containing parts II and III of the essay' (312).

absence, however, of any reference to it in his correspondence after the summer of 1879 makes this course of action seem unlikely. His failure to gain a college fellowship probably led him to abandon those projects (including the planned translations of classical texts for Macmillan) which had initially been conceived in the context of a possible academic career.

As was his habit in his *Oxford Notebook* and *Commonplace Book*, Wilde wrote on one side of the paper only, reserving the verso to record what appear to have been later or parenthetical thoughts (these verso jottings are described in more detail below). The first, and at a little over 9,600 words, the longest of the three notebooks, was given the title, retained in this edition, 'Three Books on Historical Criticism: Ἀλήθεια' [Truth] (written beneath the title at an angle are the words 'England Essay'). The second notebook, which runs to around 6,800 words, was entitled 'Historical Criticism: Vol. II. Ἀλήθεια'; it appears to have a number of leaves torn out at the end of the book. The third notebook, at approximately 7,100 words, was entitled 'Historical Criticism: Vol. III. Ἀλήθεια'. The division of material between the three notebooks appears to have been entirely pragmatic, Wilde beginning a new notebook simply when he ran out of space. In fact there does not appear to be any consistent method of dividing the essay into sections: in some places Wilde skips one or two lines; in other places he leaves up to a third or half of a page blank; and there are yet other occasions, towards the end of the third notebook, where he separates pieces of text by a row of 'x x x' marks. None of these divisions, however, is formally numbered in any way, and it remains an open question as to whether they are intended to mark different stages in his argument. (My understanding of their significance is described in more detail below, in 'A Note on the Texts and the Textual Collation', p. lxxxvii.)

Another area of confusion regarding the structure of the essay concerns Wilde's unorthodox (to modern eyes) method of punctuation, particularly his use of capitals, colons, and full-stops: full-stops are not always followed by capital letters, and capital letters are as likely to follow colons as they are full-stops. In a similar manner sentences which end mid-line do not always seem to indicate the beginning (on the following line) of a new paragraph. (Indeed Wilde often fails to begin new paragraphs with an indented line; moreover, he rarely begins a new page with an indent, even if the sentence on the previous page ends mid-line.) All of this can make it difficult to be sure where sentences and paragraphs begin and end, and such uncertainty does little to help the clarity of what is in places a densely argued piece. There are also difficulties with the ways in which Wilde marks quoted material which (again) do not follow either modern practices, nor those of nineteenth-century publishers. Quoted passages, even quite long ones, are only rarely indented; but even those which appear within the body of the text are not always marked off with quotation marks. Moreover, Wilde uses quotation marks to indicate both paraphrased passages as

well as those which are direct quotations, and he also has a tendency to omit closing quotation marks, or to include within quotation marks material—such as 'he says', or 'he argues'—that is obviously not part of the quotation. All of this can make it difficult to decide where quoted material begins and ends. (It is perhaps worth noting in passing here that a lack of clarity in signalling his debts to other writers—particularly a blurring of the distinction between paraphrase and quotation—is also a feature of much of Wilde's later critical writing, one which modern scholars have often attributed to carelessness or deviousness. However, the fact that this practice also characterizes a graduate essay, a piece which was to be submitted to close academic scrutiny, may indicate that at the time it was more acceptable, more within the range of normal practice, than modern critics have realized.)

A further series of problems relates to the verso jottings mentioned earlier. They can be divided into four categories. First, there are a number of longish passages which are clearly marked as insertions in the main text on the facing recto. Second, there are brief citations—such as, for example, 'Rep. Bk. II. 380'—which refer to passages quoted or paraphrased in the main text on the facing recto (although it needs to be stressed that the majority of such quoted or paraphrased passages are given no reference at all). Third, there is a small number of longer references to which Wilde has added (in another ink) the word 'note', although he does not always indicate precisely the part of the main text to which they refer. Finally there is a fourth and more puzzling class of jotting which takes the form of a phrase or sentence, sometimes written at an angle across the verso, which is neither marked as a note nor an insertion, and which does not always have an obvious relationship with the main text on the facing recto. My interpretation of these four kinds of verso jottings, and the various ways they have been incorporated into the copy-text, are again described more fully in 'A Note on the Texts and the Textual Collation', p. lxxxvii.

According to Mason, the manuscript of *Historical Criticism,* which would have been returned to Wilde following the judging of the Essay competition, was one of many that disappeared (or was sold) following the sale of his effects at Tite Street on 24 April 1895. It first resurfaced in 1905 when part of it (the material in the first notebook) was privately printed under the title 'The Rise of Historical Criticism' in New York, in an edition of 225 numbered copies by the Sherwood Press, Hartford, Connecticut.[11] This first notebook was subsequently offered for sale in July 1905; and a description of it appeared in the sale catalogue of S. B. Luyster Jun., of 35 John Street, New York City. Mason does not record who bought the first notebook, but it was certainly not purchased by Ross, for it was the text of the 1905 Sherwood Press edition, rather

[11] As reported in Mason, *Bibliography*, 469.

than the manuscript, which formed the basis of the version he published in Volume VII of the *Collected Edition* in 1908; and it is therefore probably with the 1905 Sherwood Press edition that the title by which the essay has subsequently come to be known—'The Rise of Historical Criticism'—originated.

In a note (on the reverse of the half-title to the essay) appended to the edition of Volume VII printed on Japanese vellum, Ross recorded his gratitude to a 'Mr Charles Glidder Osborne, who has examined the original manuscript, now in America'. He also expressed his gratitude to 'a well-known Oxford scholar', whom Mason identifies as the same J. W. Mackail who was later consulted about the entire essay, 'for correcting proofs as far as possible'.[12] In the event, however, the efforts of Osborne (who may have been the purchaser of the first notebook when it was sold in July 1905) seem to have been largely in vain, for as the textual notes to the present edition record, there are numerous differences between *MS1* and the text in Volume VII of Ross's *Collected Edition*. The title apart, there are differences in punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, and, more significantly, in aspects of the phrasing. On some occasions words in *MS1* are omitted, and on others alternative words are substituted for those which are perfectly legible. We should not assume that these variants were simply the result of negligence (or inexperience) on Osborne's part; it is equally possible that Ross was involved in 'tidying-up' manuscript readings conveyed to him by Osborne but which did not, in Ross's judgement, make good sense. Confirmation that Ross did actively 'edit' Wilde comes from two sources. First, the proof copy of the relevant section of Volume VII of the *Collected Edition* (held in the Clark Library) shows that manuscript readings correctly recorded in the proof text have been marked up to be changed (presumably by Ross or Mackail). For example, the phrase 'a factor of progress is to be rested' which occurs near the beginning of the essay (p. 3 in the present edition), and which is correctly transcribed in the proof text, is marked up as follows: a factor of progress is <to be rested> /based\. Moreover, this is the version that eventually appeared in the *Collected Edition*.[13] Second, an examination of the text of the remaining part of the essay (the material in notebooks two and three) which Ross went on to publish in *Miscellanies*, and where (as

[12] Ibid.

[13] The pages in question are part of a 'made-up copy' of *Historical Criticism* (PR5820 R591) which consists of marked-up proof pages of the preliminary matter of *Miscellanies*; the half-title to part 4 of 'The Rise of Historical Criticism' in *Miscellanies*; pp. 223–66 of *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Pieces*; and pp.181–288 of *Miscellanies*. In his study of the variants between *Intentions* and the texts established by Ross in the *Collected Edition*, Kamran Ahmadgoli has also found evidence of similar editorial interventions. See Ahmadgoli, *Robert Ross and the Collected Works of Oscar Wilde: A Textual and Historical Account* Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. University of Birmingham, 2005.

explained below) he was able to work directly from Wilde's manuscript, reveals similar numbers and kinds of variants.

Mason notes, somewhat gnomically, that 'some time after the volume containing *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Pieces* had been published, Mr. Robert Ross found the remainder of the Essay in two quarto exercise books which are apparently uniform with the volume in America described in Luyster's catalogue'.[14] Ross used an equally obscure formulation—the comment that 'recently the remainder of the original manuscript has been discovered'—in his note to the text printed in *Miscellanies*.[15] Exactly how the remaining two notebooks came so fortuitously into his possession remains a mystery; however, and as I have suggested, the discovery did at least give him the opportunity to work directly from the manuscript. Given that access, it is significant that we find a similar process of 'editing' to that which seems to have occurred in his printing of the first part of the essay. Once again Wilde's punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, and so forth have been systematically changed. There are also occasions where Ross 'corrects' Wilde's grammar, and substitutes his own phrasing for what he presumably judged to be infelicities or solecisms in Wilde's phrasing. These interventions by Ross would not be worth recording in such detail were it not for the fact that all editions of *Historical Criticism* subsequent to that of the 1908 *Collected Edition*—that is, in practice the various editions of the Collins *Anthology*—have been based on Ross's text.[16] In this respect the status of the text of *Historical Criticism* which has been in the public domain for nearly a century is not dissimilar to that of Wilde's prison manuscript (popularly known as *De Profundis*): in both cases printed texts pertaining to be faithful transcriptions of Wilde manuscripts have in fact undergone a process of judicious editing, Rupert Hart-Davis often acting, as Ian Small has shown, in a manner not dissimilar to that of Ross.[17] One important aim of the current OET volume, then, is to establish an authoritative text and title for Wilde's essay. To this end Wilde's punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, and phrasing have been restored, as have all the verso jottings (many of which were omitted by Ross). Fuller details of how I have dealt with the problems, particularly of display, posed by these textual features—by, that is, the idiosyncrasies in Wilde's punctuation, and the different status of the verso jottings—are given in 'A Note on the Texts and the Textual Collation' on p. lxxxvii. The textual notes to *Historical Criticism* record variants between the copy-text and the text printed by Ross in the 1908

[14] Mason, 470. [15] Ross, ed., *Miscellanies*, 180.

[16] The early Collins editions—those published in 1948 and 1952—contained additional errors, particularly in the transcription of Greek quotations; these were corrected in the 1994 edition edited by Merlin Holland. However, all editions conflate modern editorial notes—for example, translations of Greek phrases—with Wilde's own notes (which I describe later).

[17] See Small, ed., *De Profundis*, 6–9.

Collected Edition in order to exhibit the full extent of Ross's editorial interventions.

As might be anticipated, the argument presented in the text of *Historical Criticism* established in the present volume of the OET Wilde is, in places, less easy to follow than that in the text given by Ross. The removal of Ross's punctuation, which imposes a particular interpretation on Wilde's sometimes convoluted syntax, has made for a more ambiguous, and certainly more difficult prose style. However, what has been lost in clarity is more than made up for in authenticity. For in seeing Wilde's writing in a raw though—in his eyes—finished state, we notice a number of characteristics which recur in early drafts of later, published work. Most obvious are those relating to punctuation: this seems not to have been an aspect of his prose in which Wilde took much interest or care, and it is significant that later in his career he seems to have been more than willing to delegate details of punctuation to those with more experience (for example, to James Stoddart, who effectively repunctuated *Dorian Gray* for publication in *Lippincott's*).[18] In this respect, we perhaps need to acknowledge that some of the rhythms and cadences of Wilde's prose may in practice have been the product of other hands, brought about by the various editors and house readers with whom he worked. Likewise, structuring long pieces of prose also proved a consistent problem for him, one in which (once again) he was often willing to defer to more experienced judgements. As the textual notes to this edition show, he had some trouble organizing the material for his longer published essays, and had to tolerate the deletion of certain passages in 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' by James Knowles (the editor of the *Nineteenth Century*), apparently because of their prolixity. The problems of referencing which I have already mentioned—the failure to distinguish clearly between quoted and paraphrased material, and the haphazard acknowledgement of sources—these features also have uncanny parallels in the later and apparently more mature work. In all of this some of the most striking similarities occur once again between *Historical Criticism* and Wilde's prison manuscript: here we have two works, written near the beginning and end of his career, both of which show an apparent lack of writerly discipline. Such a comparison in turn suggests that the habitual dismissal of *Historical Criticism* as a piece of clumsy juvenilia has been too hasty.

Philip E. Smith II's and Michael S. Helfand's edition of the *Oxford Notebooks* made a careful attempt to establish the significance of the issues debated in *Historical Criticism* for Wilde's later intellectual development. As they put it: 'Our analysis will confirm the centrality of Wilde's synthesis

[18] See Bristow, ed., *Dorian Gray*, pp. lxii–lxviii. Bristow comments: '[m]uch of Stoddart's attentive work on the typescript [of *Dorian Gray*] focused on standardizing the idiosyncrasies in Wilde's punctuation' (p. lxv).

and its components (mind, imagination, race, evolution) as guiding ideas in the "Rise" . . . [T]he essay was his first realization in critical discourse of the synthesis recorded in the notebooks; each helps to explain the other, and together they provide a context for interpreting the meaning of his later works.'[19] Readers who have been sceptical about that 'synthesizing' quality may be interested to see that it is rather less in evidence in the text of *Historical Criticism* established here—where one is struck by hesitations, false-starts, and discontinuities—than in the more polished version given by Ross. The Commentary to the present edition will also make readers more alert to the frequently derivative elements of Wilde's argument, a feature which again tends to contradict Smith's and Helfand's claim that it is a knowledge of Wilde's undergraduate education that best allows us to appreciate his originality. Such observations in turn suggest that a different (and possibly more fruitful) method of reassessing *Historical Criticism*, made possible by the present OET volume, is to focus on the techniques of the essay, and on the ways in which it foreshadows writing practices characteristic of Wilde's later, more mature work, particularly his published criticism.

The Textual Condition of Intentions

I. 'THE TRUTH OF MASKS', 'PEN, PENCIL, AND POISON', AND 'THE DECAY OF LYING'

It is difficult to know exactly when Wilde contemplated putting together a book of critical essays, but it could not have been much earlier than the spring of 1889, for until then he did not have a body of work sufficient to make up such a volume. For most of the 1880s his critical writing had taken the form of short and anonymous contributions to the *Pall Mall Gazette* and (to a much lesser extent) the *Court and Society Review*; a few pieces had appeared under signature in the *Dramatic Review*, and there was also his 'Literary and Other Notes' column, written in his capacity as editor of the *Woman's World*.[20] None of this brief and topical material, however, was likely to have been thought suitable (either by Wilde or any possible publishers) for reprinting. There were two exceptions to this pattern. A more substantial piece entitled 'Shakespeare and Stage

[19] Smith and Helfand, eds., *Oscar Wilde's Oxford Notebooks*, 37. One recent study, which is particularly indebted to the approach suggested by Smith and Helfand (though not always agreeing with their findings), is Julia Prewitt-Brown, *Cosmopolitan Criticism: Oscar Wilde's Philosophy of Art* (London: University Press of Virginia, 1997). Likewise, Linda Dowling has also seen Wilde's Oxford education—and particularly his interpretation of 'Oxford Hellenism'—as the key to appreciating his 'originality' as a 'critical thinker'; she judges *Historical Criticism* to be 'Arnoldian but disorganized' (see Dowling, ed., *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, p. xx).

[20] There were also occasional short contributions to publications such as the *World*, *Saturday Review*, and *Dublin University Magazine*.

Scenery' had appeared under his own name in the *Nineteenth Century* in May 1885 (an earlier and shorter version of it, entitled 'Shakespeare on Scenery', had been published in the 14 March issue of the *Dramatic Review*; a later, expanded version, entitled 'The Truth of Masks', was the final essay in *Intentions*). The second piece was a translation from the French of Turgenev's short story 'A Fire at Sea', published a year later in the May 1886 issue of *Macmillan's Magazine*.

These last two publications suggest that Wilde had the ability to work up longer pieces more appropriate to the serious monthlies, although he did not have the time, or perhaps the confidence, to do so consistently, or perhaps he had not lighted upon topics sufficiently suited for such treatment. (In 1888 he had concentrated on compiling his first book of short fiction, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*). Certainly Wilde did not, to our knowledge, work on any more translations (in 1888 he was also canvassing a possible translation of Flaubert's *La Tentation de St Antoine*, but there is no evidence that he ever started, let alone finished it).[21] Nor did Wilde pursue his interest in Russian literature, despite the fact that it was beginning to become fashionable, as some of his later reviews for the *Pall Mall Gazette* testify.[22] He may have been discouraged from this path by a letter (dated 7 April 1886) from George Macmillan which reported that 'our experience of foreign fiction has been so uniformly discouraging that we have determined to make no further ventures in that field'.[23]

All of this was to change, however, in January 1889 when three articles under signature appeared in the same month in 'serious' publications: 'The Decay of Lying' in the *Nineteenth Century*, reprinted in the February 1889 edition of the *Eclectic Magazine*, an American periodical which reproduced what it judged to be the best articles from the principal British periodicals of the previous month; 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison' in the *Fortnightly Review*; and 'London Models' in the Macmillan serial, the *English Illustrated Magazine*. Having three pieces under signature appearing virtually simultaneously was certainly fortuitous, and it is worth pausing to consider the extent to which the resulting exposure was merely luck, or an event actively orchestrated by Wilde to launch his career as a critic. To take the last (and slightest) piece first. 'London Models', a witty comparison between the 'well-behaved and hard-working class' of men and women who sat for English (as opposed to French or Italian) artists, had been

[21] The translation was mooted in a letter tentatively dated '?December 1888' to W. E. Henley; see *Complete Letters*, 372.

[22] See, e.g., 'A Batch of Novels', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 May 1887; reprinted in Robert Ross, ed., *The Collected Works of Oscar Wilde. Volume XIII. Reviews* (London: Methuen, 1908), 157–61. Wilde's mother also had an interest in Russian literature.

[23] The letter is quoted in Josephine M. Guy and Ian Small, *Oscar Wilde's Profession: Writing and the Culture Industry in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 68.

commissioned by Joseph Comyns Carr, the editor of the *English Illustrated Magazine*, as far back as March 1886. The long delay in publication may have been because of problems in the production of the fifteen engravings from drawings by Harper Pennington which accompanied Wilde's piece.[24] That said, an advance mention of 'London Models' in the December 1888 edition of the *Pall Mall Gazette,* which described it as 'a very good article' and 'very entertaining', lending 'an unaccustomed sprightliness to the magazine', suggests that Wilde was well aware of the advantages of self-publicity, and given his professional involvement with that paper, may well have had a hand in composing the notice.[25]

In contrast to 'London Models', we have little precise information about the composition of 'The Decay of Lying' and 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison'; and we do not know either whether they were expressly written for the periodicals in which they appeared, the *Nineteenth Century* and *Fortnightly Review*, or whether they had originally been conceived for other occasions and had perhaps been turned down by other editors. An important issue is to establish the probable order of their composition, for this bears upon the ways in which we understand the relationship between the two pieces, their simultaneous publication, as well as Wilde's later decision to collect them together in *Intentions*.

Richard Ellmann suggests that 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison' was written first, followed by 'The Decay of Lying'.[26] His main evidence for this hypothesis is the strong thematic link between the subject-matter of 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison'—the Victorian artist and poisoner, Thomas Griffiths Wainewright—and Wilde's 1886 lecture on Thomas Chatterton: in both cases Wilde seems to be exploring the relationship between criminality and artistry by linking creativity with dissembling.[27] There are also some striking stylistic similarities between the two pieces: the extensive but scantily acknowledged use Wilde makes of William Carew Hazlitt's 1880 edition of *Essays and Criticisms By Thomas Griffiths Wainewright* (recorded in the Commentary to the present edition) is very reminiscent of the way he borrowed in his lecture from two recent biographies of Chatterton (the surviving manuscript of the lecture is made up of passages from those two sources cut out and pasted onto lined sheets interspersed with Wilde's own, occasional comments).[28] In both essay and lecture we see Wilde working in the same way as he must have done as a reviewer,

[24] The dating of 'London Models' derives from a later letter from Wilde to George Macmillan in which he complains about the delay in its publication; see *Complete Letters*, 385.

[25] Quoted in Mason, *Bibliography*, 70.

[26] See Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987), 283.

[27] Lawrence Danson also discusses the composition of 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison' in relation to the Chatterton Lecture; see Danson, *Wilde's Intentions: The Artist in his Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 89–92.

[28] That lecture is in the Clark Library: MS Wilde W6721M3 E78 [1886?].

developing his narrative through a mixture of quotation and unattributed paraphrase. However, placing 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison' at a relatively early stage in Wilde's writing career cannot account for the whole story of its composition; we still need to explain why if it was begun in the mid-1880s, the essay remained unpublished until the end of the decade. To return to the Chatterton lecture: it is easy to explain the timing of that piece in terms of local interest in the poet. A series of recent publications on his work, a successful West End play, and a campaign to raise funds for a memorial plaque in his home town of Bristol had all made Chatterton topical in 1886.[29] By contrast, there is no evidence in 1889 of a similar interest in Wainewright. Rather the opposite: he was somewhat 'old news' by the end of the decade, and it is not immediately obvious why any periodical editor would have wanted to publish an essay on him.[30] Furthermore, the derivative nature of 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison'—it contains no information about Wainewright other than that easily available from other sources—would surely have made an editor cautious, for Wilde's plagiarism in the Chatterton lecture was almost certainly the reason why plans to publish it in the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* came to nothing.[31]

In *Oscar Wilde: His Life and Confessions*, Frank Harris, the editor (from 1886) of the *Fortnightly Review*, dates his first meeting with Wilde to the winter of 1883–4, going on to claim that from 1884 onwards he met him 'continually', and that by 1887–8 he was lunching with him 'once or twice a week'.[32] Even allowing for the exaggeration typical of Harris, it seems likely that he was well acquainted with Wilde by the late 1880s and following his career with both a personal and a professional curiosity. Frustratingly Harris gives no direct details about his decision to publish 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison', though he suggests that as a writer Wilde attracted him as someone in possession of 'prodigious notoriety' and an ability to 'set everyone talking and laughing': in short it looked as if Wilde could sell copy, a consideration at the forefront of Harris's mind given that a condition of his appointment as editor by Chapman and Hall, at a young age and with relatively little experience, was that he should

[29] These events are discussed in more detail in Josephine M. Guy, '"Trafficking with Merchants for His Soul": Dante Gabriel Rossetti Among the Aesthetes', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 105 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 171–86.

[30] The height of interest in Wainewright was probably in the 1840s and 1850s when both Dickens and Edward Bulwer Lytton published fictional treatments of Wainewright's crimes (see Commentary, p. 448).

[31] The October 1886 edition of the magazine announced that Wilde's essay had been 'unavoidably postponed until January 1887' (in fact it never appeared).

[32] Frank Harris, *Oscar Wilde: His Life and Confessions* (London: Privately Printed by the Author, 1916); repr. as *Oscar Wilde: His Life and Confessions. Including the hitherto unpublished full and final confession by Lord Alfred Douglas and My Memories of Oscar Wilde by Bernard Shaw* (New York: Garden City Publishing, 1930), 63, 79.

raise the flagging sales of the *Fortnightly*.[33] What was it, then, that was so provocative about the subject-matter of 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison' that in the mid-winter of 1888–9 it would have seemed likely to have created a stir of interest among Harris's readers?

As I have suggested, it is unlikely that it was simply Wainewright who was the attraction, for the details of his career as a poisoner were well known by 1889; moreover attempts to justify his crimes by appealing to his aesthetic sensibility had already been made some years earlier by figures such as Thomas De Quincey and Algernon Swinburne—the latter indeed had coined the expression which Wilde used as the title of his own essay.[34] A more likely explanation for Harris's interest, and one which has the added advantage of going some way towards explaining the January publication date, may lie in the essay's subtext: its pointed analogy between Wainewright and the more contemporary figure of Walter Pater. The full details of that 'double-portrait', and the way in which it is exhibited by means of a carefully orchestrated series of allusions, are made explicit in the Commentary to the present edition. Its appeal to Harris in the winter of 1888–9 could have been that it followed so soon after the publication of Pater's essay 'Style' in the December issue of the *Fortnightly*. Given Harris's and Wilde's close acquaintance, it seems entirely possible that both men would have discussed the 'Style' essay. Perhaps Harris encouraged Wilde to respond, and Wilde in turn saw in his sketch of Wainewright (a draft of which he may have had in his possession for some time if it had originated as a review of Hazlitt's volume) an opportunity to develop a witty attack on his old mentor. If we are prepared to continue this line of speculation, then we need also to consider Wilde's motives. Why choose January 1889 as the moment publicly to distance himself from Paterian aestheticism?

The nature of Wilde's intellectual debts to Pater (the question as to whether he redefined or merely vulgarized Pater's ideas), and the psychological relationship between the two men (whether, as some critics

[33] Harris had taken over the editorship of this famous radical publication in 1886, following a period of sharp decline presided over by his predecessor T. H. S. Escott. That Harris succeeded in doubling the circulation in a year was largely a result of changes he implemented to its tone and style; these transformed the *Fortnightly* from a forum of serious political debate (as envisioned under its first editors, G. H. Lewes (1865–7) and John Morley (1867–82)) to a medium of entertainment, with a focus on creative and critical literature. A notice in *Hazell's Annual*, 1889, described the restyling as follows: 'Originally a philosophical Radical review. It has now assumed a wider scope, discussing social and political questions on a broad basis' (quoted in Mason, *Bibliography*, 71). Ironically, Harris would eventually resign his editorship (in 1894) after repeated quarrels with the publisher (Chapman and Hall) over the extent of the literary material and the promotion of extreme political causes such as anarchism.

[34] Swinburne had commented of Wainewright that 'with pen, with palette, or with poison, his hand was never a mere craftsman's' (*William Blake* (1866; London: Chatto and Windus 1906), 74).

have hinted, Wilde was contemptuous of Pater's retreat from the public arena following the reception of the first edition of *The Renaissance* and the sexual scandal which threatened his career at Oxford), are complex issues, not really pertinent to a textual history of Wilde's essay.[35] What is relevant, though, is the narrower question of the intellectual shadow Pater cast in the early winter of 1888 when Wilde was probably first thinking about the possibility of writing longer essays and thus explicitly fashioning for himself a role as a critic (rather than that anonymous reviewer working for the *Pall Mall Gazette*).

Professionally speaking, 1888 was a good year for Pater, one in which he would have had good reason to believe that the damage done to his reputation by the controversies over the first edition of *The Renaissance* had finally been put behind him. The publication in January of the third edition of that work (with the revised conclusion reinstated) had followed the critical and commercial successes of *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), which had run to two editions in its first year of publication, and *Imaginary Portraits* (1887), which would also generate enough interest for a second edition in 1890. A sense that his standing was now more secure was almost certainly a factor in Pater's decision in June 1888 to put together his first collection of essays on purely literary topics (one provisionally entitled *On Style, with Other Studies in Literature* and eventually published in November 1889 as *Appreciations*). Another factor in Pater's timing may have involved the death in April 1888 of Matthew Arnold, a figure who had done more than any other to redefine the social role of the critic, placing him at the very centre of cultural life. Arnold's death may have prompted Pater into writing the altogether more ambitious 'Style' essay which begins *Appreciations*, and which Robert Seiler has described as 'one of the most difficult compositions he had undertaken'.[36] By applying the principles of aesthetic criticism explicitly to prose (rather than to pictorial art), 'Style' seems designed to confirm Pater's authority as a literary (rather than art) critic—perhaps the pre-eminent literary critic of the time. In this respect the placing of the essay in the *Fortnightly* was especially significant;[37] its publication in the December 1888 issue must have been a reminder for Wilde that Pater, far from having retreated, was about to place himself as precisely that critical authority for which Wilde too may have had ambitions. In short, I am suggesting that in the winter of 1888–9, at the

[35] Details of the scandal, and its effects on Pater's career at Oxford, were first described by Billie Andrew Inman in 'Estrangement and Connection: Walter Pater, Benjamin Jowett, and William M. Hardinge', in Laurel Brake and Ian Small, eds., *Pater in the 1990s* (Greensboro, NC: ELT Press, 1991), 1–20.

[36] Seiler, *The Book Beautiful*, 47.

[37] 'Notes on Leonardo Da Vinci', 'Sandro Botticelli', 'Pico della Mirandola', 'The Poetry of Michelangelo', and 'The School of Giorgione' (which was included in the third edition of *The Renaissance*) appeared first in the *Fortnightly Review*. Overall the *Fortnightly* published fourteen essays and lectures by Pater.

very moment when Wilde was in the process of composing his first major critical statement to appear under signature for a serious periodical ('The Decay of Lying'), Pater may have appeared, suddenly and surprisingly, as the most likely inheritor of Arnold's mantle.

In *De Profundis*, Wilde described how the 'idea, title, treatment, mode, [and] everything' for 'the first and best of all my dialogues' (i.e. 'The Decay of Lying') was 'struck out' during a modest little dinner with Robert Ross in a Soho cafe.[38] The immediate context for this remark, made over a decade after the event, was a series of recriminations against his lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, largely over the excessive nature of Douglas's appetite, of which the only memory was 'that too much was eaten and too much was drunk'.[39] Nonetheless the scenario that Wilde sketches, of an essay topic that was thought up in relaxed conversation with a close friend is plausible.[40] Unfortunately, Wilde himself gives no precise date for the meal, and the confusing chronology of *De Profundis* prevents us from making any secure inferences about when it occurred. Some clues, though, are offered by Wilde's earlier correspondence.

For example, in a letter to the Scottish journalist James Nicol Dunn (then managing editor of the *Scots Observer*), which is dated by Holland and Hart-Davis as 'November–December 1888', Wilde describes his work 'at present' as 'chiefly reviewing' and then tentatively suggests writing for Dunn 'an article' on Alexander Smith, or more generally on 'the Scotch poets between Chaucer and Shakespeare'.[41] Had 'The Decay of Lying' been well in hand at this time, it is possible that Wilde, who was always alert to the value of self-publicity, would have mentioned it to Dunn. Likewise contemporary correspondence tentatively dated as '?December 1888' to W. E. Henley, a writer to whom Wilde, at this time, was only too ready to boast about his current projects and achievements, makes no mention at all of work on an essay, speaking only of a possible translation. The solitary confirmation we have that Ross and Wilde met in London in the early winter of 1888 comes from a letter dated '?1888–9' in which Wilde speaks of his 'great pleasure' at seeing Ross again, while at the same time chiding him for 'not writing' and requesting that next time he comes 'to town' he spend less time in Windsor with Oscar Browning.[42] The reason for Ross's inaccessibility was that in October 1888 he had gone up to Cambridge, and was therefore very unlikely to have met with Wilde for any London dinner until—as the surviving correspondence suggests—term had ended. In her biography of Ross, Maureen Borland gives few details of Ross's activities during this period, except to note

[38] Small, ed., *De Profundis*, 42. [39] Ibid.

[40] In a letter to Oscar Browning dated around this time (Oct. 1888), Wilde described Ross as 'charming and as clever as can be, with excellent taste and sound knowledge' (*Complete Letters*, 360).

[41] Ibid. 371. [42] Ibid. 381.

that he 'immersed himself in the life of the university', devoting what spare time he had to developing new friendships and launching the *Gadfly* (a short-lived undergraduate magazine).[43] More significantly, perhaps, Borland also comments in passing that although Ross had known Wilde since the early 1880s, and had lodged with him and Constance in Tite Street as a paying guest in 1887, during the autumn and early winter of 1888 their 'friendship . . . progressed slowly, there were long periods when they did not meet or correspond'.[44]

Taken together, these scraps of evidence suggest that the 'modest little dinner' where, according to Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying' was first sketched out, could not have taken place until late November or early December, and this in turn places the probable time of composition of the dialogue very close indeed to the publication of Pater's 'Style' essay.[45] My suggestion that Pater was likely to have been at the forefront of Wilde's mind when he was writing 'The Decay of Lying' might prompt one to expect some discussion of his work in that piece. Yet, as the Commentary to this edition makes clear, the exact opposite seems to be the case: although often reminiscent of Pater, 'The Decay of Lying' actually contains only one direct reference to his work, to the suggestion in his essay 'The School of Giorgione' (which was first published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1877 but not included until the 1888 edition of *The Renaissance*) that 'all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music'. In fact it is 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison' (rather than 'The Decay of Lying') which directly engages with Pater's reputation by explicitly borrowing some of the best-known passages in the preface to *The Renaissance*. These varied responses to Pater's work, in two essays published virtually simultaneously, may seem perplexing until, that is, we recognize them as in some sense companion pieces, the former, 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison', being written (at least in part, and perhaps with Harris's connivance) as a 'foil' for the latter, 'The Decay of Lying', in an attempt to deflect attention away from any too obvious intellectual debts to Pater. Such a strategy would have enabled Wilde to establish the originality of his critical voice by ridiculing the authority of his nearest rival.

Tentative support for the narrative I have sketched out can be found in correspondence between Wilde and the *Punch* journalist, Henry Lucy, which is dated January 1889. Responding to Lucy's praise for 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison' Wilde directed him to what he termed his

[43] Maureen Boorland, *Wilde's Devoted Friend: A Life of Robert Ross* (Oxford: Lennard Publishing, 1990), 19.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Horst Schroeder dates the composition of the essay some months earlier on the grounds that there are references in it to periodical articles published on 20 October and 1 November 1889. Such information, however, only gives us a date before which Wilde is unlikely to have begun the essay; it does not tell us when he actually began it (see Schroeder, *Oscar Wilde*, 9).

'Nineteenth-Century' article on the grounds that this piece was 'so much the better of the two' because it contained 'my *new* theory of art'.[46] There is also some corroborating evidence from a much repeated anecdote of W. B. Yeats. In 'The Trembling of the Veil' in his *Autobiographies* Yeats famously described a meeting with Wilde and Henley in September 1888 in which Pater's work was discussed. Yeats was struck by the overly extravagant way in which Wilde praised *The Renaissance* as 'the very flower of decadence'. According to Yeats, Wilde went on: 'the last trumpet should have sounded the moment it was written'. In his account of this exchange Ellmann perceptively comments that Wilde 'was at once admiring Pater and making him faintly ridiculous, freeing himself by professing outlandish bondage'.[47] Yeats's accounts of Wilde, like those of Harris, are not always reliable; on this occasion, though, it seems plausible that at around the time when he may have been trying to move away from anonymous journalism in order to establish himself as a critic, Wilde was sensitive about his indebtedness to Pater. Yeats also describes being invited to Wilde's house for Christmas dinner that year, a dinner in which he was treated to a reading of the proofs of 'The Decay of Lying'. This detail is a useful reminder that nineteenth-century printers could be very quick at turning round copy; there would have been time *after* Wilde had read Pater's 'Style' essay for 'The Decay of Lying' to have been completed from a rough sketch made out with Ross in late November or early December, as well as final revisions to have been made to 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison', which is a much shorter piece. Other internal evidence which points to the relatively quick composition of 'The Decay of Lying' comes from the numerous 'borrowings' from Wilde's earlier journalism: as the Commentary to the present edition makes clear, Wilde frequently appropriated phrases (and on occasions, whole stretches of text) from his earlier reviews in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Woman's World*. Although this habit of reusing material is not at all unusual in Wilde's *oeuvre*, it nevertheless reminds us that at this point in his career he was a writer under pressure to complete copy.

Unfortunately no manuscript of 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison' has survived, and there is therefore no firm evidence about how it was composed or if—as I have hypothesized—the Pater/Wainewright analogy was a late addition. While our knowledge of the writing of 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison' is insecure, there is firmer information about the genesis of the 'The Decay of Lying' in the form of an incomplete twenty-page holograph entitled 'On the Decay of Lying' held in the Berg Collection in the New York Public Library, and referred to in this edition as *MS2*. Unfortunately *MS2* is far from complete, but it does yield some interesting evidence about Wilde's compositional habits, although that evidence is not straightforward, and

[46] *Complete Letters*, 384; my emphasis. [47] Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, 284.

an interpretation of it requires that the manuscript be described in some detail.

MS2 consists of loose sheets of lined note paper which have been arranged and numbered 1–20 on the verso in an order which corresponds to that of the printed texts of the dialogue, with individual sheets keyed to the page numbers of the first edition of *Intentions*.[48] However, not all the sheets are continuous, nor do they all derive from the same draft. In fact there is evidence that they may represent as many as three, and possibly four different stages of composition, though all seem to be from a relatively early stage in the dialogue's genesis. Folios 1–6 (in the verso numbering) are a version of the first few paragraphs of the 'article' entitled 'The Decay of Lying: A Protest' which Vivian reads to Cyril; the text is not assigned to a speaker, and there is no interruption from a listener (it begins on p. 37 of the *Nineteenth Century* and p. 75 of this edition). Although these six folios are continuous with each other, they appear to derive from two different drafts: the first three folios, which are numbered '1–3' in Wilde's hand, have several corrections and passages marked for deletion; by contrast, folios 4–6, which are unnumbered, are neater and look like fair copy—a supposition supported by the fact that a later folio (numbered 11 in the sequence, and '4' in Wilde's hand) is continuous with the folio numbered '3' by Wilde (this folio is described below). Folio 7, which begins mid-sentence, is a version of a portion of the *Nineteenth Century* text (on p. 40, p. 80 of this edition) about twenty lines further on from the part which corresponds to where folio 6 ends (also mid-sentence). However, the page-numbering in Wilde's hand of folios 7 and 8 (which are continuous) are marked as '14' and '15', and the text on these two folios *are* assigned to speakers—to 'Cyril' and 'Vivian'. Taken together, these details suggest that folios 7 and 8 must belong to a different (and later) draft from that of folios 1–3 and folios 4–6.

Folios 9 and 10 are a version of a slightly later part of the *Nineteenth Century* text (from p. 42, p. 81 of this edition); they begin where Vivian starts to read again from his 'article'. The fact that once more the text is not assigned to speakers, and the folios are unnumbered, suggests that they may belong to the same draft as folios 4–6. Folio 11 (which, as I noted earlier, is numbered '4' in Wilde's hand and runs on from the folio he numbers '3') turns out (confusingly) to begin with a version of a passage about the 'Psychical Society' which occurs towards the end of the *Nineteenth Century* text (p. 53, p. 99 of this edition); yet the second paragraph of folio 11 corresponds to material on p. 44 of the *Nineteenth Century* printing (p. 86 in this edition) which is just two paragraphs on

[48] In order to avoid confusion, in the description of *MS2* that follows (as well as in the descriptions of other Wilde manuscripts) I use inverted commas around those page numberings which are in Wilde's hand; page or folio numbers which are not placed in inverted commas refer to the consecutive numbering of the manuscript pages.

from the part of the text which corresponds to the end of folio 10. Folio 12 (which is continuous with folio 11) is numbered '5' in Wilde's hand. Folios 13 and 14 are unnumbered but continue from folio 12—again this may indicate that they are part of the same draft as the other unnumbered folios (4–6 and 9–10). Folio 15 runs on from folio 14, but is numbered '30' in Wilde's hand: it is possible that it comes from yet another draft; alternatively, it may be a page from the same draft as the folios numbered by Wilde '1–3' and '4–5' (the fact that text of folio 15 is not assigned to 'speakers' suggests it does not belong to the same draft as folios 7 and 8). Folio 16, which is unnumbered, follows from folio 15 and ends mid-sentence. Folio 17 (also unnumbered) is a version of material which occurs several pages further on still in the *Nineteenth Century* text (p. 50, p. 96 in this edition); once again it seems to belong to an early draft (perhaps that of the other unnumbered folios) because once more the text is not assigned to speakers. Folio 18, which begins and ends mid-sentence, is a version of material on p. 52 of the *Nineteenth Century* (pp. 97–8 of this edition); it is numbered '45' in Wilde's hand, and thus may belong to the same draft as folio 15. Folio 20, which is unnumbered, is a version of material which appears on pp. 54–5 of the *Nineteenth Century* (pp. 101–2 of this edition), and may again belong to the same draft as the other unnumbered folios.

Folio 19 is perhaps the most perplexing folio of *MS2*, for its does not correspond to any material in either of the printed versions of the essay. However, it is numbered '27' in Wilde's hand, and it initially seems to belong to the same draft as some of the other numbered folios (e.g. folios 15 and 18). However, the text of folio 19 turns out to be a version of a review (entitled 'The New President') of a volume called *The Enchanted Island* by Wyke Bayliss, the new president of the Royal Society of Arts. It appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on 26 January 1889—that is, in the very same month as 'The Decay of Lying' was published in the *Nineteenth Century*. It might be the case that the closeness of composition of these two pieces had simply led to drafts of the review and the essay becoming bundled up with each other. Such an accident, however, does not explain the page numbering. An alternative explanation is that at some stage in composing his dialogue Wilde may have intended to include in it aspects of his review, and to that end had interleaved and renumbered a fair-copy page (or pages) of the review in order to incorporate it into an early draft of 'The Decay of Lying'. This suggestion gains plausibility from the fact that there are borrowings in 'The Decay of Lying' from other *Pall Mall Gazette* reviews (these are noted in the Commentary). Moreover, there are also some shared references between the Wyke Bayliss review and the dialogue.

For example, folio 19 begins (mid-sentence) with a joke about the dullness of Wyke Bayliss who, according to Wilde, 'never says anything that is

new'.[49] Wilde then compares art to 'an enchanted island', commenting: 'we must say that we prefer the old Puck [a reference, that is, to an old friend and later adversary, the former president of the RSA, James McNeill Whistler, renowned for his 'brilliant wit'] to the fresh Prospero'. In 'The Decay of Lying' Wilde also uses *The Tempest* to trope the value of invention. When discussing the decline of imagination in Renaissance drama, Wilde cites as an example the 'gradual breaking up of the blank verse', 'the predominance given to prose', and 'the over-importance assigned to characterisation' in Shakespeare's 'later plays', remarking: 'we will not linger any longer over Shakespeare's realism. *The Tempest* is the best of palinodes.' It seems possible that Wilde's use of *The Tempest* to illustrate the unfortunate tendency of art to imitate life (rather than vice versa) may have developed from his earlier observation about the preference for an imaginative Puck over a prosaic Prospero. It is also worth noting that if, for argument's sake, this hypothesis is accepted, then the 'proper' sequence for folio 19 should be between folios 10 and 11, for the sentence about *The Tempest* being 'the best of palinodes' occurs on pp. 43–4 of the *Nineteenth Century* text—that is, between where the text of folio 10 ends and the second paragraph on folio 11 begins. Such a sequence in turn is in accord with Wilde's numbering of folios 15 and 18 (as '30' and '45') and thus strengthens my earlier suggestion that folio 19 is part of this same early draft. The stemma I have hypothesized can be schematized as follows (numbers enclosed in inverted commas represent Wilde's own numbering; 'u' represents an unnumbered folio; ellipses represent discontinuities between extant folios):[50]

Earliest known draft:

'1' [f. 1], '2' [f. 2], '3' [f. 3], '4' [f. 11], '5' [f. 12] . . . '27' [f. 19] . . . '30' [f. 15] . . . '45' [f. 18]

Revised and expanded draft:

'1' [f. 1], '2' [f. 2], '3' [f. 3], u [f. 4], u [f. 5], u [f. 6] . . . u [f. 9], u. [f. 10] . . . '4' [f. 11], '5' [f. 12], u [f. 13], u [f. 14], '30' [f. 15], u [f. 16] . . . u [f. 17] . . . '45' [f. 18] . . . u [f. 20]

Later draft (with text assigned to speakers):

. . . '14' [f. 7], '15' [f. 8] . . .

[49] In *The Enchanted Island* Bayliss had been critical of what he termed 'the eccentricities of an aesthetic craze' and thus was, presumably, a legitimate target for Wilde's satire. See Wyke Bayliss, *The Enchanted Island: The Venice of Titian and Other Studies of Art* (London: W. H. Allen, 1888), 137; I am grateful to John Stokes for drawing this comment to my attention.

[50] My account of the stemma of *MS2* was first rehearsed in 'Oscar Wilde's "Self-Plagiarism": Some New Manuscript Evidence', *Notes and Queries*, (Jan. 2005), 485–8.

If this speculation is correct, and if folio 19 was indeed part of an early draft of 'The Decay of Lying', then it may indicate that Wilde's reuse of his earlier work was more deliberate and systematic than some modern critics have been prepared to acknowledge. Because of the uncertainty over the status of *MS2* folio 19 I have printed it in full as an appendix.

It should be obvious from the above description that it is difficult to draw secure inferences from *MS2*, except that it is made up of several different drafts, and that the process of composing 'The Decay of Lying' involved considerable reordering and expansion of material—practices which are very much in keeping with what we know about the ways Wilde put together his other works. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this complex process of rewriting concerns Wilde's decision to recast what seems initially to have been a straightforward essay—Vivian's 'article'—in dialogue-form. For Lawrence Danson, this apparent change of mind places doubt on Wilde's claims in *De Profundis* about how the essay was composed. Danson, that is, confidently describes the addition of the two speakers, and thus the dialogue structure, to what he terms a 'happy *afterthought* of the dinner in Soho'.[51] But the textual evidence does not support this assertion: none of the pages of *MS2* are dated, and we simply do not know whether the 'idea, title, treatment, mode, [and] everything' that Wilde claimed to have 'struck out' during his meal with Ross included a 'Cyril' and a 'Vivian'. After all, it is possible that all of the drafts of *MS2* were composed after the Soho dinner, and that Wilde always had the dialogue form in mind but simply found it easier creatively to compose Vivian's article first, as a discrete document. Then again, it is equally plausible that the essay which became Vivian's 'article' may have dated from an earlier, shorter, unfinished (or unplaced) piece of work which Wilde had had lying around for some time, and which the conversation with Ross helped him to revive. In both these suggested scenarios the inclusion of Vivian and Cyril could just as easily have been Ross's as Wilde's idea.

Stuart Mason claims that what he terms the 'original manuscript (54 folios)' of 'The Decay of Lying'—by which he presumably means the manuscript used for printer's copy by the *Nineteenth Century*—was 'given by the author to Mr Frank Richardson' (a close friend of Ada Leverson), and was later 'sold at Sotheby's for £111 on July 26, 1910'.[52] The whereabouts of this 'original manuscript' is currently unknown, and it must be presumed that it has either been destroyed or (more likely) that it remains in private hands. The paucity of manuscript evidence for 'The Decay of Lying' and 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison' is, disappointingly, matched by gaps in Wilde's correspondence about them: as I hinted earlier,

[51] Danson, *Wilde's Intentions*, 37; my emphasis.

[52] Mason, *Bibliography*, 123. Beckson records that the same manuscript was sold again (presumably to a private collector) at Sotheby's in 1934 (see Beckson, *Encyclopedia*, 67).

no letters survive which relate directly to the composition or periodical publication of either essay. Unfortunately our best source for Wilde's dealings with Harris and the *Fortnightly* remains the latter's unreliable *Oscar Wilde* (discussed already), while knowledge (for this period of time) of Wilde's relationship with James Knowles, the founder (in 1877) and editor of the *Nineteenth Century*, has to be put together from details contained in correspondence about other issues.

Knowles was certainly a man whom Wilde held in high respect, and by 1888 he may also have known him socially (though not with the intimacy which characterized his friendship with Harris). As far back as October 1881, for example, Wilde had send Knowles a copy of one of his mother's pamphlets, presumably at Knowles's request, for possible publication in the *Nineteenth Century*, and in the accompanying note had expressed his hope that he should 'have the privilege of introducing you to my mother—all brilliant people should cross each other's cycles'.[53] Wilde must also have had some contact with Knowles in the mid-1880s when 'Shakespeare and Stage Scenery' was published in the May 1885 issue of the *Nineteenth Century* (unfortunately no manuscript has survived for this essay; nor is there any extant correspondence about it between Wilde and Knowles). Several years later, during tensions over revisions to 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' (described below), Wilde acknowledged to Knowles that he had 'great reliance on your literary judgement'.[54] Knowles, it seems, was a fairly interventionist publisher, whose understandable concern with the overall look of the *Nineteenth Century* meant that he was not shy of requesting contributors to tailor their material to fit his sense of what constituted a balanced list of contents. We do not know whether he made any demands of Wilde for the second of his essays which he published—'The Decay of Lying'—although there is some evidence (also discussed below) that he may have asked for cuts. The only certain knowledge we have about Wilde's relationship with Knowles in 1888–9 is that Knowles was impressed enough with 'The Decay of Lying' to work with Wilde for a third time, publishing his second dialogue, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism', in the 1890 July and September issues of the *Nineteenth Century*. By contrast, Harris seems to have been more cautious: apparently he refused the next substantial periodical piece Wilde tried to place with him, 'The Portrait of Mr. W. H.', which was brought out in the July 1889 edition of *Blackwood's*, after having been offered to William Blackwood sometime in April.[55]

[53] *Complete Letters*, 116. [54] Ibid. 444.

[55] Harris's account of this refusal is characteristically disingenuous: he justifies it initially by explaining that on talking over the article with Wilde he had advised him not to publish it on the grounds that it 'had very little that was new in it, and more that was untrue'; but then Harris seems to backtrack on this judgement by claiming that much to his 'chagrin' the

It is the nature of periodical publishing that there is often little tangible or reliable evidence of readers' reactions to individual pieces. The kind of 'talking and laughing' which Harris claimed he wanted to stir up is generally impossible to substantiate or recover (so we have, for example, no knowledge of Pater's reaction to the first publication of 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison'). In addition reports of it by interested parties (such as periodical contributors or editors) cannot be assumed to be reliable. However, in the late nineteenth century periodical pieces did sometimes provoke mentions or reviews in the press ('Mr W. H.', for example, elicited a number of reactions, some of them quite favourable). Likewise, if an article proved particularly controversial, magazines such as the *Nineteenth Century* did sometimes publish responses in the next issue (though this was usually over issues which were considered to be of national importance, such as current educational policy). In this respect, it is perhaps worth drawing attention to Lord Ribblesdale's 'The Art of Conversation' which appeared in the August 1889 issue of the *Nineteenth Century* and which quoted from Wilde to make the point that 'to talk agreeably about nothing, or almost nothing, does not come easily to ordinary people'. Ribblesdale went on to relate developments in the art of conversation to larger social and cultural changes, noting that in contemporary times—that is, the late 1880s—conversation had been changed by 'the expansion of society into societies' so much so that 'its different schools' had become a matter of 'public concern', a development in which, the reader might have surmised, Wilde was seen as being instrumental.[56]

A different (and less welcome) reaction to 'The Decay of Lying' came some months later in a letter published in the 2 January 1890 issue of *Truth*, a 6*d*. weekly founded in 1877 and edited, ironically, by Henry Labouchere, who had been responsible for the clauses to the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act under which Wilde would later be convicted. The author of the letter was the artist James McNeill Whistler, whom Wilde first met around 1879 when he moved to London. Although the two men had initially been friends, by the mid-1880s their relationship had soured. Whistler, in particular, had become irritated at the way in which Wilde appeared to be copying his ideas, a habit to which he alluded in his famous 'Ten O'Clock' lecture, delivered on 10 February 1885. Wilde, who was in the audience, wrote a witty review for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, to which Whistler responded with a letter published in the *World*. This in turn initiated a series of exchanges, published in the same periodical.

finished piece was rejected 'rudely' by his 'assistant' (Harris having being 'out of the office' when it came in for review). See Harris, *Oscar Wilde*, 80–1.

[56] Lord Ribblesdale, 'The Art of Conversation', *Nineteenth Century*, 26 (Aug. 1889), 273–9. Wilde appears to have known Ribblesdale; in a letter to Douglas, dated Nov. 1894, he describes how, during a visit to the theatre, he 'felt it [his] duty to sit in the Royal Box with the Ribblesdales, the Harry Whites, and the Home Secretary' (*Complete Letters*, 622).

The appearance of 'The Decay of Lying' some years later was another provocation to Whistler, who again detected a reworking of theories that had originated with him. In his letter of 2 January he accused Wilde of being an 'all-pervading plagiarist', and then recounted an anecdote in the *Reminiscences* of Herbert Vivian (which had begun serialization in the *Sun* in November 1889) which told how in 'The Decay of Lying' Wilde had appropriated 'without a word of comment' a remark—'Oscar had the courage of the opinion of others'—which had originated with Whistler, and which had been directed at Wilde himself. Wilde responded by dismissing Whistler as 'ill-bred and ignorant', and thereby initiated another sequence of 'public' letters.[57] Moreover, and as the Commentary makes clear, when revising 'The Decay of Lying' for *Intentions*, Wilde took the opportunity to include yet further allusions to his quarrel with Whistler.

II. 'THE TRUE FUNCTION AND VALUE OF CRITICISM'

We do not know how 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' came to be published in the *Nineteenth Century*. It seems reasonable to suppose, from the reuse of the dialogue-form and the similarities in subject-matter, that Wilde wrote it with Knowles in mind, and that he intended it to be seen as a kind of follow-up to 'The Decay of Lying'. It might also be worth noting that contemporary critical dialogues were by no means new to *Nineteenth Century* readers. Modern critics have often attributed Wilde's choice of this form to his classical education (that is, they have seen in it the influence of Plato's *Dialogues*). Alternatively, it has sometimes been related to Wilde's own fame as a conversationalist. However, an equally likely (if more prosaic) influence might be the popularity of the dialogue form in contemporary periodicals.[58]

Although, as I have said, it is the formal and thematic resemblances between 'The Decay of Lying' and 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' which strike the reader first, there are also some significant differences between the two pieces, and these are worth mentioning briefly as they have a bearing on Wilde's later decision to collect the pieces in *Intentions*. Most obvious is the discrepancy in length: at around 28,000 words, the latter dialogue was over twice as long as the former, a detail which (as I explain below) caused Knowles some problems. On Wilde's part, though, it suggests a growing sense of confidence—that

[57] For details of this exchange see *Complete Letters*, 419–20; Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, 307; and Beckson, *Encyclopedia*, 405–6.

[58] Examples can be found in pieces by writers such as Vernon Lee and H. D. Traill; the latter author's 'The Politics of Literature', which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* in October 1883, has three gentlemen interlocutors who debate the politics of the man of letters in a bantering tone very similar to that of Wilde's Cyril and Vivian, Ernest and Gilbert. Wilde may also have been influenced by Renan's *Dialogues et fragments philosophiques* (1876), a work which he alludes to in 'The Critic as Artist' (see Commentary, p. 510).

putting together long pieces of critical prose was becoming easier for him. Such self-assurance also seems to underlie his choice of title—the allusion to what was probably the most famous critical essay of the recent past, Arnold's 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time'. In this respect, it is interesting that another of the differences between 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' and 'The Decay of Lying' concerns the ways in which the longer essay engages with that other eminent contemporary critical authority—Walter Pater. As the Commentary to this edition makes clear, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' contains long and explicit references to Pater's work (particularly *The Renaissance*), and these tend, moreover, to be registered in ways which are largely sympathetic to his views. Such a change of attitude is puzzling: why in the early summer of 1890 would Wilde have been willing to acknowledge an intellectual debt which a year and a half earlier he seems to have made such strenuous efforts to conceal?

The publication in November 1889 of Pater's *Appreciations*, its strong sales, and generally favourable reception, may have persuaded Wilde that Pater's self-evident cultural authority now made him a more useful ally than rival. Wilde probably did not begin work on 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' until the late spring of 1890 for up until that time he would have been preoccupied with *Dorian Gray*. Although *Dorian Gray* was supposed to have been finished in October 1889, Wilde had only finally delivered the finished draft in March 1890.[59] In that month Wilde was also writing a review of *Appreciations* for the *Speaker* (which appeared on the 22nd). The piece treads an intriguing line between acknowledging Pater's status as his teacher—as the man who was responsible in *The Renaissance* for showing Wilde 'what a wonderful self-conscious art the art of English prose-writing really is, or may be made to be'—while at the same time distancing Wilde from Pater's more recent work. Thus the 'Style' essay is the contribution judged by Wilde to be 'the most interesting' but the 'least successful' of the essays in *Appreciations*, because its 'subject is too abstract'.[60] It seems that in the spring of 1890—at around the moment when he was probably beginning work on 'The True Function and Value of Criticism'—Wilde was now willing, at least in part, to acknowledge Pater's influence.

To return, though, to the composition of 'The True Function and Value of Criticism'. The survival of two manuscript drafts of the essay give us a much fuller picture of its textual history than we have for any of the other critical essays. The first manuscript, now in the British Library, and referred to in this edition as *MS3*, consists of a fragmentary nineteen-page holograph in black ink on lined notepaper; most folios are

[59] For details of the composition of *Dorian Gray* see Guy and Small, *Oscar Wilde's Profession*, 56–8 and 232–36; and Bristow, ed., *Dorian Gray*, pp. lxi–lxviii.

[60] Ross, ed., *Reviews*, 538, 540.

heavily corrected, and all but one are unnumbered. Confusingly, the folios have been bound together—presumably by their original collector—in an apparently random order. When re-arranged (a process which is described more fully in 'A Note on the Texts and the Textual Collation', p. lxxxvii), it becomes clear that some are continuous with each other, although they are almost certainly not all from the same draft. For example, some of the folios demarcate the speakers' names as 'E' and 'G', while other folios use the fuller 'Ernest' and 'Gilbert'. Moreover, at least one folio seems to belong to another work altogether. This folio contains six isolated phrases, some of which are written diagonally across the page, and include: 'The public do not admire the work of a dead artist' and 'Self-sacrifice is a moral and intellectual error—selfishness is an/im\moral and stupid sin'. These jottings look similar to the draft aphorisms and epigrams found on some loose lined sheets now in the Clark Library.[61] It seems that Wilde kept a separate series of notebooks in which he rehearsed or collected the 'one-liners' which he would later use in various works. It is also clear that all the other folios in *MS3* derive from relatively early drafts—earlier that is, than the other surviving manuscript draft (referred to in this edition as *MS4* and described later).

The chief critical value of *MS3* is that it allows us to see how Wilde developed the argument of his essay. He seems to have composed it via a process of accretion: that is, to have started out with a relatively short and sketchy dialogue to which he added more and more detail, usually by expanding his examples. We can also see how his characteristic forms of phrasing were developed through what is often a long and complex sequence of revisions in which he experimented with small details in the word order, as well as frequently changing his mind over choices of adjectives and adverbs. Some folios of *MS3* also contain marginal notes which take the form of questions about certain references or allusions which we can see filled in in later drafts, presumably when Wilde had looked them up. Another interesting detail is that *MS3* contains more explicit allusions than the later versions: that is, names of authors—such as Matthew Arnold or Aristotle, for example—are often spelled out, only to be replaced in later drafts with phrases like 'that charming writer' or 'a Greek philosopher'. (In fact the most intriguing of this sort of substitution occurs in a variant between the *Nineteenth Century* and *Intentions* versions of Part II of 'The Critic as Artist' where Wilde replaces his earlier 'as Plato pointed out' with 'as I hope to point out myself some day' (see p. 201).)

The second extant manuscript of 'The Critic as Artist' is the version that was used as printer's copy for the *Nineteenth Century*. It is referred to in this edition as *MS4* and is held in the Clark Library.[62] This manuscript,

[61] See Ian Small, *Oscar Wilde Revalued* (Greensboro, NC: ELT Press, 1993), 141–5.
[62] Clark Library, MS Wilde W6721M3 T866 [1890].

in ink in Wilde's hand, consists of 152 loose leaves of lined quarto-sized sheets of paper. Despite being a fair copy, it is extensively corrected, with many deletions, cancelled passages, and insertions. On some occasions Wilde took up to three attempts before he was satisfied with a particular passage; it is also significant that the passages which are the most heavily reworked—and which seem to have caused Wilde the most difficulty—are often the long set-piece descriptions of literary and art works, especially those from classical sources: for example, the account of the work of the classical artist (p. 132 in this edition), Proserpina treading among the Cumnor cowslips (p. 155), the parade of characters from Browning's dramatic monologues (p. 130), or the description of a tradition of mystic philosophers (p. 176).

The numbering of *MS4* (again in Wilde's hand) runs from '1–142' and includes eleven interleaved folios (necessitated by the length and complexity of some of the revisions) which are numbered '2a', '13a', '23a', '34a', '44a', '87a', '92a', '98a', '101a', '113a', and '124a'. However, the ordering of corrections does not always follow the same sequence as the folio numbering: for example, the numbering of a folio where we find the fair copy of a cancelled passage sometimes precedes that of the folio where the cancelled passage actually appears (so the top of folio '115' of *MS4* has a scored-through passage, the fair copy of which occurs on the bottom half of the previous folio numbered '114'; '114', in turn, is a heavily corrected folio which follows on from the interleaved '113a'). Moreover, long insertions do not always appear (as one might expect) on the extra interleaved pages. For example, the run-on between the sentence which occurs at the end of the folio numbered '63' and a deleted passage at the beginning of the folio numbered '75' (p. 158 of this edition) suggests that the material in between on the folios numbered '64–74' was almost certainly an insertion into an earlier, shorter (and presumably unnumbered) draft (see textual notes to p. 166). Taken together these sorts of details suggest that *MS4* is probably a composite document made up of corrected fair-copy pages, corrected fair-copy interleaved pages, as well as corrected pages retained from an earlier draft, or drafts. (It is perhaps worth noting in passing that such complexity is reminiscent of the compositional strategies hypothesized by Ian Small when trying to account for the oddities in the numbering of Wilde's prison manuscript.[63])

As one might expect in a manuscript used for printer's copy, there are various marks on it by a hand (or hands) other than Wilde's. These include what seem to be markings portioning out sections of the text (in anything between four to ten page stretches) to various typesetters (this being the most obvious interpretation to place on the various names—such as 'Bailey', 'Holman', 'Sexton', 'Haddon', 'Beers', 'Scott', and so on—which

[63] See Small, ed., *De Profundis*, 6–11.

appear alongside these marks). There is also one passing comment on folio '5': under Gilbert's injunction that 'There is no necessity to mention names', which had followed his diatribe against 'cheap editions of great men', someone has written in parentheses: 'Wilde had Hall Caine probably in mind' (which of course Wilde did). On a few (and seemingly randomly chosen) folios there are also some curious series of back-slashes marking divisions between groups of usually (but not always) eleven words: this may be some form of counting of words or en- or em-spaces, possibly by the typesetter or supervisor of the setting room at the printers. Most surprising, though, is the virtual absence in *MS4* of evidence of another hand marking up revisions to the text itself—that is, to features such as punctuation, capitalization, or details of phrasing—even though there are numerous variants of this sort between *MS4* and the text printed in the *Nineteenth Century*. In fact, as the textual notes to this edition make clear, there are whole blocks of material which appear in *MS4* and which were omitted from the *Nineteenth Century*, but these are not marked for deletion in the manuscript.

Although we know from some other works that Wilde often used proofs as simply another stage in the writing process—another draft, as it were—we cannot as a consequence assume that all the variants between *MS4* and the *Nineteenth Century* text (many of which were carried through to *Intentions*) came about at Wilde's instigation, or even with his full co-operation. It is likely that variants to accidentals made to conform to the house-style of the *Nineteenth Century* were so routine that they were implemented by the compositors themselves during typesetting and did not need to be marked up on the manuscript. (Significantly we seem to see the same process at work in the manuscript used as printer's copy for 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism'; there, too, there are numerous variants to accidentals between the manuscript and the text printed in the *Fortnightly Review*, although none of these changes are actually marked up on the manuscript.) Moreover, Knowles himself may have waited until galley proofs: until, that is, he had a sense of how the whole run of an edition of the *Nineteenth Century* might look, before working out what needed to be changed. Luckily surviving correspondence between Wilde and Knowles sheds some light on these processes, although the picture that emerges is by no means clear or complete.

One of the most striking features of *MS4* is that it is not divided into two sections: the dialogue was obviously composed by Wilde, and submitted to the *Nineteenth Century*, as a single continuous piece of prose. In this form it must have presented Knowles with a problem, for it was very much longer than the pieces he usually published. It is not known exactly how much discussion there was over the subsequent decision to split the essay into two; nor do we know who proposed the exact point where the text was to be divided (it is indicated on the manuscript simply

as another mark portioning material for a typesetter). Wilde, though, was required to provide some additional lines to bring about an ending to what would now be Part I (and which he forwarded to Knowles in a letter dated mid-June) as well as material to mark the beginning of what would become Part II (of which there is no record in his surviving correspondence).[64] Folio '69' of *MS4*, where the break was to occur, reads as follows:

. . . so the critic reproduces the work that he criticises in a mode that is <not> /never\ imitative, and/part of\ whose charm may/really\ consist in the rejection of resemblance, and shows us in this way both the meaning and the mystery of Beauty, and, by transforming each art into literature, solves,/once for all,\ the problem of Art's unity.
Ernest. But will not the critic be sometimes a real interpreter?
Gilbert. Yes: the critic will be an interpreter, if he chooses.

In the *Nineteenth Century* this became (for Part I):

. . . so the critic reproduces the work that he criticises in a mode that is never imitative, and part of whose charm may really consist in the rejection of resemblance, and shows us in this way not merely the meaning but also the mystery of Beauty, and, by transforming each art into literature, solves once for all the problem of Art's unity.

But I see it is time for supper. After we have discussed some Chambertin and a few ortolans, we will pass on to the question of the critic considered in the light of the interpreter.
E. Ah! you admit, then, that the critic may occasionally be allowed to see the object as in itself it really is.
G. I am not quite sure. Perhaps I may admit it after supper. There is a subtle influence in supper. But come, or the *consommé* will be cold.

and (for Part II):

Ernest. The ortolans were delightful, and the Chambertin perfect. And now let us return to the point at issue.
Gilbert. Ah! don't let us do that. Conversation should touch on everything, but should concentrate itself on nothing.
E. I am afraid I don't agree with you. I want to discuss the critic and criticism. In fact, I insist upon it. You have told me that the highest criticism deals with art, not as expressive, but as impressive purely, and is consequently both creative

[64] Wilde wrote to Knowles (in a letter dated 'mid-June 1890') to request the following sentences to be 'added to the end of my article':

'But I see it is time for supper. After we have discussed some Chambertin and a few ortolans, we will pass on to the question of the critic considered in the light of the interpreter.
E. Ah! you admit, then, that the critic may occasionally be allowed to see the object as in itself it really is.
G. I am not quite sure. Perhaps I may admit it after supper. There is a subtle influence in supper. But come or the *consommé* will be cold' (*Complete Letters*, 427–8).

and independent, is in fact an art by itself, occupying the same relation to creative work that creative work does to the visible world of form and colour, or the unseen world of passion and of thought. Well, now tell me, will not the critic be sometimes a real interpreter?
G. As you insist upon it, I suppose I must descend to serious conversation. Yes; the critic will be an interpreter, if he chooses.

Although Wilde had obviously agreed to the division of his dialogue, later correspondence suggests that he had done so reluctantly and only on the understanding that the two parts would be published in consecutive numbers of the *Nineteenth Century*. In the event, however, Knowles's continuing concerns over length held up the publication of Part II until September, and the circumstances surrounding this delay were the cause of some acrimony between the two men.

At some point in July, and after the publication of Part I, Knowles had apparently written to Wilde asking him to cut material from the remaining section of the dialogue. Wilde's response, from which we can hypothesize Knowles's initial request, indicates compliance, but not without protest. In a letter tentatively dated '?early August 1890' Wilde confirmed to Knowles that he had 'cut out the additions I made to my article—of course with regret, but still ready to recognise your point of view, fully and frankly'. He went on to add: 'Of course I am disappointed that you did not let me know earlier about the matter, as the second part should have immediately followed the first. This I think was agreed between us. Two months is far too long a gap.'[65]

Wilde's use of the phrase 'additions' is confusing. It is possible that he was referring to the extra material which he had asked to be added to the dialogue when he had supplied Knowles with the lines needed to mark a beginning for Part II, and which Knowles had subsequently rejected. It seems more likely, though, that he meant material which he had added to *MS4* from an earlier draft and which therefore registered in his mind as 'additional' to a (presumably shorter) conception of the dialogue. As—to our knowledge—Knowles's side of this correspondence has not survived, it impossible to be certain about exactly which passage or passages he asked Wilde to excise; or, indeed, how specific he was about the cuts demanded. Whatever was the case, it seems that part of the reason for Wilde's irritation was the timing of the request. It had come not when the manuscript was initially submitted and the agreement reached to divide the text into two, but at some later stage, presumably when Knowles had seen proof for Part II, and realized that the piece was too long for the August issue. And this realization could have been his reason

[65] Ibid. 444.

for delaying publication till September, and also requiring Wilde to make cuts. In a slightly later letter, this time firmly dated as 'received on August 16th', Wilde complained waspishly to Knowles that he had received 'no corrected proof, nor indeed anything', and he also took the opportunity to reiterate his annoyance at the delay in publication: 'It is still a great source of regret to me that the dialogue has been interrupted. You will not, of course, let it be later than September'.[66] A subsequent letter to Rowland Prothero, tentatively dated 17 August, suggests that the corrected proofs (presumably with the 'additions' omitted) must then have been dispatched very promptly and that Wilde (who was alerting Prothero to a 'slip' he had missed when checking them) must have turned them around with equal speed, for by 18 August he was visiting friends in Scotland.[67]

This apparent rush, combined with what appears to have been some form of interruption to his communications with Knowles, may have been contributing factors in a later falling out over the material which was eventually cut. On returning from Scotland in early September, and presumably on seeing Part II in its published form for the first time, Wilde discovered that all was not as he had expected, and he wrote angrily to Knowles complaining about a large excision from a long passage on Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The piece in question runs for six full folios of *MS4* ('77–82'), yet only the first page and half (approximately 260 words out of just over 1,000) found their way into the *Nineteenth Century*. Wilde protested that 'the passage I was so anxious to retain was the *entire* Dante passage, showing the progress of a soul from horror to Heaven, through the medium of a book'.[68] If (as Holland and Hart-Davis claim) the passage from the *Divine Comedy* was the material Knowles had had in mind when he originally asked Wilde to make some cuts to Part II, then Wilde must have agreed to the deletion of some other passage or passages. Knowles in his turn must then have either ignored or misunderstood Wilde's instructions which could have been reiterated when Wilde marked up the 'corrected proofs' he had been so anxious to receive in mid-August, and which were subsequently partly ignored or misunderstood for a *second* time, when the final text was prepared. Interestingly Wilde's allusion at the beginning of his 9 September letter to a piece of correspondence from Knowles which had been 'following' him 'about' while he was in Scotland, and which he had only just opened, suggests that Knowles had tried to contact Wilde over the 'corrected proofs', and in the absence of a reply had been forced to proceed without obtaining Wilde's full consent. Despite his anger, Wilde ended his letter on a conciliatory note, aware, perhaps, that it was not really in his interest to alienate Knowles:

I am sorry you seem to think my letter to you [presumably the letter which had accompanied Wilde's revisions to the 'corrected proofs' and which had specified

[66] *Complete Letters*, 450. [67] Ibid. [68] Ibid. 452.

that the '*entire*' Dante passage be retained] too strongly expressed. Of course as an editor you have to consider space, to preserve a balance of contents, but no one should be better able than yourself to understand how really painful it is to have one's work touched. I certainly belong to the *genus irritabile*, though when the thing is over I don't vex myself. In any case I need hardly say I intended no discourtesy to you.[69]

We will never really know the details of this incident, nor whether it was the result of editorial high-handedness or a series of genuine misunderstandings. The aftermath, though, is suggestive of a tension that remained unresolved, despite the polite words: Wilde duly reinstated the Dante passage when he republished the piece in *Intentions*, while Knowles published no further work by Wilde in the *Nineteenth Century*.

In light of these confusions, there are two further significant variants between *MS4* and the text of the *Nineteenth Century* which are worth a brief examination. Although there is no external evidence which explains how they might have come about, they indicate that the Dante passage may not have been the only material at issue when Wilde and Knowles were discussing cuts. The passages in question occur close to each other around the middle of Part II of 'The Critic as Artist' (pp. 192–4 of this edition). The first reads as follows in *MS4* (folios '118–20'):

But if he mocks no longer, it is because he has been met with mockery, swifter and keener than his own, and <has,> /and for a moment, has\ been/bitterly\ schooled <for a moment> into that silence that should seal for ever his distorted uncouth lips. Yes, Ernest, England is even now quickening with this/strange\ passion for beauty, and when her yellow leopards/have\ grown weary of wars, and the rose of her shield is crimson no more with the blood of men, she will find that, <the> matched with the treasures that <dreamer and artist> /form and colour\ /<poet> \ have brought her, the treasures of <her merchandise> /extended empire\ are as barren as the sea that she has made her highway, and as bitter as the fire that she would make her slave. What has been done up to this has been chiefly the clearing of the way. It is/not\ always more <difficult> /easy\ to <destroy than it is to create> /destroy\ than <to> {it}is to <destroy> /create\. When what one has to destroy is vulgarity and stupidity, the/task of\ destruction is difficult. But it seems to me to have been done. We have got rid of what was bad. We have now to make what is beautiful <,> {.} <a> {A}nd if those who work in the decorative arts will always remember that their work should <always> be impressive primarily, and expressive, if at all, in a much lesser degree, that it should gain its suggestions, not from the mind immediately, but from the wonderful materials that it employs, and that the highest originality would display itself in the revival of antique traditions, there is no reason why this English Renaissance should not become as mighty in its way as was that new birth of Art that woke many centuries ago in the cities of Italy. [*a paragraph break is marked here*] Certainly, for . . .

Most of this was cut in the *Nineteenth Century*:

But if he mocks no longer, it is because he has been met with mockery, swifter and keener than his own, and for a moment has been bitterly schooled into that

[69] Ibid. 453.

silence which should seal for ever his uncouth distorted lips. Yes, Ernest, England is even now quickening with this strange passion for beauty, and when her yellow leopards have grown weary of wars, and the rose of her shield is crimson no more with the blood of men, she will find that, matched with the treasures that form and colour can bring her, the treasures of extended empire are as barren as the sea that she has made her highway, and as bitter as the fire that she would make her slave.

Certainly for . . .

And some of it (although interestingly not the lines which had been retained in the *Nineteenth Century*) was restored in revised form in *Intentions*:

But if he mocks no longer, it is because he has been met with mockery swifter and keener than his own, and for a moment has been bitterly schooled into that silence that should seal for ever his uncouth distorted lips. What has been done up to now, has been chiefly in the clearing of the way. It is always more difficult to destroy than it is to create, and when what one has to destroy is vulgarity and stupidity, the task of destruction needs not merely courage but also contempt. Yet it seems to me to have been, in a measure, done. We have got rid of what was bad. We have now to make what is beautiful. And though the mission of the aesthetic movement is to lure people to contemplate, not to lead them to create, yet, as the creative instinct is strong in the Celt, and it is the Celt who leads in art, there is no reason why in future years this strange Renaissance should not become almost as mighty in its way as was that new birth of Art that woke many centuries ago in the cities of Italy.

Certainly, for . . .

The second passage, which occurs just a few lines further on, reads as follows in *MS4* (folios '120–122'):

One exhausts what they have to say in a very short time, and then they become as tedious as <one's> relations. I am very fond of the work of many of the Impressionist painters of Paris and London. <The *illeg. word*> /Subtlety\ and distinction <of Manet> have not yet left <the school> /<them> \ /the school.\ Some of their arrangements <in colour,> /and harmonies\ /<such as those of *4 illeg. words*,> \ serve to remind one of the unapproachable beauty of Gautier's immortal Symphonie en Blanc Majeur, that flawless masterpiece/of colour and music\ which has <given them> /suggested\ the type<s> <and> as well as the titles of <for> many of their/best\ pictures. For a class that welcomes the incompetent with sympathetic eagerness, and that confuses the bizarre with the beautiful,/and vulgarity with truth,\ they are extremely accomplished. They can do etchings that have the brilliancy of epigrams, pastels that are as fascinating as paradoxes, and <whether> as for their portraits, whatever <also may be said> /the commonplace may say\ against them, no one can deny that they possess that unique /and wonderful\ charm <that belongs to> /which belongs <inseparately *illeg. word*> to\ works of pure fiction. But even the Impressionists, earnest and industrious as they are, will not do. I like them. If they have not opened the eyes of the blind, they have, at least, given great encouragement to the short-sighted, and though their leaders may have all the inexperience of old age, their young men are far too wise to be ever sensible. But they will insist on treating painting as if it were a mode of autobiography invented for the use of the illiterate, and are always prating to us on their/coarse\ gritty canvases of their unnecessary selves and their unnecessary opinions, and spoiling by a vulgar overemphasis that fine

contempt of nature which is the best and only modest thing about them. One tires at the end of the work of individuals, whose individuality is always noisy, and generally uninteresting. There is far more to be said in favour of that newer school at Paris, the Archaicistes, as they call themselves, who, refusing to leave the artist entirely at the mercy of the weather, do not <see> /find\ the ideal of art in mere <accidental> atmospheric effect, but seek rather for the imaginative beauty of design and the loveliness of fair colour, and rejecting the tedious realism of those who merely paint what they see, try to see something worth painting, and to see it not merely with <the physical eye> /actual and/physical\ vision\, but with that nobler vision of the soul, which is/as\ far wider in/spiritual\ scope, <and> /as it is\ far more splendid in/artistic\ purpose. They, at any rate, work under/those\ decorative conditions that each art requires for its perfection and have sufficient <artistic> /aesthetic\ instinct to regret <that> those sordid and stupid limitations of absolute modernity of form, /which have proved the ruin of /so many of\ the Impressionists.\ Still, the art that is frankly decorative . . .

Almost the whole of this passage was omitted from the *Nineteenth Century*, which reads simply:

One exhausts what they have to say in a very short time, and then they become as tedious as one's relations.

The art that is frankly decorative . . .

The passage was restored (slightly revised and expanded) in *Intentions* thus:

One exhausts what they have to say in a very short time, and then they become as tedious as one's relations. I am very fond of the work of many of the Impressionist painters of Paris and London. Subtlety and distinction have not yet left the school. Some of their arrangements and harmonies serve to remind one of the unapproachable beauty of Gautier's immortal *Symphonie en Blanc Majeur*, that flawless masterpiece of colour and music which may have suggested the type as well as the titles of many of their best pictures. For a class that welcomes the incompetent with sympathetic eagerness, and that confuses the bizarre with the beautiful, and vulgarity with truth, they are extremely accomplished. They can do etchings that have the brilliancy of epigrams, pastels that are as fascinating as paradoxes, and as for their portraits, whatever the commonplace may say against them, no one can deny that they possess that unique and wonderful charm which belongs to works of pure fiction. But even the Impressionists, earnest and industrious as they are, will not do. I like them. Their white keynote, with its variations in lilac, was an era in colour. Though the moment does not make the man, the moment certainly makes the Impressionist, and for the moment in art, and the 'moment's monument' as Rossetti phrased it, what may not be said? They are suggestive also. If they have not opened the eyes of the blind, they have at least given great encouragement to the short-sighted, and while their leaders may have all the inexperience of old age, their young men are far too wise to be ever sensible. Yet they will insist on treating painting as if it were a mode of autobiography invented for the use of the illiterate, and are always prating to us on their coarse gritty canvases of their unnecessary selves and their unnecessary opinions, and spoiling by a vulgar over-emphasis that fine contempt of nature which is the best and only modest thing about them. One tires, at the end, of the work of individuals whose individuality is always noisy, and generally uninteresting. There is far more to be said in favour of that newer school at Paris, the *Archaicistes*, as they call

themselves, who, refusing to leave the artist entirely at the mercy of the weather, do not find the ideal of art in mere atmospheric effect, but seek rather for the imaginative beauty of design and the loveliness of fair colour, and rejecting the tedious realism of those who merely paint what they see, try to see something worth seeing, and to see it not merely with actual and physical vision, but with that nobler vision of the soul which is as far wider in spiritual scope as it is far more splendid in artistic purpose. They, at any rate, work under those decorative conditions that each art requires for its perfection, and have sufficient aesthetic instinct to regret those sordid and stupid limitations of absolute modernity of form which have proved the ruin of so many of the Impressionists. Still, the art that is frankly decorative . . .

It is possible that these were the passages (the 'additions') which Wilde agreed to cut, or had proposed as possible cuts, instead of the material on the *Divine Comedy*. Equally, it is possible that Knowles did not judge such cuts to be sufficient in length to meet his demands; hence his decision also to cut the 'entire' Dante passage. One secure inference we can draw from all this is that Wilde's sense of the critical integrity of his argument was at odds with that of Knowles, even while he recognized both the acuteness of Knowles's 'literary judgement' as well as his need, as an editor, to 'preserve a balance of contents'. A sense of his growing reputation in the summer of 1890 may have led Wilde to feel some sense of resentment towards the power of periodical editors, as well as irritation at having to tailor his work to fit that of other contributors. Moreover, for a writer who sometimes found it difficult to complete long pieces of prose, and who had earlier struggled to meet long commissions, it must have been particularly galling to be asked to cut material. In such circumstances, the possibility of publishing a book of criticism, with the greater freedom of expression which that form would have held, must have been attractive. Wilde set himself to the task almost immediately.

III. *INTENTIONS*: A 'SPECIAL VOLUME OF ESSAYS AND STUDIES'

The very first reference in Wilde's correspondence to the possibility of bringing out what he termed a 'special volume of essays and studies' appears as early as July 1889. The volume was proposed to William Blackwood as an alternative to his suggestion of republishing 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.' Of course at this point in time Wilde barely had enough material to make up such a collection; he referred Blackwood to 'the things that have appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* and the *Fortnightly*' (which could only have meant 'Shakespeare and Stage Scenery', 'The Decay of Lying', and 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison'). Blackwood's reply was lukewarm: while agreeing to look over the materials Wilde suggested, he warned that 'volumes of reprinted essays and stories are not remunerative to either publisher or author'.[70] Wilde took the hint and in his next letter suggested

[70] *Complete Letters*, 405 and n.

bringing out 'a dainty little volume of "Mr W. H." by itself'—a proposal which this time Blackwood declined outright.[71] Plans for a 'volume of essays and studies' may then have been temporarily shelved, perhaps until Wilde felt he had a range of material upon which to draw. At any rate, the next reference to such a work does not appear until nearly a year later when, in a letter dated May 1890, Wilde wrote to an unidentified publisher to propose a 'volume of essays and dialogues' which he 'wished to bring out in the autumn'. The same letter also proposed a book-version of *Dorian Gray*, a story which, Wilde explained, was due to be published 'on the 20th of next month' and which he hoped (when the copyright reverted to him in 'three months') to publish 'with two new chapters, as a novel'.[72] As matters turned out, the placing of both these projects would not be quite so straightforward as Wilde hoped. The main difficulty with the volume of essays was still its contents.

In the late spring of 1890 Wilde seems to have been partly aware of the fact that he still did not have an abundance of critical material to draw upon, for his May 1890 letter flagged only his proposed novel as work which was 'new' (a description which itself rather stretched the meaning of that word). In practice he only had one extra essay, 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' (which he may have still been finishing), to add to the contents originally proposed to William Blackwood. The unidentified publisher in the May letter obviously rejected both of Wilde's proposals. A surviving reader's report in the Macmillan archive, of October 1890, concerning a book by Wilde simply entitled *Essays*, indicates yet another rejection, this time because Wilde did not possess 'the sort of reputation—clever and accomplished writer as he is—that would help a volume of miscellanies from his pen'.[73]

Unfortunately we do not know exactly what was to have made up the various volumes which Wilde had proposed in May and October, although the changes in his description of his book—from 'essays and studies', to 'essays and dialogues', and finally to 'essays'—suggests some indecision on his part, probably over whether to include 'Mr W. H.' or to pursue his plan to publish that work separately. Nor do we know how many publishers he approached before finally securing an agreement for what he called *Intentions* with Osgood, McIlvaine. We can be sure, though, that this new firm (established only in 1891) was not Wilde's first choice

[71] Ibid. 407. [72] Ibid. 425.

[73] The report is quoted by Warwick Gould in 'The Crucifixion of the Outcasts: Yeats and Wilde in the Nineties', in George Sandelescu, ed., *Rediscovering Oscar Wilde* (Gerrards Cross, Bucks: Colin Smythe, 1994), 185. Macmillan rejected a total of four books by Wilde: *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (in February 1888), *Dorian Gray* (in June 1890) *Essays* (in October 1890), and *Lady Windermere's Fan* (in May 1892). For a fuller account of Wilde's dealings with Macmillan, see Guy and Small, *Oscar Wilde's Profession*, 66–74.

of publisher, and may even have been a last resort.[74] It is also intriguing that rejection from better-known houses does not seem to have led Wilde substantially to modify his plans for his book, nor to compose any new material for it. At the same time, it is clear from the revisions which he did undertake (and which I describe more fully below) that he was well aware that the final contents list—'The Decay of Lying,' 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison', 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' (now renamed 'The Critic as Artist', Parts I and II), and 'Shakespeare and Stage Scenery'(now renamed 'The Truth of Masks')—did not cohere particularly well.

Unfortunately no correspondence has survived between Wilde and Osgood, McIlvaine, so we have little information about the terms which Wilde agreed (though we do know that he retained the copyright of the work);[75] nor do we know much about his involvement in decisions over print-runs and pricing. However, the fact that Wilde went on to publish two other works with the house suggests that relations were good, and that he was probably given a reasonable degree of independence in both textual matters and the design of the book. Surviving textual evidence suggests that printer's copy for *Intentions* consisted of the periodical texts of the essays marked up with some revisions Wilde had made with reference to earlier manuscript drafts. Changes were also probably made by the typesetter to accord with Osgood, McIlvaine's house style (for example, in the substitution of 'ize' for 'ise' in the ending of verbs). As I suggested earlier, the title of the volume—*Intentions*—seems to have been chosen as a conscious echo of Pater's *Appreciations*; the use of the plural form may also have been designed to warn the reader against expecting any single or 'finished' critical position.

[74] Evidence that Wilde may have had some doubts about Osgood, McIlvaine can be gleaned from arrangements he made, around a year later, to bring out a new edition of his *Poems* (which had been originally published in 1881). He signed a contract with Elkin Mathews, who had a reputation for producing finely designed books, on 24 October 1891. The new edition was to use the unsold sheets of the 'fifth' edition of *Poems* which had been brought out by David Bogue in 1882. A letter from Wilde to Elkin Mathews, dated 21 November 1891, confirms that once matters about the book's design were settled, Wilde would 'ask Osgood & McIlvaine to hand you over the copies' (*Complete Letters*, 490). According to Mason, when Bogue went bankrupt in August 1882 his stock was taken over by Chatto and Windus (*Bibliography*, 316); and it is from this firm that Osgood, McIlvaine must have purchased the unsold sheets ('the copies') of Wilde's *Poems* which were later sold on again to Elkin Mathews. Unfortunately we do not know exactly when Osgood, McIlvaine acquired the sheets; nor whether they did so at Wilde's request; nor, indeed, how far they went in planning a new edition of *Poems*, although it is hard to believe that they would have bought the sheets without intending to republish them. What we can be certain of, though, is that Wilde's opinion of the firm was not high enough for him to have entrusted them with his poetry; moreover, he cannot, at this time, have been influenced by the failure of *A House of Pomegranates*, for it was not brought out by Osgood, McIlvaine until November.

[75] Wilde confirms that the copyright belongs to him in a letter to William Heinemann (*Complete Letters*, 486); his negotiations with Heinemann are discussed later.

In this respect, the most problematic piece to assimilate into an overall and coherent argument was 'Shakespeare and Stage Scenery', an article which had been composed over six years earlier (originally, as I have noted, for the *Dramatic Review*) to engage with what had been a topical and lively debate about archaeological realism in the staging of Shakespeare's plays. (In common with virtually all of the rest of Wilde's early journalism from this period, no manuscript of 'Shakespeare and Stage Scenery' has survived). Wilde's later decision to include 'Shakespeare and Stage Scenery' in *Intentions* was probably made when he was first thinking about an essay collection, and when he planned 'The Portrait of Mr. W. H.' to accompany it. The subsequent omission of this last piece, though, made 'Shakespeare and Stage Scenery' something of an anomaly. By renaming it 'The Truth of Masks' Wilde was probably trying to establish a connection with some of the themes discussed in 'The Decay of Lying'. But the effort was half-hearted, as Wilde himself seems to have acknowledged when he added the following closing lines to the version of the essay in *Intentions*:

> Not that I agree with everything that I have said in this essay. There is much with which I entirely disagree. The essay simply represents an artistic standpoint, and in aesthetic criticism attitude is everything. For in art there is no such thing as a universal truth. A Truth in art is that whose contradictory is also true. And just as it is only in art-criticism, and through it, that we can apprehend the Platonic theory of ideas, so it is only in art-criticism, and through it, that we can realize Hegel's system of contraries. The truths of metaphysics are the truths of masks. (p. 228)

As well as changing the titles of two of the essays for *Intentions*, Wilde added a series of subtitles: so to 'The Decay of Lying' he appended 'An Observation'; to 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison', 'A Study in Green'; to 'The Critic as Artist. Part I', he added 'With Some Remarks Upon the Importance of Doing Nothing'; to 'The Critic as Artist. Part II', 'With Some Remarks Upon the Importance of Doing Everything'; and to 'The Truth of Masks', 'A Note on Illusion'. Nicholas Frankel has suggested that these subtitles were designed as yet another jibe at Whistler, whose publication in 1890 of *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, which included both his 'Ten O'Clock' lecture and his correspondence with Wilde from *Truth*, was a provocation which Wilde could not ignore. According to Frankel, the choice of some of the titles caricatured Whistler's 'self-conscious manner of naming his paintings' (for example, 'Whistler's *A Note in Red, A Harmony in Green*, and . . . the mannered abstraction of his famous "Arrangements" and nocturnes'); indeed for Frankel, even the way they are set out on the page parodied the typography of *The Gentle Art*.[76] The consequence of Frankel's assumption, however, is that only a small group of Wilde's readers could have appreciated the full subtleties of his joke; all readers, though, would have recognized a refreshing playfulness of tone.

[76] Frankel, *Oscar Wilde's Decorated Books*, 99.

Titles and subtitles aside, there are other variants between the periodical versions of the essays and those in *Intentions*, and they can be roughly divided into five categories. The first, and most numerous, involve small stylistic revisions—usually changes to adverbs, nouns, and adjectives—a pattern of correction which is familiar from extant manuscript and typescript drafts of Wilde's other works. For example, in 'The Decay of Lying' 'absolutely' in the *Nineteenth Century* version becomes 'entirely' in *Intentions*; 'meditative' becomes 'thoughtful'; 'terrible' becomes 'most depressing and humiliating'; 'we' becomes 'the elect'; 'anyone' becomes 'anybody'; 'the Russian' becomes 'some dead Russian', and so on. Or, in 'The Critic as Artist', 'wild remorse' in the *Nineteenth Century* becomes 'dull remorse' in *Intentions*; 'the common-place' becomes 'monotony of type'; 'clear' becomes 'fresh'. Likewise in 'The Truth of Masks' we find 'nearly always' in the *Nineteenth Century* being changed to 'constantly' in *Intentions*, or 'allusion' to 'reference', and so on. Semantically, and perhaps politically, the most important of these changes is the substitution of 'Northern Nations' for 'Celt'. There are also frequent changes to accidentals, including a tendency to capitalize (in *Intentions*) abstract nouns such as 'nature' and 'art'. It is impossible to know who was responsible for this sort of change, although it seems likely that at least some of them were at Wilde's request. As I noted earlier in relation to the manuscript of *Historical Criticism*, Wilde's handwriting can make it difficult to be certain when he is using capital letters (particularly when these occur for nouns mid-sentence which would normally not be capitalized). It is therefore possible that his original intentions were consistently disregarded by printers; alternatively periodical editors (such as Knowles) may have disliked the use of capitalization for emphasis. Either way, it is possible that Wilde took the opportunity in *Intentions* to restore this stylistic trait.

A second sort of variant, for which Wilde was this time fully responsible, concerns the addition of a few sentences or clauses here and there, usually to expand an initial observation or to change (or add) to illustrative examples. For example, the following comment in the *Nineteenth Century* version of 'The Decay of Lying'

> Mr. Henry James writes fiction as if it was a painful duty, and wastes upon mean motives and imperceptible 'points of view' his neat literary style, his felicitous phrases, his swift and caustic satire. Mrs. Oliphant prattles pleasantly about curates, lawn-tennis parties, domesticity, and other wearisome things. Mr. Marion Crawford has immolated himself upon the altar of local colour.

is expanded in *Intentions* (pp. 77–8 of this edition) to:

> Mr. Henry James writes fiction as if it were a painful duty, and wastes upon mean motives and imperceptible 'points of view' his neat literary style, his felicitous phrases, his swift and caustic satire. Mr. Hall Caine, it is true, aims at the grandiose, but then he writes at the top of his voice. He is so loud that one cannot hear what he

says. Mr. James Payn is an adept in the art of concealing what is not worth finding. He hunts down the obvious with the enthusiasm of a short-sighted detective. As one turns over the pages, the suspense of the author becomes almost unbearable. The horses of Mr. William Black's phaeton do not soar towards the sun. They merely frighten the sky at evening into violent chromolithographic effects. On seeing them approach, the peasants take refuge in dialect. Mrs. Oliphant prattles pleasantly about curates, lawn-tennis parties, domesticity, and other wearisome things. Mr. Marion Crawford has immolated himself upon the altar of local colour.

Or, in the *Nineteenth Century* version of 'The Truth of Masks' we find the following list of Shakespearean costumes

Posthumous hides his passion under a peasant's garb, and Edgar his pride beneath an idiot's rags; Jessica flees from her father's house in boy's dress,

expanded in *Intentions* (p. 209 of this edition) to:

Posthumous hides his passion under a peasant's garb, and Edgar his pride beneath an idiot's rags; Portia wears the apparel of a lawyer, and Rosalind, is attired, 'in all points as a man'; the cloak-bag of Pisanio changes Imogen to the youth Fidele; Jessica flees from her father's house in boy's dress,

In the following example from 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison', the additional lines introduce material from a new source, one which may only have been made available to Wilde after the piece had appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* (see Commentary, pp. 417–8). The periodical version has

He . . . never wearies of pointing out to the young student the artistic possibilities that lie dormant in Hellenic marbles and Hellenic methods of work. The highest praise that we can give to him is that he tried to revive style as a conscious tradition.

We find this expanded in *Intentions* (p. 110 of this edition) to:

He . . . never wearies of pointing out to the young student the artistic possibilities that lie dormant in Hellenic marbles and Hellenic methods of work. In his judgements on the great Italian Masters, says De Quincey, 'There seemed a tone of sincerity and of native sensibility, as in one who spoke for himself, and was not merely a copier from books.' The highest praise that we can give to him is that he tried to revive style as a conscious tradition.

'Pen, Pencil, and Poison' also provides us with a good example of a third (and rarer form of revision)—the slight reordering of material. Take, for example, the following description of Wainewright's critical methods in the *Fortnightly Review*:

As regards his own method as an art critic he is often extremely technical, and talks learnedly of 'a delicate Schiavone, various as a tulip-bed, with rich broken tints,' of 'a glowing portrait, remarkable for *morbidezza*, by the scarce Moroni,' and of another picture being 'pulpy in the carnations.' Of Tintoret's 'St. George delivering the Egyptian Princess from the Dragon' he remarks:—

'The robe of Sabra . . . surrounding the castle.'

But, as a rule, he deals with the impressions of the work as an artistic whole . . .

This becomes in *Intentions* (p. 111 of this edition):

As is to be expected from one who was a painter, he is often extremely technical in his art criticisms. Of Tintoret's 'St. George delivering the Egyptian Princess from the Dragon' he remarks:—

'The robe of Sabra . . . surrounding the castle.'

And elsewhere he talks learnedly of 'a delicate Schiavone, various as a tulip-bed, with rich broken tints,' of 'a glowing portrait, remarkable for *morbidezza*, by the scarce Moroni,' and of another picture being 'pulpy in the carnations.'

But, as a rule, he deals with his impressions of the work as an artistic whole . . .

A fourth kind of variant concerns the deletion in the *Intentions* versions of some lines found in the periodical texts. For example, the following passage in 'The True Function and Value of Criticism'

. . . and the Priamid, the lion-hearted, Patroklus, the comrade of comrades, must meet his doom. Ernest, I tell you that there are moments when one can see them all. Targe clashes against targe. The leaping lightening runs from morion to morion, and splinters. The helm-crests sway. The whizzing lances hurtle through the rent air, and the great white-starred falchion rings upon casque and visor, while the thick arrows of the Lycians darken the shuddering sky. There is a wail of mourning from the camp, and a shout of joy from the walls, as back to the Scaean gate, in harsh and clanging mail, tall Hector strides. Phantoms, are they?

is reduced in 'The Critic as Artist' (p. 150 of this edition) to:

. . . and the Priamid, the lion-hearted, Patroklus, comrade of comrades, must meet his doom. Phantoms, are they?

It needs to be stressed, though, that substantive deletions of this kind are rare: the majority of the revisions for *Intentions* involve expansion of material, a practice which is consistent with my earlier suggestion that Wilde's essay collection was in danger of seeming a little thin (in all *Intentions* amounts to just over 60,000 words). In this respect, the fifth and by far the most significant sort of variant between periodical and book concerns the addition of substantial passages to the *Intentions* versions of 'The Decay of Lying' and 'The True Function and Value of Criticism'.

As I have already pointed out, two of the additional portions of text found in 'The Critic as Artist'—the long account of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and the description of the art of the 'Impressionists' and '*Archaicistes*'—involved reinstatements of passages in *MS4* which had been omitted from the periodical publication of 'The True Function and Value of Criticism'. Another passage, though, seems to have been composed especially for *Intentions*; so the discussion of Puritanism and journalism (pp. 191–2 of the present edition) does not appear either in the *Nineteenth Century* text or in *MS3* or *MS4*. In the case of the 'The Decay of Lying' we unfortunately do not have the manuscript used by the *Nineteenth Century* for printer's copy, so it is impossible to know whether in this case as

well, the additional material found in the *Intentions* version of this essay was the result of Wilde restoring his original thoughts or composing new material. On the other hand, though, the length of the passage added to the *Intentions* version of 'The Decay of Lying', and the way in which it fits in (with little modification of the preceding and succeeding sentences), supports the case that the material was simply reinstated. So where the *Nineteenth Century* version reads

C. The theory is certainly a very curious one. But even admitting this strange imitative instinct in life, surely you would acknowledge that art expresses the temper of its age, the spirit of its time, the moral and social conditions that surround it, and under whose influence it is produced.

V. Certainly not!

We find in *Intentions* (pp. 94–6 of this edition)

Cyril. The theory is certainly a very curious one, but to make it complete you must show that Nature, no less than Life, is an imitation of Art. Are you prepared to prove that?

Vivian. My dear fellow, I am prepared to prove anything.

Cyril. Nature follows the landscape painter then, and takes her effects from him?

Vivian. Certainly. Where, if not from the Impressionists, do we get those wonderful brown fogs that come creeping down our streets, blurring the gas-lamps and changing the houses into monstrous shadows? To whom, if not to them and their master, do we owe the lovely silver mists that brood over our river, and turn to faint forms of fading grace curved bridge and swaying barge? The extraordinary change that has taken place in the climate of London during the last ten years is entirely due to this particular school of Art. You smile. Consider the matter from a scientific or a metaphysical point of view, and you will find that I am right. For what is Nature ? Nature is no great mother who has borne us. She is our creation. It is in our brain that she quickens to life. Things are because we see them, and what we see, and how we see it, depends on the Arts that have influenced us. To look at a thing is very different from seeing a thing. One does not see anything until one sees its beauty. Then, and then only, does it come into existence. At present, people see fogs, not because there are fogs, but because poets and painters have taught them the mysterious loveliness of such effects. There may have been fogs for centuries in London. I dare say there were. But no one saw them, and so we do not know anything about them. They did not exist till Art had invented them. Now, it must be admitted, fogs are carried to excess. They have become the mere mannerism of a clique, and the exaggerated realism of their method gives dull people bronchitis. Where the cultured catch an effect, the uncultured catch cold. And so, let us be humane, and invite Art to turn her wonderful eyes elsewhere. She has done so already, indeed. The white quivering sunlight that one sees now in France, with its strange blotches of mauve, and its restless violet shadows, is her latest fancy, and, on the whole, Nature reproduces it quite admirably. Where she used to give us Corots and Daubignys, she gives us now exquisite Monets and entrancing Pisaros. Indeed there are moments, rare, it is true, but still to be observed from time to time, when Nature becomes absolutely modern. Of course she is not always to be relied upon. The fact is that she is in this unfortunate position. Art creates an incomparable and unique effect, and, having done so,

passes on to other things. Nature, upon the other hand, forgetting that imitation can be made the sincerest form of insult, keeps on repeating this effect until we all become absolutely wearied of it. Nobody of any real culture, for instance, ever talks now-a-days about the beauty of a sunset. Sunsets are quite old-fashioned. They belong to the time when Turner was the last note in art. To admire them is a distinct sign of provincialism of temperament. Upon the other hand they go on. Yesterday evening Mrs. Arundel insisted on my going to the window, and looking at the glorious sky, as she called it. Of course I had to look at it. She is one of those absurdly pretty Philistines, to whom one can deny nothing. And what was it? It was simply a very second-rate Turner, a Turner of a bad period, with all the painter's worst faults exaggerated and over-emphasized. Of course, I am quite ready to admit that Life very often commits the same error. She produces her false Renés and her sham Vautrins, just as Nature gives us, on one day a doubtful Cuyp, and on another a more than questionable Rousseau. Still, Nature irritates one more when she does things of that kind. It seems so stupid, so obvious, so unnecessary. A false Vaturin might be delightful. A doubtful Cuyp is unbearable. However, I don't want to be too hard on Nature. I wish the Channel, especially at Hastings, did not look quite so often like a Henry Moore, grey pearl with yellow lights, but then, when Art is more varied, Nature will, no doubt, be more varied also. That she imitates Art, I don't think even her worst enemy would deny now. It is the one thing that keeps her in touch with civilized man. But have I proved my theory to your satisfaction?

Cyril. You have proved it to my dissatisfaction, which is better. But even admitting this strange imitative instinct in Life and Nature, surely you would acknowledge that Art expresses the temper of its age, the spirit of its time, the moral and social conditions that surround it, and under whose influence it is produced.

Vivian. Certainly not!

It may be significant that this additional passage again involves a discussion of Impressionist Art. In fact it is so reminiscent of the deleted and then reinstated passage on the 'Impressionists' and '*Archaicistes*' in 'The Critic as Artist' that it is tempting to surmise that when adding material to the *Intentions* version of 'The Decay of Lying' Wilde was again reinstating cuts which had been made for periodical publication (in both cases he was working with the same editor, James Knowles, who, we know, asked his authors to tailor their material to his demands). On the other hand, though, the fact that the beginning of Vivian's speech involves a mischievous parody of a passage from Whistler's *Gentle Art* (see Commentary, p. 365) seems to point towards part of it at least being later thoughts (as the Commentary also reveals, there are a number of other, briefer allusions to Wilde's falling-out with Whistler which appear only in the *Intentions* version of 'The Decay of Lying').[77] The most likely explanation of this

[77] Further evidence that Whistler is the 'Impressionist' being targeted in Vivian's description of 'lovely silver mists that brood over our river' comes from the fact that, as Nicholas Frankel has observed, in 1890 it was Whistler who had an 'unrivalled' reputation for his paintings of the Thames (which Vivian is describing); Monet's much more famous series of Thames paintings were not executed until 1902–3 (ibid. 199).

sequence of revision, then, is that the passage added to the *Intentions* version of 'The Decay of Lying' was a reinstatement of an earlier deleted passage which had subsequently been revised and expanded to incorporate the snide references to Whistler.

Whatever the reason was, it is perhaps worth noting in passing the subtle change in attitude towards the Impressionists which is exhibited in the passages in 'The Decay of Lying' and 'The Critic as Artist'. In the former essay, 'the white quivering sunlight that one sees now in France, with its strange blotches of mauve, and its restless violet shadows' is described as the 'latest fancy' which has rescued the expressive techniques of Impressionism from becoming 'the mere mannerism of a clique'. But in 'The Critic as Artist' these same works, with 'their white keynote, with its variations in lilac', though acknowledged as marking 'an era in colour', are nevertheless now criticized for being out of date. For Gilbert, they are examples of work by artists who 'insist on treating painting as if it were a mode of autobiography invented for the use of the illiterate, and are always prating to us on their coarse gritty canvases of their unnecessary selves and their unnecessary opinions, and spoiling by a vulgar over-emphasis that fine contempt of nature which is the best and only modest thing about them'.

Such shifts in viewpoint lend weight to my earlier speculation that the passage on Impressionism in 'The Decay of Lying' probably was largely a reinstatement of earlier thoughts. Had it been composed especially for *Intentions* we might have expected Wilde to have smoothed out the differences in attitude, or at least made some allusion to the later discussion of the same artistic movement in 'The Critic as Artist'. That said, the decision to have let such contradictions stand is still a little puzzling, and suggests that Wilde's revisions of his essays for *Intentions* operated for the most part only locally, at the level of improving a particular sentence, paragraph, or (occasionally) an aspect of the argument of an individual essay, rather than strengthening the coherence of the collection as a whole. Moreover, it is equally difficult to know whether this pattern of revision was a result of publication constraints; for example, the use of revised periodical texts as printer's copy may have made large-scale structural revisions difficult. The absence of an overall consistency could also have been due to lack of time on Wilde's part (preparations for *Intentions* would almost certainly have overlapped with those for the book version of *Dorian Gray*). Alternatively, and as some modern critics have argued, it could have been a deliberate strategy to undermine that sense of coherence, authority, seriousness, and so forth, that was generally expected of collections of critical essays.

Although we cannot be certain about the precise motives for all the revisions to the text of *Intentions*, we can be in little doubt that Wilde paid careful attention to the appearance of his new book. As I noted earlier, he took great interest in book design, recognizing that—to use his own words—'the public is largely influenced by the *look* of a book. So are we all'.[78] Osgood, McIlvaine were also a firm interested in these matters, and were praised in the 13 June 1891 edition of the *Publisher's Circular* for their innovations in binding and typography:

> A book is doubly a book when printer and binder do their work well, and, so far, slovenly would be the last word of which a reader would think in connection with any of Messers. Osgood's books. To handle them is quite a delight, and to hold a volume with pleasure is to be prepossessed in favour of its contents. Appearances go for a good deal in literature as in life.[79]

Intentions was a handsome volume. Produced in a crown-size format ($8'' \times 5\frac{1}{2}''$) it ran to 258 pages (plus preliminaries). It was bound in moss-green cloth boards with the titles of the four essays and a small design by Charles Ricketts stamped in gilt on the front, and the title of the book and names of the author and publisher in six lines on the back. Ricketts (and his partner the artist Charles Shannon) had been known to Wilde since May 1889.[80] Ricketts's first commission (in the summer of that year) had been to produce a small Elizabethan-style painting of Willie Hughes as a frontispiece for Wilde's planned book-publication of 'Mr. W. H.'; he then designed the title-page and binding for *Dorian Gray*. *Intentions* was thus the third of what proved to be a fruitful series of collaborations, which included *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories* (1891), *The Sphinx* (1894), and with Shannon, *A House of Pomegranates* (1891). Shannon, working on his own, produced designs for *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1893), *A Woman of No Importance* (1894), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1899), and *An Ideal Husband* (1899). The title-page of *Intentions* listed (on the top left-hand side) the book title, followed by Wilde's name, and then (in a smaller font) the four essay titles; the publisher's device was positioned halfway down the page on the right; and the place and date of publication in a very small font appear near the bottom of the page on the right.

Frankel once again sees in this unusual layout and typography another mockery of Whistler's *Gentle Art*: 'In these respects, *Intentions* follows Whistler, whose title pages bore two main distinctive features: a fondness for setting "secondary" information like subtitles and dedications asymmetrically, far to the right and low down the page, and a predilection

[78] *Complete Letters*, 984.

[79] Quoted in Giles Barber, 'Rossetti, Ricketts, and Some English Publishers' Bindings of the 90s', *Library*, 5th series, 25 (1970), 325.

[80] See Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, 281.

for varying font sizes so as to achieve striking visual effects'.[81] However, the resemblances are not quite as close as Frankel implies (the title and subtitle to the *Gentle Art* are spaced rather differently, and Whistler's butterfly motif is both smaller and positioned more centrally than Osgood, McIlvaine's motif), and it is just as likely that the layout was decided on purely aesthetic grounds.[82]

One thousand five hundred copies of the first edition of *Intentions* were printed, of which 600 were issued in America under the imprint of Dodd, Mead, and Co. of New York. The American edition, printed from the same plates as the British edition, was identical throughout except for the title and preliminary pages, with Dodd, Mead, and Co.'s name and design replacing that of Osgood, McIlvaine, and the choice of pink (rather than green) canvas boards (which were described by a contemporary reviewer as 'that execrable tint of half rose which seems to be the present fad, and which one might believe would make Wilde himself howl with rage').[83] The British edition was priced at 7*s*. 6*d*. (that is, well above the average prices—from 2*s*. 6*d*. to 6*s*.—which one might have expected to have paid for a single-volume novel or collection of stories, but comparable with other essay collections, such as Pater's *Appreciations* which retailed for 8*s*. 6*d*.). The American edition was priced at $2.25, a broadly similar sum at the rates of exchange then obtaining. As was usual at this time, the publication of *Intentions*, on 2 May 1891, was announced by a series of publisher's advertisements. The following placed in the *Times* was typical:

> 'The Decay of Lying,' a whimsical and ingenious dissertation . . . is full of epigram and paradox, and a similar vein is pursued in [the] two essays on 'The Critic as Artist'. 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison,' on the other hand, is a study in biography—a psychological analysis of Thomas Wainewright, artist, writer, and prisoner, the friend of Lamb and his literary contemporaries . . . Very entertaining reading.[84]

The volume was widely reviewed, both in mainstream London publications, such as the *Academy, Athenaeum, Pall Mall Gazette, Times, Speaker*, and *Punch*, as well as in smaller regional papers, such as the *Birmingham Daily Post* and *Newcastle Chronicle*. Opinion, though, was mixed, with many reviewers being unsure of how to interpret Wilde's tone. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, for example (a magazine to which Wilde himself had regularly contributed), objected to what it saw as a certain superficiality—'the

[81] Frankel, *Oscar Wilde's Decorated Books*, 95.

[82] Another detail which weakens Frankel's argument somewhat concerns Wilde's own comments on book-binding (quoted earlier); namely, his argument that 'bookbinding' is an 'essentially decorative' art which should be determined by the materials used; by contrast when it is 'the expression of the individual it is usually either false or capricious' (see p. xv, n. 10).

[83] The comment appeared in the *Photographic American Review*, July 1891; it is quoted in Mason, *Bibliography*, 359.

[84] Quoted in Mason, 357–8.

result of a facile formula, a process of word-shuffling'—but nevertheless praised the book's 'wit', concluding that Wilde had written 'a fascinating, stimulating book, with more common sense in it than he would care to be accused of'. The reviewer in the *Athenaeum* was less generous, dismissing the same 'showy paradoxes' as 'the tricks of the smart advertiser'. In the *Speaker* Arthur Symons, although ready to acknowledge a sincere 'devotion to art' underlying Wilde's 'frivolity', nevertheless observed that he was 'too witty to be taken seriously'. The most perceptive review was perhaps that by Richard Le Gallienne,[85] who was a close friend, for the *Academy*. In it he drew attention to a larger problem in defining Wilde's reputation in the summer of 1891.

> [S]ince 'The Decay of Lying', which is here reprinted, Mr Wilde has become newly significant. One hardly knows yet what to expect of him, but we may be quite sure that these essays and *Dorian Gray* are but preludes. At present a delicate literary affectation, which is probably irritating to most, but rather a charm to those who know what it means, a suggestion of insincerity, a refusal to commit himself . . . makes him somewhat of a riddle.[86]

This uncertainty among reviewers may also have been reflected in the reading public, for the volume seems to have sold rather slowly; a second 'cheap' edition was not issued until three years later in 1894. (It is worth recalling here that Pater's more highly priced *Appreciations* had nearly sold out its print run of 1,000 copies in a little over a month.) Only 1,000 copies of the second edition of *Intentions* were printed, and once again 500 were issued under the imprint of Dodd, Mead, and Co. for sale in the U.S.A. With the exception of minor alterations to the dates on the title pages, the second edition was identical to the first and was printed from the same plates. Light green cloth was used for the boards (for the English edition) with the same lettering and designs by Ricketts; the American edition was issued in yellow buckram boards with lettering in brown. They were priced at 3*s*. 6*d*. and $1.50 respectively. In a letter to Ada Leverson (tentatively dated 23 September 1894) thanking her for a re-bound copy of *Intentions* (presumably the second edition) which she had given him as a birthday present, Wilde exclaimed 'I simply love that

[85] Le Gallienne was known to Wilde personally (they had first met in 1887 and Le Gallienne had taken up an invitation to stay at Wilde's Tite Street home in 1889); the nature of their relationship, however, is disputed. Some critics see their friendship as merely a literary one (though at times it was conducted with a certain air of theatricality); while others, notably Neil McKenna, have argued that at one time they were lovers (see McKenna, *The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde* (London: Century, 2003), 88–90 and Beckson, *Encyclopedia*, 193–5). By 1891 Le Gallienne was reviewing widely in London newspapers, and had made something of a name for himself among the members of the Rhymers' Club; in 1892 he became the principal reader for the Bodley Head.

[86] All the reviews quoted can be found in Karl Beckson, *Oscar Wilde: The Critical Heritage* (1970; London, Routledge, 1997); a fuller list of reviews is given by Mason, *Bibliography*, 357.

book'. He repeated the sentiment in a telegram dispatched on 27 October: 'the copy of *Intentions* is quite beautiful. . . . I read it as a new work with wonder and joy'.[87]

Wilde, then, seemed, at least in public, to have been pleased with *Intentions,* judging it to have been 'very successful'.[88] Certainly it had done well enough to attract the attention of other publishers. For example, in October 1891 William Heinemann, another recently established firm (dating from 1890), brought out an edition of *Intentions* in the paperback English Library series which it issued (with Wolcott Balestier) from Leipzig in imitation of the popular Tauchnitz editions. However, in his correspondence over this edition Wilde let slip to Heinemann a hint of dissatisfaction with the volume which he would later proclaim to 'love'; he suggested that if *Intentions* proved too long for Heinemann's series 'the last essay might be left out'.[89] Misgivings about 'The Truth of Masks' also surfaced in correspondence of around the same time with the French writer Jules Cantel. Cantel had apparently written to Wilde proposing a French translation of *Intentions*; Wilde agreed but with the following proviso: 'je ne veux pas qu'il traduise le dernier essai, "La Vérité des Masques"; je ne l'aime plus. Au lieu de cela, on pourra mettre l'essai paru dans le *Fortnightly Review* de février dernier sur "L'Ame de l'Homme", qui contient une partie de mon esthétique'.[90]

This revised contents list would undoubtedly have made a more substantial and probably also a more coherent volume. One wonders, then, why Wilde had not proposed it to Osgood, McIlvaine; after all, the three-month gap between the publication of 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' in the February 1891 issue of the *Fortnightly Review* and the appearance of *Intentions* in May would probably have allowed time for the substitution to have taken place if Wilde had so wished. Furthermore, and as I explain below, the manuscript of 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' was probably substantially complete by the end of December 1890. One possible answer to this question might lie in Wilde's habit of being economical with his material. He was not a writer who willingly

[87] *Complete Letters*, 616 and n.

[88] He described the volume in these terms when writing to the publisher William Heinemann; see *Complete Letters*, 486.

[89] Ibid.

[90] 'I do not want the last essay, "The Truth of Masks", to be translated; I no longer like it. In its place, one could put the essay that appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* last February on "The Soul of Man" which contains part of my aesthetic.' (See *Complete Letters*, 487.) As Holland and Hart-Davis note, the first French translation of *Intentions* by Jean-Joseph Renaud appeared in 1905 and was followed in 1906 by that of Georges Grassal; Cantel's edition, which implemented Wilde's instructions, was not published until 1914, when it was given the title *Opinions de littérature et d'art*. As early as October 1890 Arthur Symons had approached Wilde on behalf of 'a friend' who wanted to translate into French 'The True Function and Value of Criticism'; Wilde gave his permission but the translation apparently never materialized (see *Complete Letters*, 454, 645).

discarded work, and he liked to make what he had written go a long way: a creative reuse of material is a feature found throughout his *oeuvre*, from *Poems* to *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Thus in February 1891, having already got together what he thought was sufficient material for one volume of essays, and presumably having also agreed terms for it with Osgood, McIlvaine, he might have wished to reserve 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' for separate publication (like 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.'), or for possible inclusion in a future second collection of essays.

The Textual Condition of The Soul of Man

I noted earlier that Frank Harris had declined the opportunity to publish 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.', the next piece which Wilde offered him after 'Pen, Pencil, and Poison'. However, the two men remained friends and continued to lunch together. Just such an occasion prompted a letter, almost a year later, dated 10 February 1890, in which Harris asked Wilde whether he 'could write an Article for the March *Fortnightly*'. Harris continued: 'Can you do this within 8 days?—An Article on Literature or any Social Subject as paradoxical as you please.'[91]

It is difficult to know exactly what Wilde made of this request (which he must have refused). Practically speaking, he would have been preoccupied with *Dorian Gray* (which was still unfinished and months overdue), and he may simply have felt too busy to have taken on new work. However, it is also possible that he was a little offended at an approach which seems to have been the consequence of a local emergency: Harris's tight timetable and flexibility over subject-matter suggest that a contributor to the March issue had let him down, and he had approached Wilde only because he was in urgent need of copy. This sense that Wilde was no longer a contributor of first choice is also hinted at in *Oscar Wilde: My Life and Confessions* when Harris characterizes his feelings towards Wilde during this period as 'doubting', hinting that his disquiet derived in part from his growing sense of professional (rather than personal) unease with what he terms 'the peculiar rumours about his [that is, Wilde's] private life'.[92] Confirmation that Harris had been harbouring some misgivings about his friend's suitability as a *Fortnightly* contributor is also to be found in a later piece of correspondence—written in response to the publication of the first part of 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' in July 1890—where he appears to acknowledge what had been an earlier lack of confidence in Wilde: 'I've done you wrong in my thoughts these many years, of course,

[91] The letter was first printed in Ian Small, *Oscar Wilde Revalued*, 79.

[92] Harris, *Oscar Wilde*, 80. According to Neil McKenna, Wilde was already sexually promiscuous by late 1888–9, his lovers appearing and disappearing 'with dizzying and ever-accelerating speed' (McKenna, *The Secret Life*, 92).

ignorantly, but now, at last, I'll try to atone. You're certain, I think, to be a *chef-de-file* (if I may use Balzac's coinage without offence) of the generation now growing to manhood in England."[93] A cynical eye might see in Harris's praise an opportunistic attempt to court a writer whose reputation, following the publication of a major piece of criticism in a rival, serious periodical, was now a little more assured. Unfortunately there is no record of Wilde's reply, but we can assume that the flattery worked, for his next article, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', duly appeared in Harris's *Fortnightly Review* in February 1891.

We have little concrete information either about when Wilde began this essay or about how long it took him to compose it. In his 'Memories of Oscar Wilde' (appended to the second edition of Harris's *Oscar Wilde*) George Bernard Shaw claimed the credit, via Robert Ross, for inspiring the piece:

> I delivered an address on Socialism, and at which Oscar turned up and spoke. Robert Ross surprised me greatly by telling me, long after Oscar's death, that it was this address of mine that moved Oscar to try his hand at a similar feat by writing 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism'.[94]

Modern critics, though, have been sceptical of Shaw's account, not least because it has proved difficult to trace precisely the lecture to which he refers. More to the point, and as Lawrence Danson puts it, 'Shaw's voice was hardly the only one Wilde heard talking about socialism. The subject was all around him."[95] Indeed many of the major periodicals of the time, including those (such as the *Nineteenth Century*) to which Wilde had already contributed, were publishing articles on the merits of Socialism. As important, there is also evidence of an equally vigorous (and perhaps more topical) debate about the opposing politics of Individualism (which Wilde also addresses in his essay, perhaps more so than Socialism). This debate centred on the activities of the right-wing Liberty and Property Defence League, which was founded in 1882, and was the most high-profile of those campaigners who termed themselves Individualists. It culminated in the publication in 1891 of a collection of essays entitled *A Plea for Liberty* (introduced by Herbert Spencer) which was explicitly designed as a riposte to the earlier, best-selling *Fabian Essays in Socialism* (1889).[96]

[93] The letter is quoted in Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, 309; his source was the Maggs Catalogue, item. 1139. Harris's letter singles out for particular praise 'pages 128–9' of the essay which he claims 'Plato might have been proud to sign'.

[94] Harris, *Oscar Wilde*, 389. [95] Danson, *Wilde's Intentions*, 158.

[96] As far back as 1965 J. D. Thomas observed that Wilde's essay should be understood as 'a treatise on Individualism' rather than as an engagement with Socialism; subsequent critics, however, were very slow to explore this hint, almost certainly because of the short life-span of the political movement whose polemicists identified themselves as Individualists. Emerging in the 1880s, Individualism was a spent force by 1910, its politics consigned to what Edward Bristow terms 'the dust-heap of history'. (See J. D. Thomas, '"The Soul of Man Under Socialism": An Essay in Context', *Rice University Studies*, 51 (1965), 83; and

In short, if Wilde had been casting around in the autumn of 1890 for a newsworthy topic, something on which he could be 'as paradoxical' as he pleased, then he could hardly have chosen better than the very public rivalry between Socialists and Individualists.[97]

Our best source of evidence for the dating of 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' is the single (though unfortunately incomplete) extant manuscript (referred to in this volume as *MS5*) which was used as printer's copy for the *Fortnightly Review* (it is marked on the front—in a hand other than Wilde's—'proofs edition' and also has Wilde's Tite Street address pencilled under the title—again not in Wilde's hand). It is currently held in the Berg Collection in the New York Public Library. *MS5* is very similar in appearance to *MS4*; it is written in ink and (as was Wilde's habit) on one side only of his favourite lined folio notepaper. *MS5* is clearly a revised fair copy, with numerous insertions, cancelled passages, and deletions, as well as evidence of pages having been rewritten and renumbered, presumably to incorporate new material. Wilde did not make life easy for his typesetters; in places the corrections are substantial, and the manuscript is by no means easy to decipher, a situation which led (as I explain later) to some errors in the published version of the essay.

The numbering (in Wilde's hand) of the first two folios of *MS5*—'1A' and '1B' respectively—suggests that the beginning of the essay was expanded and rewritten at a late stage. In one of Wilde's corrections to '1B', a reference to his 'article' on the 'Importance of Doing Nothing' is changed to 'Function of Criticism' (see textual notes, p. 231). Wilde's reversion to the earlier periodical title of Part I of 'The Critic as Artist' (in contrast to the subtitle he gave this essay when it appeared in *Intentions*) suggests that 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' was probably substantially written in the late autumn/early winter of 1890, and that final revisions to it were made *after* Wilde had begun reworking his essays for *Intentions* (for the earliest he is likely to have agreed terms with Osgood, McIlvaine is January 1891). The final choice of the periodical title was probably made when he realized that 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' would appear in print before his book of critical essays. This dating is confirmed by another textual variant in *MS5*. Near the beginning of the periodical version of his essay Wilde includes a

Edward Bristow, 'The Liberty and Property Defence League and Individualism,' *Historical Journal*, 18 (1975), 770.)

[97] In the late 1880s and early 1890s The Liberty and Property Defence League had staged a series of public events to counter the influence of the Fabians; these included debates between leading Socialists and Individualists which were widely reported in the press, anti-socialist lantern shows, and what were termed 'liberty missionaries' who propagandized Individualist policies from the saddles of tandem tricycles in London parks. The LPDL also distributed thousands of anti-Socialist leaflets and pamphlets, and funded two journals, the short-lived *Jus* (1887–8) and the slightly more successful *Liberty Review* (1892–1909).