

Oscar Wilde:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Wilde, Oscar, 1854-1900.
Title:	Oscar Wilde Collection
Dates:	1851-1957 (bulk 1877-1957)
Extent:	3 boxes (1.26 linear feet)
Abstract:	The Oscar Wilde Collection is divided fairly evenly between works and correspondence. Some of the works are by people other than Wilde and a portion of the correspondence is written between people who were associated with Wilde.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-04515
Language:	English and French
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchases and gifts, 1959-1975
Processed by:	Chelsea Dinsmore, 2002
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde, born in 1854 in Dublin, Ireland, was the second son of Sir William Robert and Lady Jane Francesca Wilde. At the age of ten, Wilde entered the well-known Portora Royal School, where he excelled in Greek studies. His interest in Greek continued at Trinity College, Dublin, where John Mahaffy, an eminent Greek scholar who later took Wilde on a tour of Italy, was his tutor.

Wilde was awarded a scholarship in classics from Magdalene College, Oxford, which he entered in 1874. During his fourth year at Oxford, Wilde won the prestigious Newdigate Prize for imitative poetry with a verse praising Ravenna, a city he had visited with Mahaffy and the burial site of Dante. In addition to his studies, Wilde began to develop his role as poseur and aesthete. Wilde received his BA in 1878 and, after an additional year at Oxford, went to London where he began writing.

In 1880 Wilde published *Vera; or, The Nihilists*, and in 1881 he was hired by Richard D'Oyly Carte to boost Gilbert and Sullivan's new opera *Patience* in America by means of a lecture tour. Dressed in black velvet and a full length fur coat, he spoke on the new aestheticism from New York to San Francisco. He met with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Louisa May Alcott, Walt Whitman, and Jefferson Davies, among others.

After America, Wilde went to Paris where he wrote another play while visiting with Zola, Hugo, Degas, Pissarro, and other literary and artistic figures. In 1883 an American producer agreed to produce *Vera* in New York. Its abbreviated run left Wilde disappointed and he returned to England and Ireland where he lectured and wrote about his experiences in America. While visiting Dublin, he renewed an acquaintance with Constance Lloyd, and in May of 1884 they were married. They moved to London and Wilde spent the next few years writing reviews and essays and giving lectures. They had two sons, Cyril (b. 1885) and Vyvyan (b. 1886).

Wilde began editing *Woman's World* magazine in 1887, contributed regularly to *Pall Mall Gazette*, and worked on a collection of fairy tales, which were published in 1888. His critical essay *Intentions* and "The Portrait of Mr. W. H." appeared in 1889, and the first version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was published in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* in 1890. An edited and expanded version of *Dorian Gray* was published in book form in 1891.

1891 proved an eventful year for Wilde. His second play, *The Duchess of Padua*, was produced under the title *Guido Ferranti*. He published a second book of fairy stories, *A House of Pomegranates*, as well as "The Soul of Man under Socialism," and *Lord Savile's Crime & Other Stories*. Wilde completed another play, *Salomé*, which the Lord Chamberlain found unsuitable for the English stage. Over the next four years Wilde published *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1893), *A Woman of No Importance* (1894), *An Ideal Husband* (1895), and his most enduring theatrical work, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895).

In 1895, the Marquess of Queensberry, father of Lord Alfred Douglas ("Bosie"), an intimate of Wilde's, accused Wilde of posing as a sodomite. Wilde sued for libel and a trial began in April of 1896. Wilde withdrew from the case and was subsequently arrested on charges of gross indecency under Section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885. After two trials he was found guilty and sentenced to the maximum penalty of two years at hard labor. He served the bulk of his sentence at Reading Gaol where the warden provided him with paper to write what became *De Profundis*.

After his release in 1897, Wilde lived in France, Italy, and Switzerland. He renewed his relationship with Bosie; as a result his wife, Constance, who with their children had fled England during his trial, refused to see him. Constance died in 1898. Wilde underwent an operation for an ear infection in October of 1900 from which he never fully recovered. He died in his Paris hotel room on November 30, 1900.

Sources:

Dictionary of Literary Biography -- Volume 34: British Novelists, 1890-1929. Thomas F. Staley, ed. Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1985.

Scope and Contents

The Oscar Wilde Collection, 1851-1957, is divided fairly evenly between works and correspondence. Some of the works are by people other than Wilde and a portion of the correspondence is written between people who were associated with Wilde. The collection is organized into three series: Series I. Works, 1878-1909 (1.5 boxes); Series II. Correspondence, 1877-1900 (1 box); and Series III. Third-Party Works and Correspondence, 1851-1957 (.5 box). This collection was previously accessible through the card catalog, but has been re-cataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project.

Series I is composed of five major works by Oscar Wilde. *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, and *A Woman of No Importance* are present as complete typescripts while an incomplete draft of *A Florentine Tragedy* is handwritten. *Salomé*, in French, is a complete holograph notebook. A few additional items are also present.

Series II is divided into outgoing and incoming correspondence. Outgoing correspondence are letters from Wilde to friends and associates including George Alexander, Frank Harris, and Ada Levenson, among others. Incoming correspondence includes letters to Wilde from a wide variety of friends and admirers. Recipients of letters from Wilde and the authors of letters to Wilde are all listed in the Index of Correspondents at the end of this guide.

Series III is divided into works by other authors and third-party correspondence. Works by other authors include *Mr. and Mrs. Davenport* (based on a plot by Wilde) by Frank Harris and Robert Sherard's *Oscar Wilde: The Story of an Unhappy Friendship*. Third-party correspondence includes letters between people who were associated with Wilde, his family, and his biographers, including Vyvyan Holland, Arthur Ransome, and Constance Wilde. All correspondents in this series are listed in the Index of Correspondence at the end of this guide.

Elsewhere in the Ransom Center are ten photographs of Wilde, his home in Dublin, and Reading Gaol, located in the Literary Files of the Photography Collection. Pencil and watercolor drawings by Wilde and related to Wilde are located in the Art Collection. Other related pieces of artwork may be found in the Max Beerbohm, Bernard Partridge, and Aubrey Beardsley manuscript collections, among others. Programs, playbills and press clippings relating to Wilde's plays, are present in the Performing Arts Collection, which also houses photographs of Wilde and many of the actors and actresses who appeared in his plays.

Other materials associated with Oscar Wilde may be found in the following manuscript collections at the Ransom Center:

- Beerbohm, Max
- Brooke, Jocelyn
- Croft-Cooke, Rupert
- Douglas, Alfred Bruce, Lord
- Harris, Frank
- Houseman, Laurence
- Hyde, H. Montgomery
- Le Gallienne, Richard
- Mason, Alfred Edward Woodley
- Morley, Christopher Darlington
- Scott-Moncrieff, C.K.
- Orioli, Giuseppe
- Pansaers, C/ Lake Collection
- Whistler, James McNeill
- Wilkinson, Louis

Index Terms

Correspondents

Alexander, George, Sir, 1858-1918.
Harris, Frank, 1855-1931.
Holland, Vyvyan Beresford, 1886-1967.
Leverson, Ada.
Ransome, Arthur, 1884-1967.
Ross, Robert Baldwin, 1869-1918.
Shaw, George Bernard, 1856-1950.
Sitwell, Sacheverell, 1897-.
Smithers, Leonard C. (Leonard Charles), 1861-1907.
Tree, Herbert Beerbohm, Sir, 1853-1917.
Turner, Reginald.
Wilde, Constance, 1858-1898.

Subjects

Douglas, Alfred Bruce, Lord, 1870-1945.
Hyde, H. Montgomery, (Hartford Montgomery), 1907-.
Sherard, Robert Harbough, 1861-1943.
Art, Victorian.
Authors, English, 19th century.
Authors, Irish, 19th century.
English literature, 19th century.
English poetry, 19th century.
Trials (slander), Great Britain.

Document Types

Page proofs.

I. Works, 1878-1909

A-Z:

Box 1 Folder 1

"and many an Afghan chief..."

Desepoir

Lily-flower

The New Remorse

Pan: A Double Villanelle

A Florentine Tragedy, holograph notebook with author notes, revisions, and sketches for the play, 43pp, nd

**Folder
2**

The Importance of Being Earnest, page proofs bound with revisions and layout notes, 160pp, 1898

**Folder
3**

Lady Windermere's Fan [*A Good Woman*], typescript with author revisions, 71pp, 1892

**Folder
4**

Salomé drame en un acte (in French), holograph notebook with author revisions, 129pp, 1891

**Folder
5**

A Woman of No Importance [*Mrs. Arbuthnot*], typescript with author revisions and notes by Herbert Beerbohm Tree and other person(s), 129pp, nd

**Box 2
Folder
1-3**

II. Correspondence, 1877-1900

Outgoing letters

A-Z, Unidentified	Box 2 Folder 4
Alexander, George, Sir	Folder 5
Harris, Frank	Folder 6
Ives, George	Folder 7
Quaritch, Bernard	Folder 8
Ross, Alexander Galt	Folder 9

Incoming letters

A-H, Unidentified	Box 2 Folder 10
I-R	Folder 11
S-Z	Box 3 Folder 1

III. Third-Party Works and Correspondence, 1851-1957

Works

A-Z; Unidentified

Box 3 Folder 2Harris, Frank, *Mr. and Mrs. Daventry*, mimeographed radio script, 39pp, 1956**Folder
3**Sherard, Robert, *Oscar Wilde: the Story of an Unhappy Friendship*, holograph with author revisions and preservation photocopy, 175pp, 1902**Folder
4-5**

Turgenev, Ivan S., "A Fire at Sea," bound holograph translation by Oscar Wilde with translator revisions, 25pp, nd

**Folder
6**

Correspondence

A-H; Unidentified

Box 3 Folder 7

Brown, Margaret Lumley

Folder 8

I-Z

Folder 9

Morse, W.F.

Folder 10

Oscar Wilde Collection--Index of Correspondents

Names in **bold** appear in the RLIN record.

- Äide, Hamilton, 1826-1906--2.10
- **Alexander, George, Sir, 1858-1918--2.5, 2.10**
- Archer, William, 1856-1924--2.10
- Arnold, Matthew, 1822-1888--2.10
- Barret, Laurence--2.4 (from Wilde)
- Bedborough, George--2.4 (from Wilde)
- Belincroft, Marie--2.10
- Benson, Frank Robert--2.10
- Blackwood, William, 1836-1912--2.10
- Blanche, Jacques-Emile, 1861-1942--2.10
- Blunt, Wilfrid Scawen, 1840-1922--2.10
- Bouchier, Arthur, 1863-1927--2.10
- Bourget, Paul, 1852-1935--2.10
- Brown, Margaret Lumley--3.8
- Browning, Oscar, 1837-1923--2.4 (from Wilde), 2.10
- Buchanan, Robert Williams, 1841-1901--2.10
- Burke, Edmund--3.7
- Burne-Jones, Edward Coley, Sir, 1833-1898--2.10
- Carte, Richard D'Oyly, 1844-1901--2.4 (from Wilde)
- Cazin, Jean-Charles, 1841-1901--2.10
- Chambers, C. Haddon (Charles Haddon), 1860-1921--2.10
- Churchill, --, Lady--2.10
- Clifton, Arthur--2.4 (from Wilde)
- Coleridge, Stephen, 1854-1936--2.10
- Coquelin, Constant, 1841-1909--2.10
- Courtney, W.L. (William Leonard), 1850-1920--2.10
- Crane, Walter, 1845-1915--2.10
- Cranston, Maurice--3.7
- Crawford, F. Marion (Francis Marion), 1854-1909--2.10
- Croly, J.C. (Jane Cunningham), 1829-1901--3.7
- Davis, Robert S.--3.7
- Davitt, Michael, 1846-1906--2.4 (from Wilde)
- De la Rameé, Louise--See Ouida, 1839-1908
- De Vere, Aubrey, 1814-1902--2.10
- Dilke, M.M.--2.10
- **Douglas, Alfred Bruce, Lord, 1870-1945--3.7**
- "Eighty" Club--3.7
- Fawcett, Edgar, 1847-1904--2.10
- Fish, Arthur--2.4 (from Wilde)
- Gladstone, W.E. (William Ewert), 1809-1898--2.10
- Gosse, Edmund, 1849-1929--2.10
- Hare, John, Sir--2.10
- **Harris, Frank, 1855-1931--2.6, 2.10**
- Heinemann, William, 1863-1920--2.10
- Helena Augusta Victoria, Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, 1846-1923--2.10
- Henley, William Ernest, 1849-1903--2.10
- Hillyard, Fabienne--3.7

- **Holland, Vyvyan Beresford, 1886-1967--3.7**
- Hollingshead, John--2.10
- Hotel Alsace--2.10
- Houghton, Richard--2.10
- Humphrey, -, Mrs.--2.4, (from Wilde)
- Humphreys, Travers, Sir, 1867-1956--3.7
- Image, Selwyn, 1849-1930--2.4 (from Wilde)
- Irving, Henry, Sir, 1838-1905--2.11
- Ives, George, 1867-1950--2.7 (from Wilde)
- Johnson, A.B.--3.9
- Jopling, Louise, 1843-1933--2.11
- Kendal, Madge, 1849-1935--2.11
- Lamartine, Alphonse de, 1790-1869--3.9
- Lane, John, 1854-1925--2.11
- Lane, Violet--2.11
- Langtry, Lillie, 1853-1929--2.11
- Le Gallienne, Richard, 1866-1947--2.11
- Leighton, Frederic--3.9
- Leland, Charles Godfrey, 1824-1903--2.11
- Lever, Charles James, 1806-1872--2.11
- Levenson, Ada--2.4 (from Wilde)
- Lewis, George Henry, Sir, 1833-1911--2.11
- Locker-Lampson, - --2.4 (from Wilde)
- Lonsdale, E.--2.11
- Loti, Pierre, 1850-1923--3.1
- Louÿs, Pierre, 1870-1925--2.11
- Lytton, Edward Robert Bulwar Lytton, Earl of, 1831-1891--2.11
- MacMillian, Maurice Harold--2.11
- Maeterlinck, Maurice, 1862-1949--2.11
- Mahaffy, John Pentland, Sir, 1839-1919--2.11
- Mallarmé, Stephane, 1842-1898--2.11
- Mansfield, Richard, 1857-1907--2.11
- Marin, Helena Faucit, 1814-1898--2.11
- Mathews, Elkin, 1851-1921--2.11
- Maxwell, Gerald--2.4 (from Wilde)
- Menpes, Mortimer, 1855-1938--2.11
- Meynell, Wilfrid, 1852-1948--2.11
- Millard, Christopher, 1872-1927--3.9
- Milner, Alfred Milner Viscount, 1854-1925--2.11
- Modjeska, Helena, 1840-1909--2.11
- Morgan, -, Mr.--2.4 (from Wilde)
- Morris, William, 1834-1896--2.11
- Morse, W.F.--2.110
- Mountmornes, - --2.11
- Myers & Co., Ltd--3.9
- Nevill, Dorothy, Lady, 1826-1913--2.11
- O'Reilly, John Boyle, 1844-1890--2.4 (from Wilde)
- Ouida, 1839-1908--2.10
- Palmer, Walter, b. 1868--2.11
- Pater, Noël--2.11
- Pater, Walter, 1839-1894--2.11

- Payn, James, 1830-1898--2.11
- Quartich, Bernard, 1819-1899--2.8 (from Wilde)
- **Ransome, Arthur, 1884-1967--3.9**
- Rauzand, Christine Wilson--2.11
- Regnier, Henri de, 1864-1936--2.11
- Reid, T. Wemyss (Thomas Wemyss), 1842-1905--2.11
- Rennell, James Rennell Rodd--See Rodd, Rennell, 1858-1941
- Richards, Grant, 1872-1948--3.9
- Richmond, W.B. (William Blake), Sir, 1842-1921--2.11
- Ricketts, Charles S., 1866-1931--2.4 (from Wilde)
- Riddell, Charlotte Eliza Lawson Cowan--2.4 (from Wilde)
- Robertson, Norman Forbes--2.11
- Robinson, Lennox, 1886-1958--3.9
- Rodd, Rennell, 1858-1941--2.11
- Ross, Alexander Galt--2.9 (from Wilde)
- **Ross, Robert Baldwin, 1869-1918--2.4, 3.9**
- Rossetti, William Michael, 1829-1919--2.11
- Rupert Hart-Davis Limited--3.9
- Ruskin, John, 1819-1900--2.11
- Sargent, John Singer, 1856-1925--3.1
- Sayce, A.H. (Archibald Henry), 1845-1933--3.1
- Schreiner, Olive Emilie Albertina--3.1
- Schwab, Marcel--3.1
- **Shaw, George Bernard, 1856-1950--3.9**
- **Sitwell, Sacheverell, 1897- --3.9**
- Smalley, George--3.9
- **Smithers, Leonard C. (Leonard Charles), 1861-1907--2.4 (from Wilde, 1 forgery, 2 authentic)**
- Speed, Emma Keats--3.1
- Stanley, Dorothy, Lady, d. 1926--3.1
- Stead, W.T. (William Thomas), 1849-1912--3.1
- Steadman, Edmund Clarence, 1833-1908--3.9
- Stoddart, Joseph Marshall--2.4 (from Wilde)
- Strauss, Richard, 1864-1949--3.9
- Symmonds, John Addington--3.1
- Taylor, Tom--3.9
- Terry, Ellen, Dame, 1847-1928--3.1
- Thursfield, Emily--2.4 (from Wilde)
- **Tree, Herbert Beerbohm, Sir, 1853-1917--3.1**
- Tree, Maud, 1863-1937--3.1
- **Turner, Reginald--3.9**
- University of California, Los Angeles--3.9
- Vezin, Hermann, 1829-1910--3.1
- Viaud, Julian--See Loti, Pierre, 1850-1923
- Waller, Leris--3.1
- Ward Genevieve, 1838-1922--3.1
- Watts-Dunton, Theodore, 1832-1914--3.1
- Westminster, Constance--3.1
- Whistler, James McNeill, 1834-1903--3.1
- White, Terence de Vere--3.9
- **Wilde, Constance, 1858-1898--3.9**

- Wilde, Lady, 1829-1896--2.4 (inscription by Wilde)
- Yates, Edmund Hodgson, 1831-1894--3.1

Oscar Wilde Collection--Index of Third-Party Works

- Harris, Frank--3.3
- *Mr. and Mrs. Daventry*
- Hobsbaum, Philip--3.2
- Review of *Oscar Wilde: The Aftermath* by H. Montgomery Hyde
- Holland, Vyvyan--3.2
- Foreword for *Constance*
- Proposed broadcast on the occasion of the centenary of Oscar Wilde, October 16, 1954
- Ross, Arthur Leonard--3.2
- Article on *Mr. and Mrs. Daventry*
- Shaw, George Bernard--3.2
- Bernard Shaw on *An Ideal Husband*
- Sherard, Robert--3.4-5
- *Oscar Wilde: the Story of an Unhappy Friendship*
- Turgenev, Ivan S.--3.6
- "A Fire at Sea"
- Unidentified authors--3.2
- Biographical notes about Frank Harris
- Notes on works by Oscar Wilde
- Une Comédie inédite d'Oscar Wilde