



Oscar Wilde

By Richard Ellmann

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Oscar Wilde By Richard Ellmann

In this long-awaited biography, Wilde the legendary Victorian - brilliant writer and conversationalist, reckless flouter of social and sexual conventions - is brought to life. More astute and forbearing, yet more fallible than legend has allowed, Wilde is given here the dimensions of a modern hero. Based on fresh material from many hitherto-untapped sources, Ellmann depicts Wilde's comet-like ascent on the Victorian scene and his equally dramatic sudden eclipse. His Irish background, the actresses to whom he paid court, his unfortunate wife and lovers, his clothes, coiffures, and the decor of his rooms - all are presented here in vivid detail. The saga of his 1882 American tour is recounted with a wealth of new details; also his later impact on the bastions of the French literary establishment. The London of the Nineties, of Whistler and the Pre-Raphaelites, Lillie Langtry and the Prince of Wales, is evoked alongside Paris of the "belle époque" and the Greece, Italy and North Africa of Wilde's travels. Ellmann's definitive critical account of Wilde's entire oeuvre shows him as the proponent of a radical new aesthetic who was perilously at odds with Victorian society. After his period of success and daring, the fatal love affair with Lord Alfred Douglas is followed by exposure, imprisonment, a few wretched years abroad and death in exile. The tragic end of Wilde's life leaves the reader with a sense of compassion and grief for the protagonist. This edition makes the popular and best selling biography available in paperback for the first time.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Richard Ellmann capped an illustrious career in biography (his *James Joyce* is considered one of the masterpieces of the 20th century) with this life of Oscar Wilde, which won both the National Book Critics Circle Award and Pulitzer Prize on its original publication in 1988. Ellmann's account of Wilde's extravagantly operatic life as poet, playwright, aesthete, and martyr to sexual morality is notable not only for the full portrait it gives of Wilde, but also for Ellmann's assessment of his subject's literary greatness; both aims are served by a plethora of quotations from Wilde's own work and correspondence. Wilde straddled the line between the Victorian age and the modern world as he did everything in life ... with impeccable style.

From Library Journal

The late Ellmann worked 20 years on this magisterial biography. He tells the fascinating story of Oscar Wilde wit and aesthete, poet and playwright, scapegrace and scapegoat more fully and irresistibly than it has ever been told before. Ellmann captures Wilde's charm and high spirits and also the darker side of his personality, which led to increasingly public homosexual affairs at a time when homosexuality was legally a crime. Ellmann skillfully marshals his material (some of it new), and he writes brilliantly but unobtrusively. A masterpiece to match Ellmann's *James Joyce* (1959), this work is certain to trigger renewed interest in Wilde. Keith Cushman, Univ. of North Carolina, Greensboro

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Review

The biography will further distinguish Ellman's illustrious career . . . it should give impetus to a view . . . that Wilde was, after all, a writer of enormous significance and originality. -- *New York Times Book Review*,
George Levine

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lee Flynn:

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