

Wilde Discoveries: Traditions, Histories, Archives edited by Joseph Bristow. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2013. 399 pp. + 22 b/w illus. ISBN 978-1-4426-4644-5. \$52.50.

The “Oscar Wilde and his Circle” archive at UCLA is the world’s largest collection of Wilde materials. *Wilde Discoveries: Traditions, Histories, Archives* takes the archive’s holdings, housed in the William A. Clark Memorial Library, as its catalyst for thirteen diverse essays spanning the entirety of Wilde’s writing life. The results demonstrate the archive’s continuing potential to transform and extend critical conceptions of Wilde. As Joseph Bristow’s introduction makes clear, this capacity is not confined to the Los Angeles collections: acquisitions and catalogue projects in the British Library and the J. Pierpont Morgan Library reveal, in Bristow’s words, “how much more about [Wilde] there remains to be unearthed, as well as understood with greater accuracy.” Bristow’s introduction is majestic in its sweep if occasionally disorienting in its changes of scale: from a state-of-play survey of the Wildean archival landscape, we jump to a narrative of the young Wilde as Hellenist and thence to the (admittedly justified) observation that Neil McKenna rather overstates and overspecifies the nature and vigour of Wilde’s gay sex life in the 1880s. The book is divided into five sections, dealing chronologically with phases in Wilde’s career. Given the relatively clear periodization of Wilde’s career, this schema works well – although there are times, as I outline below, where the divisions give certain transitional chapters a feeling of being abruptly stopped short.

The first section deals, broadly, with the young Wilde. Chris Foss provides an important corrective to prior accounts (from Richard Ellmann onwards) of Wilde as romantic reader primarily concerned with the construction of an authentic self. Instead, Foss stresses the influence of Walter Pater (above all in “The English Renaissance, 1882”) as an interpretative lens for the Oxonian Wilde’s encounters with Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats. In Foss’s reading, Keats’s writing on insincerity becomes a formative influence for Wilde’s later works. Two subsequent essays look at the Irish Wilde. Elizabeth Carolyn Miller illuminates the political links between the early play *Vera* (1881) and Irish nationalism in the 1880s, specifically in relation to the career of Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, the Fenian assassinated in 1885. *Vera*, like *The Duchess of Padua* (1880) (to which the volume as a whole pays little attention) remains little-studied, but it is perhaps surprising that Miller calls the play “a footnote in Wilde studies”: elsewhere in the article, she refers to Sos Eltis’s *Revising Wilde* (1996), which contains a chapter on *Vera* that is both a painstaking textual history and an argument for Wilde’s feminist, anarchist socialism. With these concerns being close to Miller’s own – she