



Oscar Wilde — The Great Drama of His Life: How His Tragedy Reflected His Personality

Ashley H. Robins

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Detailing how, in the 1890s Oscar Wilde enjoyed one of the most high-profile reputations in Britain and yet, virtually overnight, he was plunged into disgrace and ruin, this work discusses the reasons for this extraordinary reversal of fortune. Author Ashley Robins explores Wilde's motivation in prosecuting the Marquess of Queensberry, and elaborates on the precarious legal situation that effectively quashed any prospect of a withdrawal from the lawsuit without dire consequences. He examines the medical and psychiatric aspects of Wilde's two-year imprisonment and reveals—for the first time and based on the original Home Office records—the machinations among prison officials and doctors to cover up Wilde's state of health. Robins details Wilde's tangled matrimonial affairs during his imprisonment and goes on to disclose the maneuvers adopted by friends to secure his early release, citing hitherto unpublished letters to show that bribery of prison personnel was seriously contemplated. Additionally, the issue of homosexuality is discussed not only in relation to Oscar Wilde but from the broader historical, legal and biological perspective. Finally, Wilde's personality is assessed using internationally accepted diagnostic criteria; and, in an unusual and innovative experiment, a group of Wildean scholars completed a psychological questionnaire as if they were doing so for Oscar Wilde himself. Drawing on these findings and on his own extensive psychiatric experience, Ashley Robins concludes that Wilde had a disorder of personality that culminated in the final and tragic phase of his life.

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