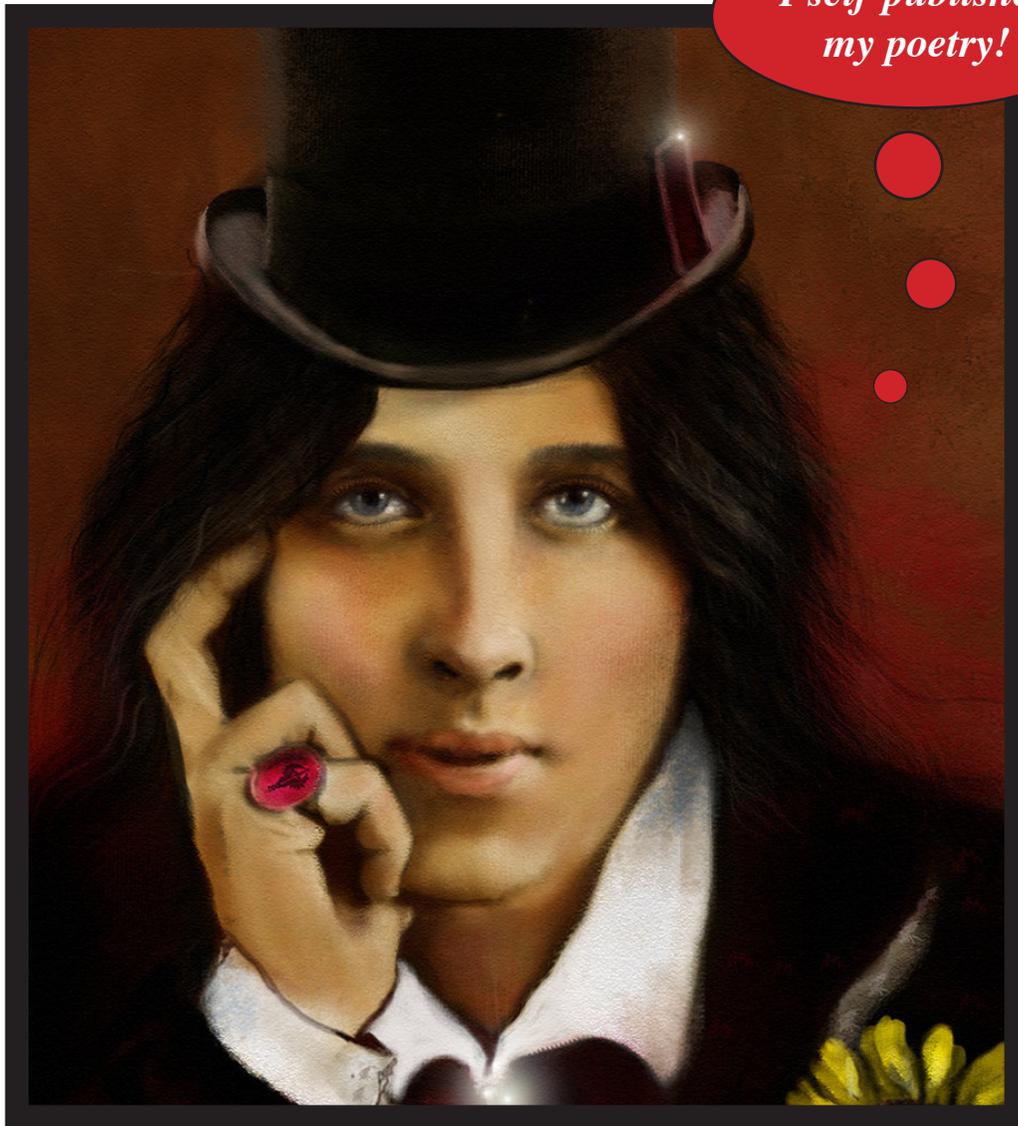


# *PWR Newsletter*



*I self-published  
my poetry!*



*Oscar Wilde*

(October 16, 1854 – November 30, 1900)



**PUBLISHED WRITERS OF ROSSMOOR**



# PUBLISHED WRITERS OF ROSSMOOR



*A Club to Celebrate and Support Aspiring and Published Authors*



April 1, 2017

Volume VI, Issue 4

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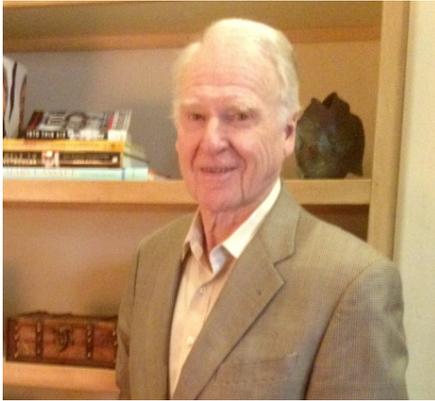
*Newsletter Backup Editor:* Vacant

**Coming up!**  
**Our monthly PWR meeting**  
**This Saturday, April 1, 2017**  
**From 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.**  
**In the Fairway Room at Creekside Clubhouse**

*Come early and enjoy complimentary coffee!*

## *April's Speaker: Harold Felton on How a Little Fraud Led to Literary Success*

BY RON WREN



Ron Wren

*My 25 Years in San Quentin* author Harold “Fingers” Felton will be the guest speaker at the April 1 meeting of the Published Writers of Rossmoor. Harold, the former CEO of the Death Valley Development Corporation, tells about his rise from “poverty to plentitude” in his best-selling memoir that topped the nonfiction charts in 2016, scoring an impressive 126,423 hard-cover sales within two weeks of release (of the book, not Harold!).

A self-styled “kid from Berkeley’s bad side,” Harold will tell us how promoting land sales just outside of Furnace Creek, California, to naïve midwesterners led to his acquiring a fortune in real estate—and the attention of the state’s attorney general.

“It wasn’t my fault,” Harold told a jury, “that buyers didn’t read the 4-point legal disclosure that revealed summer

temperatures often exceeded 131 degrees Fahrenheit or that the nearest potable water was 32 miles away in Horse Poo Corner.”

Harold’s writing career—such as it is—began when he enlisted the aid of an elderly proofreader who had been convicted of Gross Plagiarism. “He corected my speling,” writes Harold, “gave me tips on punctuation, and reminded me that it is “*i* before *e* except after *c*.”



“Fingers,” as his friends and former fellow inmates call him, will also reveal how the San Quentin in-house monthly, *Q Time*, was the first to review his book and applaud his almost-perfect speling.

*(continued on page 4)*

“We had only a hand-cranked mimeograph machine in Q,” Harold says, “so I had to get the manuscript outside the walls. I did a switch on an old trick by baking an angel food cake, stuffing the manuscript in the middle, and giving it to my mom one visitors’ day. She took it to a guy named Juan, who ‘self-published’ passports—and the rest is history.”

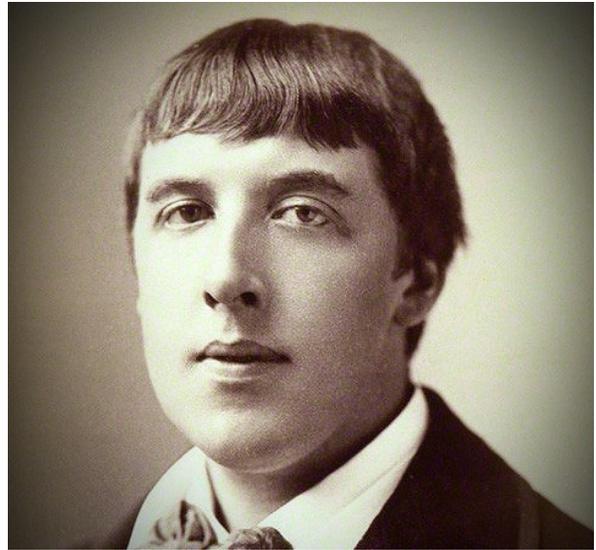
Writers, the general public, and law enforcement officers are invited to attend this PWR meeting, which starts at 10:00 A.M. in the Fairway Room of the Creekside Club House.



Harold will be assisted by his defense attorney du jour, Ms. Kelley A. Way of Walnut Creek, who specializes in estate planning, copyright, and trademark law—and April Fools’ Day presentations. □

For more information on the program, contact [ronwren@aol.com](mailto:ronwren@aol.com)

For more information on PWR, visit [www.rossmoor-writers.com](http://www.rossmoor-writers.com)

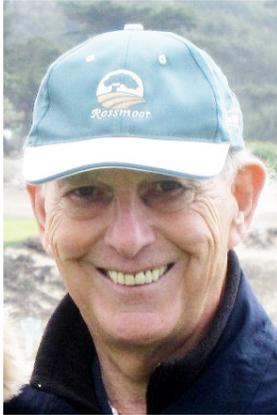


At Oxford



## *The President's Page*

BY DUKE ROBINSON



Duke Robinson

### **Useful Tools**

Here are two useful tools for publishing and promoting your book.

First, the Bay Area Independent Publisher's Association (BAIPA). According to BAIPA's website, this is "a diverse and open group involved in the world of independent publishing, from folks who simply have a book idea to published authors, editors to illustrators, readers to reviewers, agents to printers, audio book experts to book shepherds."

BAIPA holds second-Saturday-of-the-month meetings in Novato (a one-hour drive from Rossmoor) and regularly sponsors workshops on book publishing and promotion. In the past few years, we have had Becky Parker Geist, the current president of BAIPA, speak to us twice.

For more information, go to BAIPA's website: <https://www.baipa.org/>. PWR members Bob Bone and Lynn Ash-

down, who both belong to BAIPA, will be happy to answer any questions you don't get answered at the site. (Lynne: [lynneashdown@yahoo.com](mailto:lynneashdown@yahoo.com) and 415-408-8009. Bob: [travelwriter@robert-bone.com](mailto:travelwriter@robert-bone.com) and 925-954-7388.)

A second tool, which has to do with tracking your sales, comes from Susan Uttendorfsky, an independent book editor at Adirondack Editing. While you don't want to log in to Amazon or Smashwords every single day (the ups and downs may kill you emotionally), at some point you would do well to check your dashboard and see how things are going. While you're in there, write down some trackable measurements:

- Number of sales in the last 30 days.
- Amount earned from sales in the last 30 days.
- Note promotions you ran during this period.

Notice trends over time. Plan promotional periods based on sales trends. Over the long haul, having this information may ease your mind. ("Oh, it's February again. *That's* why I only sold three books.")

Check which of your promotions are being effective. ("That XYZ promotion really seemed to work!") Also, keeping track can encourage you to keep writing. ("My sales are slowly but surely picking up. I'd better finish that sequel!")

Here's a blog post that offers a free tracking spreadsheet template via Google Docs:

*(continued on page 7)*

<https://fixmystory.com/2017/01/13/why-you-should-track-your-book-sales-bonus-free-sales-tracker-template/>.

If you already track your sales, can you tell PWR members what information you look for, where you find it, and how it's been helpful? Let me know at [dukenclaire@gmail.com](mailto:dukenclaire@gmail.com)/. I'll see to it that it gets to our membership.

### **New Secretary**

In the February *Newsletter*, you learned that Diana Smith has resigned as our PWR board secretary. On behalf of your board, I am happy to announce that we have recruited, elected, and welcomed to our March meeting Dorothy Pritchett, who has agreed to serve as our secretary through June of this year. Dorothy has backed up Julie Blade, our Membership Coordinator, and filled in so ably at a couple of our PWR meetings when Julie was out of town. At our annual meeting on June 3, Dorothy will be eligible for election to a two-year term that begins July 1.

### **Membership in PWR**

PWR exists to help those who have published or hope to publish. Our members are authors looking forward to publishing as well as those who already have been through the process. If you ever hear people say that to attend PWR meetings or to be a member one must have already published a book, please tactfully set them straight.

### **Questions, Concerns, & Suggestions**

If you are a member or potential member of this club, the board members want you not only to be informed about club matters but also to have your voice heard. Whenever you have a question, concern, or suggestion about what we are or are not doing, please contact us by e-mail or the website template, or talk to us at one of our Saturday meetings. □



## Vegetarian Circle

BY GENE GORDON



Gene Gordon

animals.

“One of the greatest opportunities to live our values—or betray them,” says Jonathan, “lies in the food we put on our plates.” □



Jonathan Safran Foer

### Vegetarian Writer of the Month: Jonathan Safran Foer

American novelist Jonathan Safran Foer is the author of *Here I Am*, *Everything Is Illuminated*, and *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. In the last of these, Foer tells the story of a 9-year-old boy whose father died in the World Trade Center on 9/11.

Foer, who teaches creative writing at New York University, has also examined the life of his maternal grandfather and Holocaust survivor, Louis Safran.

Jonathan has also written profound nonfiction. His *Eating Animals*, a *New York Times* bestseller, discusses the ramifications of the factory farm system of food production, while attempting to understand why we are so loving to our pets, and yet so indifferent to other





## *Book Giveaway*

BY TRICIA SPIEGEL



Tricia Spiegel

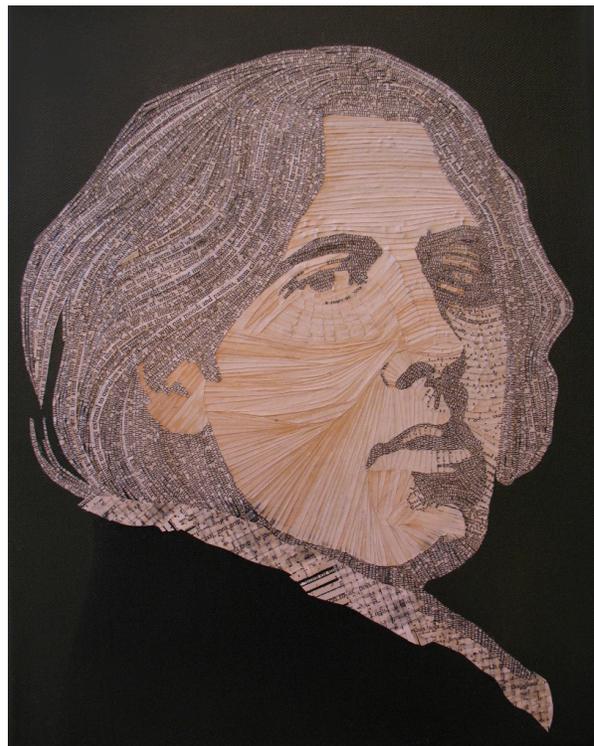
Do you have books you no longer need that might be helpful to PWR members and their writing projects? Rather than letting them gather more dust or throwing them away (heaven forbid!), put them on a designated table at our Saturday morning meetings for those who might like them.

Obvious topics that are likely to be appreciated include writing in various genres, self-publishing, creating your platform, marketing, finding illustrators or book cover artists, among many others.

Also, writers are often energized by reading excellent works by others in the same area in which they are working, such as memoirs, novels, or “how to” books. Inspirational books are also welcome—we can all use a little of that!

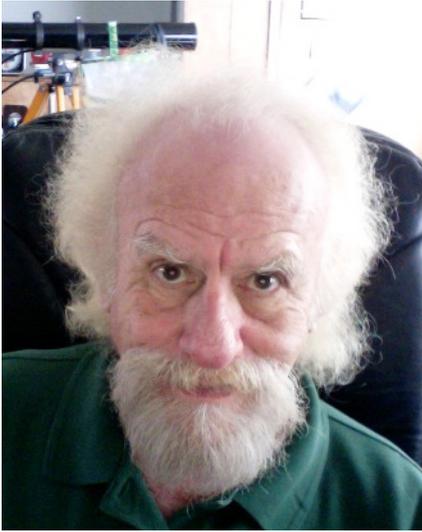
All books are to be free, with the

idea that you take only one before our meeting is adjourned. After that, take as many that are left as you think you will use. □





## *From the Editor*



Paul Weisser

### *Oscar Wilde, Self-Publisher*

Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde came into the world on October 16, 1854, in Dublin, Ireland. He was the second of three children born to Sir William Wilde, Ireland’s leading ear and eye surgeon, and Jane Wilde, a literary hostess of Italian descent who wrote and published poetry under the pseudonym “Speranza” (Italian for “hope”).



Until he was nine, Oscar was educated at home, where a French *bonne* and a German governess taught him their languages. He then studied at Trinity College, Dublin, after which he went to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he achieved a double first and won the Newdigate Prize for a poem, “Ravenna.”

After graduating from Oxford in 1878, at the age of 24, Wilde moved to London, where he became notorious for his sharp wit, flamboyant clothes, and glittering conversation. In fact, he became one of the best-known personalities of his day and is still remembered for his epigrams (see *Thoughts for the Month*, below).



As a young man, Wilde wrote his first play, *Vera: or the Nihilists*. He also published lyrics and poems in Irish magazines after entering Trinity College, Dublin, especially in *Dublin University Magazine*. In mid-1881, at the age of 27, he self-published *Poems*. The book was generally well received, and sold out its first print run of 750 copies, prompting further printings in 1882.

*(continued on page 13)*

It was bound in a rich, enamel, parchment cover (embossed with gilt blossom) and printed on handmade Dutch paper. Over the next few years, Wilde presented many copies of the book to the dignitaries and writers who received him. However, in a tight vote, the Oxford Union condemned the book for alleged plagiarism. The librarian, who had requested the book for the library, returned the presentation copy to Wilde with a note of apology.



In December 1881, Wilde sailed for New York to travel across the United States and deliver a series of lectures on aesthetics. The 50-lecture tour was originally scheduled to last four months, but stretched to nearly a year, with over 140 lectures given in 260 days, including at least one in San Francisco. In between lectures he made time to meet with Henry Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Walt Whitman.



In 1884, in Dublin, Wilde met Constance Lloyd, and married her that May at the Anglican St James's Church, Paddington in London. The couple had two sons, Cyril (1885) and Vyvyan (1886). However, during this time, Wilde was initiated into homosexual sex, and the marriage began to quickly unravel after Constance's second pregnancy, which left Wilde physically repelled.



In the early 1890s, Wilde became one of London's most popular playwrights, drawing large audiences to see and hear *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband*, *Salomé*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. He is also remembered for his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

(continued on page 14)

In 1895, at the height of his fame and success, while *Earnest* was still being performed to packed houses in London, Wilde had the Marquess of Queensberry prosecuted for criminal libel. The Marquess, who created the modern rules of boxing, was the father of Wilde's lover, Lord Alfred Douglas. The charge carried a penalty of up to two years in prison. However, the trial unearthed evidence that caused Wilde to drop his charges and led to his own arrest and trial for gross indecency with men. After two more trials, he was convicted and imprisoned for two years of hard labor.



With Constance and One of Their Sons

Wilde first entered Newgate Prison in London on May 25, 1895, for a week of processing, then was moved to Pentonville Prison, where the "hard labor" to which he had been sentenced consisted of many hours of walking a treadmill and picking oakum (separating the fibers in scraps of old navy ropes), and where prisoners were allowed to

read only the Bible and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Prisoners were not allowed to speak to each other, and, when out of their cells, were required to wear a cap with a thick veil so they would not be recognized by other prisoners.



Wilde and Douglas

A few months later, Wilde was moved to Wandsworth Prison in London. Inmates there also followed the regimen of "hard labor, hard fare, and a hard bed," which wore harshly on Wilde's delicate health. In November, he collapsed during chapel from illness and hunger. His right ear drum was ruptured in the fall, an injury that later contributed to his death. He spent two months in the infirmary.



(continued on page 15)

On November 23, 1895, thanks to help from a member of Parliament, Wilde was transferred to Reading Gaol, 30 miles west of London. The transfer itself was the lowest point of his incarceration, as a crowd jeered and spat at him on the railway platform. He spent the remainder of his sentence in Reading, addressed and identified only by “C33”—the occupant of the third cell on the third floor of C ward.



Wilde's Cell in Reading Gaol Today

Upon his release from prison on May 18, 1897, Wilde immediately left for France, never to return to Ireland or Britain. In Paris, he wrote his last work, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898), a long poem commemorating the harsh rhythms of prison life.

Although Douglas had been the cause of his misfortunes, he and Wilde were reunited in August 1897 at Rouen. This meeting was disapproved of by the friends and families of both men. Constance Wilde was already refusing to meet Wilde or allow him to see their sons, though she sent him money—a

meager three pounds a week. During the latter part of 1897, Wilde and Douglas lived together near Naples for a few months until they were separated by their families under the threat of cutting off all funds.



Despite his unconventional ways, Wilde had a lifelong interest in Catholic theology and liturgy, and frequently considered converting to Catholicism, discussing the possibility with clergy several times. Although his health had suffered greatly from the harshness and diet of prison, he came out with a feeling of spiritual renewal. He immediately wrote to the Society of Jesus, requesting a six-month Catholic retreat. When the request was denied, Wilde wept. “I intend to be received into the Catholic Church before long,” he told a journalist who asked about his religious intentions.



(continued on page 16)

Wilde spent his last three years in impoverished exile in France. His final address was at the dingy Hôtel d'Alsace (now known as L'Hôtel), on rue des Beaux-Arts in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Paris. "This poverty really breaks one's heart," he wrote to his publisher. "It is so sale [filthy], so utterly depressing, so hopeless. Pray do what you can." During this time, he corrected and published *An Ideal Husband* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, but he refused to write anything else. "I can write," he said, "but have lost the joy of writing."

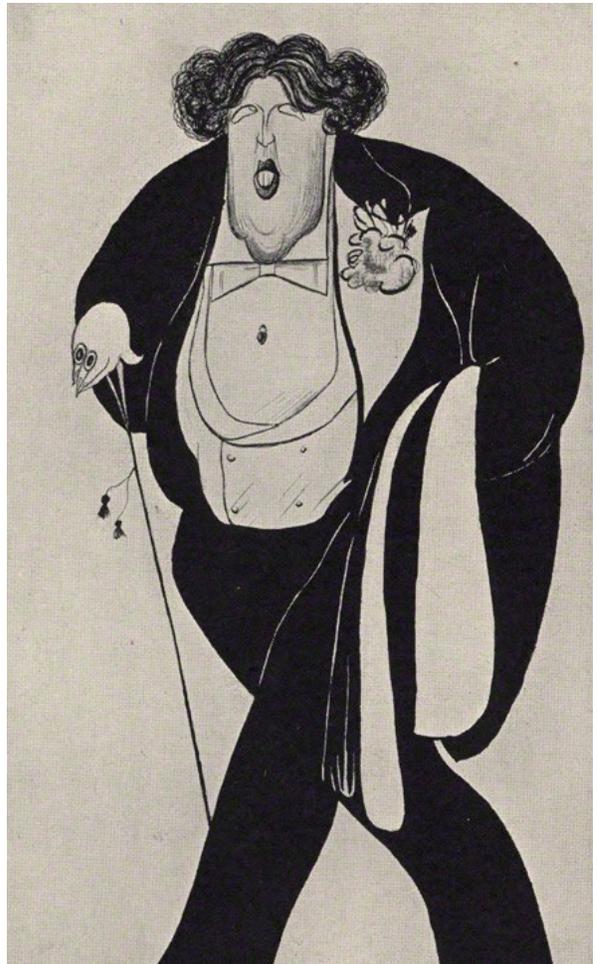


Also during this time, Wilde wandered the boulevards alone, and spent what little money he had on alcohol. A series of embarrassing encounters with English visitors, or Frenchmen he had known in better days, drowned his spirit. Soon Wilde was sufficiently confined to his hotel to joke, on one of his final trips outside, "My wallpaper and I are fighting a duel to the death. One of us has got to go."

By November 25, 1900, Wilde had developed cerebral meningitis. On November 29, a friend sent for a priest, and Wilde was baptized into the Catholic Church. He died the next day.

In 2017, Queen Elizabeth II posthumously acquitted Wilde and 50,000 other men of charges relating to past homosexual acts that are no longer crimes in the UK. □





## Thoughts for the Month



*“What is a cynic? A man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.”*

*“Experience is simply the name we give our mistakes.”*

*“The world is a stage, but the play is badly cast.”*

*“It is absurd to divide people into good and bad. People are either charming or tedious.”*

*“Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth.”*

*“Pessimist: One who, when he has the choice of two evils, chooses both.”*

*“Everything popular is wrong.”*

*“I sometimes think that God, in creating man, somewhat overestimated his ability.”*

*“There is no sin except stupidity.”*

*“The difference between literature and journalism is that journalism is unreadable and literature is not read.”*

*“It is only the modern that ever becomes old-fashioned.”*

*“There are only two tragedies in life: one is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it.”*

*“America is the only country that went from barbarism to decadence without civilization in between.”*

*“Patriotism is the virtue of the vicious.”*

*“Bigamy is having one wife too many. Monogamy is the same.”*

*“There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written.”*

*“I like persons better than principles, and I like persons with no principles better than anything else in the world.”*

*“No great artist ever sees things as they really are. If he did, he would cease to be an artist.”*

*“Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught.”*

*“If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life.”*

*(continued on page 19)*

*“Morality is simply the attitude we adopt towards people whom we personally dislike.”*

*“True friends stab you in the front.”*

*“The function of the artist is to invent, not to chronicle.”*

*“No object is so beautiful that, under certain conditions, it will not look ugly.”*

*“All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That’s his.”*

*“To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance.”*

*“We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.”*

*“The moment you think you understand a great work of art, it’s dead for you.”*

*“Moderation is a fatal thing. Nothing succeeds like excess.”*

*“Always forgive your enemies—nothing annoys them so much.”*

*“There is only one thing in life worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.”*

*“A critic should be taught to criticize a work of art without making any reference to the personality of the author.”*

*“A poet can survive everything but a misprint.”*

*“The salesman knows nothing of what he is selling save that he is charging a great deal too much for it.”*

*“If one cannot enjoy reading a book over and over again, there is no use in reading it at all.”*

*“Good people exasperate one’s reason; bad people stir one’s imagination.”*

*“I am not young enough to know everything.”*

*“There are only two kinds of people who are really fascinating—people who know absolutely everything, and people who know absolutely nothing.”*

*“All bad poetry springs from genuine feeling.”*

*“Good people, belonging as they do to the normal, and so, commonplace type, are artistically uninteresting.”*

*“An idea that is not dangerous is unworthy of being called an idea at all.”*

*“As long as war is regarded as wicked, it will always have its fascination. When it is looked upon as vulgar, it will cease to be popular.”*

*“I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train.”*

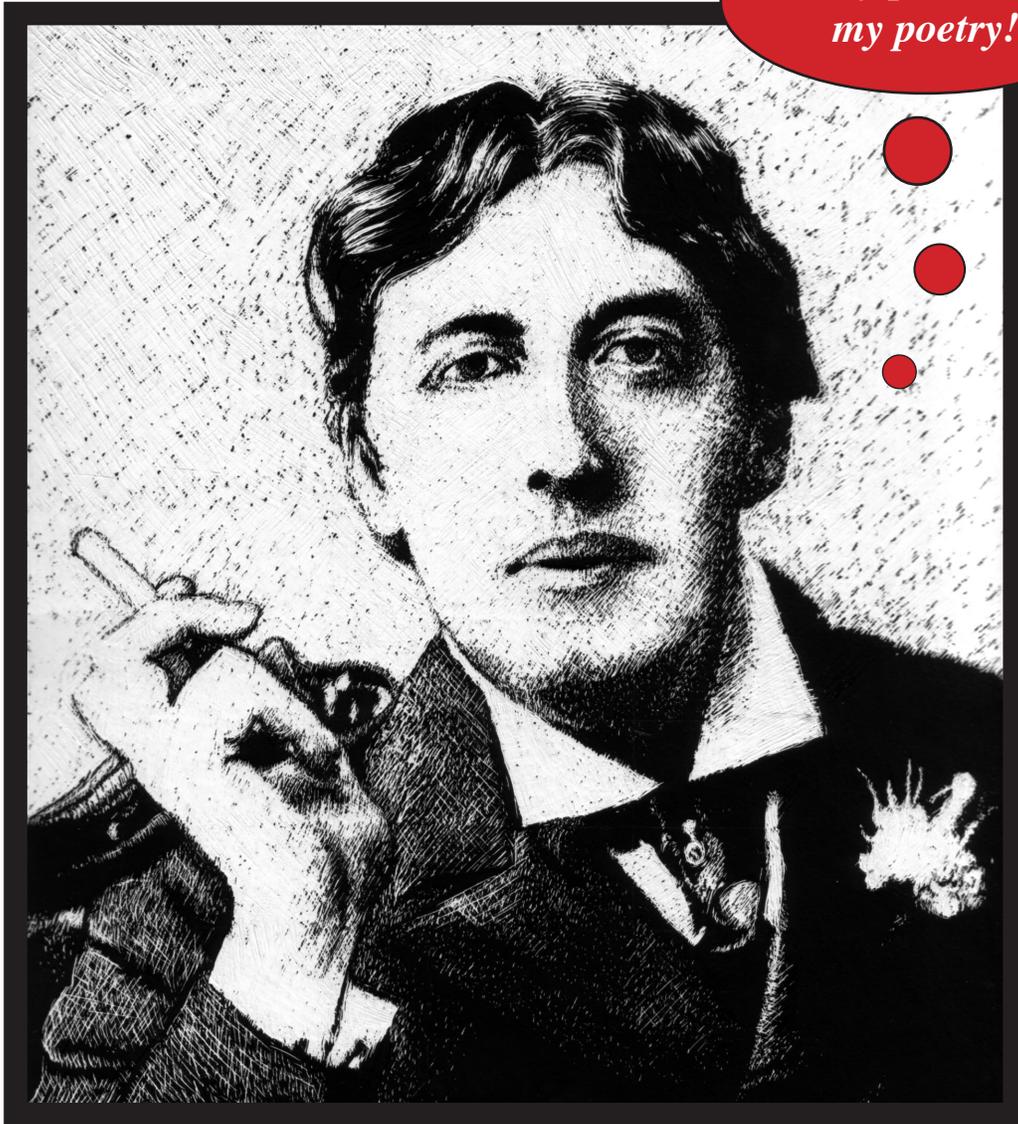
—Oscar Wilde



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