AN OVERLOOKED SOURCE
ON OSCAR WILDE AND THE PRE-RAPHAELITES

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In the 1970s when I was studying the archives of the Mount-Temple papers, once stored in the muniment room of the family estate Broadlands, Romsey, Hampshire, but then moved temporarily to the Hampshire Record Office in Winchester (where I studied them) for eventual transfer to the Hartley Library at the University of Southampton – all of this in preparation for my book Christmas Story: John Ruskin’s Venetian Letters (1990), I noted that among the Broadlands Estate documents, Box BR57, there were two packets of letters from Constance Wilde (wife of Oscar Wilde) to Lady Mount-Temple, dated 1889-97. I took only a few notes, this correspondence not germane to my project. Since then I have noticed that apparently neither Richard Ellmann, in what has been regarded as the definitive biography of Oscar Wilde (1988), nor Barbara Belford, in her revisionist biography of Wilde (2000), knew about these letters. Nor did Rupert Hart-Davis in his earlier The Letters from Oscar Wilde (1962), which includes some correspondence from Constance. The letters also escaped attention from Anne Clark Amor in her earlier Mrs. Oscar Wilde: A Woman of Some Importance (1983), although she does include information on the distant blood relationship of the two ladies, and their long friendship, especially after the death of Lord Mount-Temple in 1888. These letters at Southampton then are a new window on Wilde’s trial of 1896 for sexual relations with Alfred Lord Douglas, his conviction, and imprisonment in Reading Gaol.

The letters also may offer new insights on Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his association with Lady Mount-Temple. This friendship had begun earlier when Rossetti persuaded the Cowper-Temples to redecorate their house in London with Morris wallpaper, and to fill the staircase window with glass by Burne-Jones (Burd 53). By 1871 the Cowper-Temples had purchased Rossetti’s Beata Beatrice (Surtees 1:93), perhaps on Ruskin’s suggestion (Ruskin 36:‘l’), which would remain in the family until the death of Lord Mount-Temple when the estate passed to the next male heir, Evelyn Ashley. At this point Lady Mount-
Pre-Raphaelite Painting. Still, even with differing views and artistic approaches, the paintings produced by the Pre-Raphaelites did share some similar characteristics. These include a naturalistic and detailed approach to art, an interest in narrative subject matter, and, most famously, a preference for women with long, red hair. Even though it was created in the midst of controversy, the piece was met with much success, with critics calling it a “tour de force of detailed depiction” and “one of the most imaginative and powerful pictures in the exhibition.” Today, it remains an icon of the movement, and a prized gem of the Tate Britain, a London museum with an extensive Pre-Raphaelite collection. The Group's Legacy. Oscar Wilde. The Picture When the superbly handsome Dorian Gray sees his portrait he makes a terrible wish: that the portrait will grow older and that he will remain young forever. What happens to the portrait that no one ever sees? This disturbing story of a man who is willing to sell his soul for eternal youth while pursuing pleasure and passion was first published in 1890. It is Oscar Wilde's only novel and one of his most celebrated works. Wide range of activities practising the four skills FCE-style activities Trinity-style activities (Grades 7,8) Dossiers on The Aesthetic Movement a Oscar Wilde was the major representative of the Aesthetic Movement. He was born in Dublin in 1854, the son of a surgeon (chirurgo) and of an ambitious literary woman. He gained a first class degree in Classics and distinguished himself for his eccentricity. He became a disciple of Walter Pater, the theorist of aestheticism in England, accepting the theory of “Art for Art’s Sake.”