



Built of Books: How Reading Defined the Life of Oscar Wilde

Thomas Wright

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An entirely new kind of biography, *Built of Books* explores the mind and personality of Oscar Wilde through his taste in books

This intimate account of Oscar Wilde's life and writings is richer, livelier, and more personal than any book available about the brilliant writer, revealing a man who built himself out of books. His library was his reality, the source of so much that was vital to his life. A reader first, his readerly encounters, out of all of life's pursuits, are seen to be as significant as his most important relationships with friends, family, or lovers. Wilde's library, which Thomas Wright spent twenty years reading, provides the intellectual (and emotional) climate at the core of this deeply engaging portrait.

One of the book's happiest surprises is the story of the author's adventure reading Wilde's library. Reminiscent of Jorge Luis Borges's fictional hero who enters Cervantes's mind by saturating himself in the culture of sixteenth-century Spain, Wright employs Wilde as his own Virgilian guide to world literature. We come to understand how reading can be an extremely sensual experience, producing a physical as well as a spiritual delight.

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