



# Oscar Wilde's *Chatterton*: Literary History, Romanticism, and the Art of Forgery

*Joseph Bristow, Rebecca N. Mitchell*

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In *Oscar Wilde's Chatterton*, Joseph Bristow and Rebecca N. Mitchell explore Wilde's fascination with the eighteenth-century forger Thomas Chatterton, who tragically took his life at the age of seventeen. This innovative study combines a scholarly monograph with a textual edition of the extensive notes that Wilde took on the brilliant forger who inspired not only Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Keats but also Victorian artists and authors. Bristow and Mitchell argue that Wilde's substantial "Chatterton" notebook, which previous scholars have deemed a work of plagiarism, is central to his development as a gifted writer of criticism, drama, fiction, and poetry. This volume, which covers the whole span of Wilde's career, reveals that his research on Chatterton informs his deepest engagements with Romanticism, plagiarism, and forgery, especially in later works such as "The Portrait of Mr. W. H.," *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Grounded in painstaking archival research that draws on previously undiscovered sources, *Oscar Wilde's Chatterton* explains why, in Wilde's personal canon of great writers (which included such figures as Charles Baudelaire, Gustave Flaubert, Théophile Gautier, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti), Chatterton stood as an equal in this most distinguished company.

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