From his boyhood Oscar Wilde was haunted by the literature and culture of ancient Greece, but until now no full-length study has considered in detail the texts, institutions and landscapes through which he imagined Greece. The archaeology of Celtic Ireland, explored by the young Wilde on excavations with his father, informed both his encounter with the archaeology of Greece and his conviction that Celt and Greek shared a hereditary aesthetic sensibility, while major works such as *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* maintain a dynamic, creative relationship with originary texts such as Aristotle’s *Ethics*, Plato’s dialogues and the then-lost comedies of Menander. Drawing on unpublished archival material, *Oscar Wilde and Ancient Greece* offers a new portrait of a writer whose work embodies both the late nineteenth-century conflict between literary and material antiquity and his own contradictory impulses towards Hellenist form and the formlessness of desire.

**Iain Ross** teaches English, Latin, Greek and Classical Civilisation at Colchester Royal Grammar School.
Nineteenth-century British literature and culture have been rich fields for interdisciplinary studies. Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholars and critics have tracked the intersections and tensions between Victorian literature and the visual arts, politics, social organization, economic life, technical innovations, scientific thought – in short, culture in its broadest sense. In recent years, theoretical challenges and historiographical shifts have unsettled the assumptions of previous scholarly synthesis and called into question the terms of older debates. Whereas the tendency in much past literary critical interpretation was to use the metaphor of culture as ‘background’, feminist, Foucauldian, and other analyses have employed more dynamic models that raise questions of power and of circulation. Such developments have reanimated the field. This series aims to accommodate and promote the most interesting work being undertaken on the frontiers of the field of nineteenth-century literary studies: work which intersects fruitfully with other fields of study such as history, or literary theory, or the history of science. Comparative as well as interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

A complete list of titles published will be found at the end of the book.
OSCAR WILDE
AND ANCIENT GREECE

IAIN ROSS
For my parents
Canon Chasuble: Such details are perhaps better referred to in a dead language.

Miss Prism: I am decidedly of your opinion. That, I conceive to be the use of Latin and Greek.
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4 Comic iambic trimeter composition, translating Plautus, *Aulularia*, Act 2, Scene 8. From a notebook used by Wilde at Trinity College Dublin, 1873 (MS Clark Library, Wilde w6721M3 G793 1873)
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Finally, I should like to thank my parents for making this book possible and for long ago arranging for me to be taught Greek, without which my life would have been rather different.

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Note on transliteration

All Greek words are given in the Roman alphabet (of the long vowels only omegas and etas are indicated, with a circumflex), except (1) when they are embedded in a quotation, in which case the method of the author quoted is preserved and (2) in transcriptions of MS material. In the second case Wilde’s cavalier way with breathings, accents and iota subscripts has been preserved.

Greek names have not been Latinised, but neither have they been literally transcribed: hence ‘Aischylos’ rather than ‘Aischulos’ or ‘Aeschylus’, ‘Thukydides’ rather than ‘Thoukudidês’ or ‘Thucydides’. (See Chapter 2 for the origins of the practice.)
Abbreviations

**Artist as Critic**  

**CL**  

**CW, i**  

**CW, ii**  

**CW, iii**  

**CW, iv**  

**DNB**  
Oxford Dictionary of National Biography – consulted online: www.oxforddnb.com

**Earnest**  

**Lady Windermere**  

**Miscellanies**  

**Reviews**  

**Society Comedies**  