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THE LAST TESTAMENT OF OSCAR WILDE - AN APOCRYPHAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Keywords: *postmodernism, parody/pastiche, intertextuality, historicity, historiographic metafiction, apocrypha, authorship.*

Abstract: *The paper explores certain postmodern strategies of revisiting the past deployed in The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde, a fake autobiographical journal. A relevant sample of historiographic metafiction, Peter Ackroyd's rewriting of Wilde's last months of life in Paris not only blurs the formally assumed distinction between historical fact and pure fiction, but also raises further questions regarding authenticity, originality, copyright and authorship.*

Ackroyd's rewriting of Wilde works through de-naturalization and de-doxification of what we assume to be "the canonical Wilde". Writing an apocryphal biography of Wilde is but one of the various techniques that a Postmodernist author can employ in order to express his relation with historical tradition: he reinstalls tradition at the centre of his work only to subvert it. The text also reaffirms the historical value of the apocrypha as they remake the context in which actual events took place.

Written in a parodic mood, The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde is a puzzling intertext in which the recreation of a certain historical context calls into question the very notion of historical knowledge since it challenges both the historians' claim to offer a single reliable version of the past and the concept of genuine historicity.