Ernest: But is Criticism really a creative art?

Gilbert: Why should it not be? It works with materials, and puts them into a form that is at once new and delightful. What more can one say of poetry? Indeed, I would call criticism a creation within a creation. For just as the great artists, from Homer and Æschylus, down to Shakespeare and Keats, did not go directly to life for their subject-matter, but sought for it in myth, and legend, and ancient tale, so the critic deals with materials that others have, as it were, purified for him, and to which imaginative form and colour have been added. Nay, more, I would say that the highest criticism, being the purest form of personal impression, is in its way more creative than creation . . . and, in fact, its own reason for existing, and, as the Greeks would put it, in itself, and to itself, an end.

(Oscar Wilde, *The Critic as Artist*, 1890)

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 18 Nov 2026 at 02:17:51, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009369992