

bisexual American writer Robert McAlmon in an "unconventional" marriage, Bryher had long been aware of her lesbianism. She swept H.D. off her feet and the two embarked on a number of trips together, including visits to Greece and Egypt, a country which left a great impression, reorienting H.D.'s subject matter. They both remained on friendly terms with McAlmon, whose Contact Editions became H.D.'s publisher. The two women settled more or less permanently in Switzerland, providing mutual support in their careers as writers. They both consulted with Sigmund Freud in Vienna and helped to spread his fame in the English-speaking world. Another passion was films, which they made and supported with a critical journal. H.D. spent the war years in London, returning to Switzerland where Bryher was watchful over her deteriorating health.

The reputation of H.D. remained for a long time linked to her participation in the imagist movement in the teens of the century, to the detriment of her later work. In the 1960s, however, she underwent a revival, influencing a number of contemporary poets, including Robert Duncan.

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*Evelyn Gettone*

### DOUGLAS, ALFRED, LORD (1870–1945)

British writer and adventurer. The third son of John Sholto Douglas, the eighth marquess of Queensberry, Alfred Douglas was an exquisitely beautiful child. The boy was sent to various preparatory schools and then to Winchester, where he encountered a good deal of what Douglas called "public-school nonsense," which he at first resisted but then accepted. While he was at Winchester, his father took as mistress a woman so notorious that when Lady Queensberry eventually sued for divorce the proceedings took only fifteen minutes.

This episode marked the beginning of Alfred's alienation from his father, who was later to declare, "I never believed he was my son."

In the summer of 1889 young Douglas had his first affair with a woman, a divorcee whom he encountered while staying at a hotel in the south of France, but who found herself the object of indignation for having seduced "an innocent boy." In the fall of 1889 he entered Magdalen College, Oxford, where despite some faults of character—he was a poor loser—he was popular, with a dashing personality and lighthearted rebelliousness that endeared him to his fellow undergraduates. His burgeoning literary talent also won him admirers. The minor poet Lionel Johnson arranged an introduction to the celebrated litterateur Oscar Wilde at his house in Tite Street in London in the late summer of 1891.

Douglas later admitted that the friendship between them had some sexual expression (though of sodomy "there was never the slightest question"), which began about six months after they met and ended forever some six months before the catastrophe that terminated Wilde's career. Wilde did not generally care for sexual intimacy with young men of refinement and preferred "rough trade" from the lower depths of society, while Douglas was aggressively masculine. At the outset, moreover, each of the friends was inordinately proud of the other. It was a few nights after Douglas attended the premiere of *Lady Windermere's Fan* (February 20, 1892) that the intimacy between them began.

During the term that followed Douglas became involved in a homosexual scandal at Oxford and got out of it by paying £100 to a blackmailer. He was an aristocrat in the worst sense, indifferent to bourgeois morality, and obsessed with the belief that he enjoyed the inalienable privilege of amusing himself as he pleased. Wilde, for his part, reveled in flirting with danger, deriving much of his pleasure from

the thought that his actions were branded as vices by respectable society.

In the summer of 1894 there occurred an episode, trivial at the time, which had grave consequences for the two men. A homosexual undergraduate at Oxford named John Francis Bloxam asked Douglas for a contribution to a new periodical called *The Chameleon*. Not only did Douglas contribute two poems, but Wilde submitted some "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young" originally destined for the *Saturday Review*. Bloxam published a homosexual story entitled "The Priest and the Acolyte" that was later—and falsely—attributed to Wilde.

On February 18, Queensberry began the series of events that led to Wilde's disgrace, arrest, and imprisonment by leaving a card at the Albemarle Club addressed "To Oscar Wilde posing as a sodomite" (sic). Alfred Douglas never testified at any of the three trials, yet he maintained to the end of his life that if he had gone into the witness box he could have saved Wilde, even though the presiding judge in summing up the testimony said that "the whole of this lamentable inquiry has arisen through the defendant's association with Lord Alfred Douglas." After the trial Douglas wrote furious letters in defense of Wilde and of homosexuality, although his family and its friends wanted his liaison with Wilde utterly forgotten.

In prison Oscar Wilde composed the *De Profundis*, originally as a letter of forty thousand words which he intended to send to Douglas. However it was neither published nor delivered to its addressee; it was ultimately brought out of the British Museum Library as evidence against Douglas in a civil action for libel.

The two men resumed their friendship in France, after Wilde's release from prison, despite pressure from various sources to break off the relationship. The marquess of Queensberry died half-insane in 1900, and his son received £15,000 from

the estate. Of this he gave Wilde some £1000 during what was to be the writer's last year of life; he told no one and produced the evidence only years later to prove that he had not abandoned Wilde.

During the subsequent decades of his own life Douglas had an indifferent career as a writer and as the editor of several small magazines. In 1902 he married a woman named Olive Custance who deserted him in 1913. At the age of forty he converted to Catholicism and derived emotional strength from it when what he called "the years of persecution" began. In 1933 he published a book entitled *The True History of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, not an outstanding work of scholarship, but an exploration of the possible homoerotic attachment between the poet and a boy actor named Will Hughes (the "Mr. W.H."). Other trials and controversies figured in his later years, including a feud with Robert Ross, who had also been intimate with Wilde. Remembered chiefly as the companion of the ill-fated playwright, Lord Alfred Douglas was a defender of homosexuality before the cause had achieved any standing in England, and also a minor author in his own right, a personality that will continue to intrigue future generations.

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Warren Johansson

## DOUGLAS, NORMAN (1868–1952)

British novelist and travel writer.

Born in Falkenhorst, Austria, of mixed Scottish and German parentage, Douglas was educated at Uppingham, England, and at Karlsruhe, Germany. His cosmopolitan leanings were confirmed by a career in the British Foreign Service, which included residence in St. Petersburg from 1894 to 1896. He abandoned this calling, however,