

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,

and went to Italy to live. Though he was married at the time, Douglas' stay in Italy brought forth his pederastic bent. It is said that during his later years he would take a different boy "muse" as inspiration during the writing of each of his books. *Siren Land* (1911) and *Old Calabria* (1915) are evocative records of his travels in southern Italy that mingle chronicle, observation, historical notes, and philosophical musings. During one of these trips he recalls spending months with Amitrano, an illiterate peasant boy of the Sorrento countryside, renewing contact with "elemental and permanent things . . . casting off outworn weeds of thought with the painless ease of a serpent." Evidently the casting off was incomplete, for he could still recognize the outlines of classical statuary in the laboring bodies of Italian fieldhands.

Douglas wrote his popular novel *South Wind* (1917) to capture the expatriate atmosphere of the Capri colony. Set against the semitropical flora and fauna of "Nepenthe" (as he calls the island), the novel evokes a gentle hedonism that softens the sharp edges of the northern visitors. The plot, such as it is, pivots on the gradual conversion of the straightlaced Anglican colonial bishop, Mr. Heard, to a kind of aesthetic paganism. Although nothing in *South Wind* is overtly homosexual, the alert reader can detect allusions to the fancies and foibles of the island's foreign gay residents. Continuously in print since its first publication, the novel owes its success to its depiction of a Mediterranean outpost of bohemia, whose denizens have learned to "go with the flow."

In the nineteen-twenties Norman Douglas settled down in Florence, where he lived in straightened circumstances, sometimes with the bookseller Pino [G. M.] Orioli. He spent the war years 1941-46 in England. Most of Douglas' later fiction was not successful, owing to his lack of convincing characterization and plotting. As a result he sometimes required subventions from more fortunate authors such as

W. Somerset Maugham. His efforts to earn money not infrequently had entertaining results, as in his spoof of literary scholarship, *Some Limericks, Collected for the Use of Students, and Ensplendour'd with Introduction, Geographical Index, and with Notes Explanatory and Critical* (1928). In this little book, the point is not so much the bawdy limericks themselves, but the ingenious and improbable glosses supplied by the editor.

A renowned consumer of haute cuisine and wines, Douglas had little fondness for avant-garde literature, which he described as "rats' feet over broken glass in a dry cellar." As he grew older his interest in people became increasingly selective, and he acquired a reputation as a misanthrope. But his enthusiasm for young people never waned. "A child," he remarked, "is ready to embrace the universe. And, unlike adults, he is never afraid to face his own limitations."

In retrospect Douglas represented the milieu of the select foreign colony in Italy before the age of mass tourism. His Florentine circle included other homosexual and lesbian residents, notably Harold Acton, Vernon Lee, and Reggie Turner. They were seduced to their venerable surroundings by a largely illusory Mediterranean paradise of the senses. But since many of them flourished and were creative there, the illusion was a beneficial one.

Wayne R. Dynes

## DRAG

See Transvestism; Transvestism, Theatrical.

## DRAMA

See Theatre and Drama.

## DREAMS

Since the beginning of time human beings have dreamed and have been fascinated, perplexed, and terrified by their dreams. Universal as is the experience of dreaming, the interpretation of dreams is