

Dictionary of Literary Biography • Volume Thirty-six

British Novelists, 1890-1929: Modernists

Edited by
Thomas F. Staley
University of Tulsa

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To my Irish colleagues
Darcy O'Brien and Michael Whalon

Plan of the Series

... Almost the most prodigious asset of a country, and perhaps its most precious possession, is its native literary product—when that product is fine and noble and enduring.

Mark Twain*

The advisory board, the editors, and the publisher of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* are joined in endorsing Mark Twain's declaration. The literature of a nation provides an inexhaustible resource of permanent worth. It is our expectation that this endeavor will make literature and its creators better understood and more accessible to students and the literate public, while satisfying the standards of teachers and scholars.

To meet these requirements, *literary biography* has been construed in terms of the author's achievement. The most important thing about a writer is his writing. Accordingly, the entries in *DLB* are career biographies, tracing the development of the author's canon and the evolution of his reputation.

The publication plan for *DLB* resulted from two years of preparation. The project was proposed to Brucoli Clark by Frederick G. Ruffner, president of the Gale Research Company, in November 1975. After specimen entries were prepared and typeset, an advisory board was formed to refine the entry format and develop the series rationale. In meetings held during 1976, the publisher, series editors, and advisory board approved the scheme for a comprehensive biographical dictionary of persons who contributed to North American literature. Editorial work on the first volume began in January 1977, and it was published in 1978.

In order to make *DLB* more than a reference tool and to compile volumes that individually have claim to status as literary history, it was decided to organize volumes by topic or period or genre. Each of these freestanding volumes provides a biographical-bibliographical guide and overview for a particular area of literature. We are convinced that this organization—as opposed to a single alphabet method—constitutes a valuable innovation in the presentation of reference material. The volume plan necessarily requires many decisions for the placement and treatment of authors who might

properly be included in two or three volumes. In some instances a major figure will be included in separate volumes, but with different entries emphasizing the aspect of his career appropriate to each volume. Ernest Hemingway, for example, is represented in *American Writers in Paris, 1920-1939* by an entry focusing on his expatriate apprenticeship; he is also in *American Novelists, 1910-1945* with an entry surveying his entire career. Each volume includes a cumulative index of subject authors. The final *DLB* volume will be a comprehensive index to the entire series.

With volume ten in 1982 it was decided to enlarge the scope of *DLB* beyond the literature of the United States. By the end of 1983 twelve volumes treating British literature had been published, and volumes for Commonwealth and Modern European literature were in progress. The series has been further augmented by the *DLB Yearbooks* (since 1981) which update published entries and add new entries to keep the *DLB* current with contemporary activity. There have also been occasional *DLB Documentary Series* volumes which provide biographical and critical background source materials for figures whose work is judged to have particular interest for students. One of these companion volumes is entirely devoted to Tennessee Williams.

The purpose of *DLB* is not only to provide reliable information in a convenient format but also to place the figures in the larger perspective of literary history and to offer appraisals of their accomplishments by qualified scholars.

We define literature as the *intellectual commerce of a nation*: not merely as belles lettres, but as that ample and complex process by which ideas are generated, shaped, and transmitted. *DLB* entries are not limited to "creative writers" but extend to other figures who in this time and in this way influenced the mind of a people. Thus the series encompasses historians, journalists, publishers, and screenwriters. By this means readers of *DLB* may be aided to perceive literature not as cult scripture in the keeping of cultural high priests, but as at the center of a nation's life.

DLB includes the major writers appropriate to each volume and those standing in the ranks immediately behind them. Scholarly and critical counsel has been sought in deciding which minor figures to include and how full their entries should be.

*From an unpublished section of Mark Twain's autobiography, copyright © by the Mark Twain Company.

Wherever possible, useful references will be made to figures who do not warrant separate entries.

Each *DLB* volume has a volume editor responsible for planning the volume, selecting the figures for inclusion, and assigning the entries. Volume editors are also responsible for preparing, where appropriate, appendices surveying the major periodicals and literary and intellectual movements for their volumes, as well as lists of further readings. Work on the series as a whole is coordinated at the Brucoli Clark editorial center in Columbia, South Carolina, where the editorial staff is responsible for the accuracy of the published volumes.

One feature that distinguishes *DLB* is the illustration policy—its concern with the iconography of literature. Just as an author is influenced by his surroundings, so is the reader's understanding of the author enhanced by a knowledge of his environment. Therefore *DLB* volumes include not only drawings, paintings, and photographs of authors, often depicting them at various stages in their careers, but also illustrations of their families and places where they lived. Title pages are regularly reproduced in facsimile along with dust jackets for modern authors. The dust jackets are a special fea-

ture of *DLB* because they often document better than anything else the way in which an author's work was launched in its own time. Specimens of the writers' manuscripts are included when feasible.

A supplement to *DLB*—tentatively titled *A Guide, Chronology, and Glossary for American Literature*—will outline the history of literature in North America and trace the influences that shaped it. This volume will provide a framework for the study of American literature by means of chronological tables, literary affiliation charts, glossarial entries, and concise surveys of the major movements. It has been planned to stand on its own as a vade mecum, providing a ready-reference guide to the study of American literature as well as a companion to the *DLB* volumes for American literature.

Samuel Johnson rightly decreed that "The chief glory of every people arises from its authors." The purpose of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* is to compile literary history in the surest way available to us—by accurate and comprehensive treatment of the lives and work of those who contributed to it.

The *DLB* Advisory Board

Foreword

The foreword to *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, volume 34, *British Novelists, 1890-1929: Traditionalists*, discusses the fertility and diversity of the British novel during the forty-year period that bracketed the Great War and was marked by sweeping and revolutionary changes in the fabric of public and private life. These changes were so substantial and unalterable that Virginia Woolf proclaimed, "in or about December 1910 human character changed." This phrase is remembered more for its dramatic quality than its historical accuracy, but, nevertheless, it points with psychological accuracy to the profound changes in the way man was beginning to think about his universe, his social and governmental structures, and, most profoundly, about himself and his place in the world. In her choice of date, Woolf was referring specifically to the first postimpressionist exhibition in England, but her announcement serves as a summation of the developments that were to take place during the next twenty years. As novelists, both major and minor, sought to capture and give shape to these new developments, the novel became the most flexible and versatile of the literary genres.

The novelists in this volume form an interesting contrast to those covered in *DLB 34*. The realists had strong philosophical and aesthetic affinities to the novel as it had developed in the nineteenth century and were not preoccupied with experiments in form and structure. The modernists, while they were writing during the same period, relied less on the older order of the imagination. Their radical departure from tradition finds its distinct identity in what we have come to call *modernism*. Yet such terms as *realist* and *modernist* must be used to classify rather than define each group, to refer to general trends and impulses. For example, the works of Joseph Conrad contrasted with those of James Joyce demonstrate this division, but there are important similarities in their fiction as well, and among minor writers distinctions become blurred.

To a certain extent every generation of writers sees itself as being different from its predecessors, concerned as it is with its own problems and aesthetic demands, with new ways of ordering and defining experience. But in no recent artistic movement was the definition of the new so central as it was to modernism. Not confined to any one country, modernism pervaded Europe and later America and

was manifest in all of the arts. Yet, because it was perceived in crucially different ways by its various practitioners, a precise definition of modernism is a challenge to literary critics and historians. It is difficult to find commonality in such diversity, even in one genre in a single country. Nevertheless, the diverse group of British novelists who may be classified as modernists, for all of their dissimilarities, reveal in their fiction those elements which literary critics identify with modernism. For all of the immediate differences among the modernists, as in the extreme example of Joyce and Lawrence, their sense of change and the range of their concerns set them apart from such traditionalists as Bennett or Galsworthy.

All of the vast and profound changes in British life affected the novel in a multiplicity of ways. Powerfully affected was, as Roland Barthes suggests, language itself. New forces and new awarenesses in society made past literary accountings seem incomplete, and, as the new was reflected in a multitude of innovative modes of writing, literary language ceased to be universal.

Modernism is characterized by its insistence on the autonomy of the work of art: a novel is not merely a reflection of the life it depicts but is its own enterprise; modernist fiction draws attention to itself, its codes, its forms, and its methods. Modernism is preoccupied with irony, and evinces an attitude of detachment and ambivalence, which is frequently expressed through experiments with point of view. The relativity of time is another preoccupation in the modernist novel, as in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*; and myth is frequently used as an ordering device, as in Joyce's *Ulysses*. Finally, as Maurice Beebe has pointed out, there is in modernist fiction a reflexive quality, an insistence on the primacy of the individual consciousness. Yet, Joyce, Woolf, Lawrence, Dorothy Richardson, and the other novelists in this volume, as diverse as they are in their sensibilities and concerns, as different as they are in their choices of subject matter and form, have one major commonality and that is a profound commitment to recognize, capture, rearrange, and even reshape the perceptions of their contemporary world.

—Thomas F. Staley

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British Novelists, 1890-1929: Modernists

Dictionary of Literary Biography

Richard Aldington

(8 July 1892-27 July 1962)

Douglas M. Catron
Iowa State University

See also the Aldington entry in *DLB 20, British Poets, 1914-1945*.

SELECTED BOOKS: *Images (1910-1915)* (London: Poetry Bookshop, 1915); revised and enlarged as *Images Old and New* (Boston: Four Seas, 1916); enlarged again as *Images* (London: Egoist, 1919);

Reverie: A Little Book of Poems for H. D. (Cleveland: Clerk's Press, 1917);

The Love Poems of Myrrhine and Konallis, a Cycle of Prose Poems Written after the Greek Manner (Cleveland: Clerk's Press, 1917); enlarged as *The Love of Myrrhine and Konallis and Other Prose Poems* (Chicago: Covici, 1926);

Images of War: A Book of Poems (Westminster: C. W. Beaumont, 1919; enlarged edition, London: Allen & Unwin, 1919; Boston: Four Seas, 1920); enlarged as *War and Love (1915-1918)* (Boston: Four Seas, 1921);

Images of Desire (London: Elkin Mathews, 1919);

Exile and Other Poems (London: Allen & Unwin, 1923; Boston: Four Seas, 1924);

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A Fool in the Forest: A Phantasmagoria (London: Allen & Unwin, 1925; New York: MacVeagh/Dial Press, 1925);

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French Studies and Reviews (London: Allen & Unwin, 1926; New York: MacVeagh/Dial Press, 1926);

D. H. Lawrence: An Indiscretion (Seattle: University of Washington Book Store, 1927); republished as *D. H. Lawrence* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1930); revised and enlarged as *D. H. Lawrence: An Appreciation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950);

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- All Men Are Enemies, A Romance* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1933; Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1933);
- The Poems of Richard Aldington* (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1934);
- Women Must Work, A Novel* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1934; Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1934);
- D. H. Lawrence: A Complete List of His Works, Together with a Critical Appreciation* (London: Heinemann, 1935); republished as *D. H. Lawrence* (N.p.: Tobago, 1935);
- Artifex: Sketches and Ideas* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1935; Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1936);
- Life Quest* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1935; Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1935);
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- Seven Against Reeves: A Comedy-Farce* (London & Toronto: Heinemann, 1938; Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1938);
- Rejected Guest, A Novel* (New York: Viking, 1939; London & Toronto: Heinemann, 1939);
- W. Somerset Maugham: An Appreciation* (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1939);
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- Four English Portraits, 1801-1851* (London: Evans, 1948);
- The Complete Poems of Richard Aldington* (London: Wingate, 1948);
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- Pinorman: Personal Recollections of Norman Douglas, Pino Orioli, and Charles Prentice* (London: Heinemann, 1954);
- Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot: A Lecture* (Hurst, Berkshire: Peacocks Press, 1954);
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- Richard Aldington: Selected Critical Writings, 1928-1960*, edited by Alister Kershaw (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970).
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- The Viking Book of Poetry of the English-Speaking World*, edited by Aldington (New York: Viking, 1941); republished as *Poetry of the English-Speaking World* (London: Heinemann, 1947);
- The Portable Oscar Wilde*, edited by Aldington (New York: Viking, 1946); republished as *Oscar Wilde: Selected Works* (London: Heinemann, 1946);
- Walter Pater: Selected Works*, edited by Aldington (London: Heinemann, 1948; New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1948).
- TRANSLATIONS: *The Poems of Anyte of Tegea* (London: Egoist Press, 1915; Cleveland: Clerk's Press, 1917);
- Feodor Sogolub (Feodor Teternikov), *The Little Demon*, translated by Aldington and John Cournos (New York: Knopf, 1916);
- Greek Songs in the Manner of Anacreon* (London: Egoist Press, 1919);
- Medallions in Clay* (New York: Knopf, 1921); repub-

- lished as *Medallions from Anyte of Tegea, Meleager of Gadara, the Anacreontea: Latin Poets of the Renaissance* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1930);
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- Cyrano de Bergerac, *Voyages to the Moon and the Sun* (London: Routledge/New York: Dutton, 1923; London: Routledge, 1927);
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- Voltaire, *Candide and Other Romances* (London: Routledge, 1927; London: Routledge/New York: Dutton, 1927);
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- Julien Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals (La Trahison des clercs)* (New York: W. Morrow, 1928);
- Euripides, *Alcestis* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1930);
- The Decameron of Giovanni Boccaccio* (New York: Covici, Friede, 1930; London: Putnam's, 1930);
- Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, translated by Aldington and Delano Ames (New York: Prometheus Press, 1959).

Richard Aldington is perhaps best remembered among students of early twentieth-century poetry as a central figure in the imagist movement. His three poems published in *Poetry* (Chicago) in November 1912 were the first to be identified with the imagists. Aldington and Hilda Doolittle (H. D.), whom he married in 1913, were central contributors to the anthologies of poetry representing this new movement, among them *Des Imagistes* (1914), compiled by Ezra Pound. Later, Aldington



Richard Aldington, 1917

continued to represent the imagists in England, along with D. H. Lawrence and F. S. Flint, in the first three volumes of Amy Lowell's anthologies, *Some Imagist Poets*, published in 1915, 1916, and 1917. America was represented by H. D., John Gould Fletcher, and Lowell. Given Aldington's prominence in the most important poetic movement of the first half of this century, many critics have understandably paid little attention to his fiction. Nevertheless, Aldington did produce eight novels during a long and distinguished career as novelist, poet, translator, and critical biographer. At least two of these novels received considerable praise during his lifetime.

Aldington was born 8 July 1892 in Portsmouth, England, the eldest son of Albert Edward Aldington, a solicitor's clerk, and his wife, Jessie May Godfrey. The events of his early life are recorded in considerable detail in his autobiography, *Life for Life's Sake: A Book of Reminiscences* (1941). Here he recounts his boyhood in Dover and his early years at a private school, where he studied French and Latin. His early reading was broad. Beginning with his father's library, a surprisingly good collection of the best literature, Aldington continued to build on his knowledge of literature beyond the French and Latin classics. By the time he entered University College, London, in 1910, he was so well read he was able to pass a required reading examination with a "98 out of 100 on a special test paper." Sir Alec Randall, a close friend of Aldington's college days, describes him as "the centre of a group of admiring friends, of whom I was one."

In 1911, owing to his family's financial difficulties, Aldington left University College and began what would prove to be a distinguished career as a writer. His first efforts were as a part-time journalist covering sporting events and an occasional contributor to various poetry magazines. Later, because of the contacts he began to make among other young poets, particularly those of the imagist movement, he was able in 1914 to become assistant editor of the *Egoist*, a fortnightly review originally founded in June 1913 by Dora Marsden and Harriet Shaw Weaver as the *New Freewoman: An Individualist Review*. The title, Richard E. Smith notes, was "changed to *The Egoist: An Individualist Review* on the first of January of the following year." Even before the title change, however, the review became a vehicle for the emerging *Imagistes*, including Aldington. With the exception of the years of World War I, during which time Aldington served first as an enlisted man and later as a commissioned officer, Aldington devoted the next fifteen years to poetry and criticism, translations, and biographical work.

His first novel, *Death of a Hero* (1929), appeared at a point in his career when he was already well known and highly regarded as a poet and critic. Already the author of a dozen volumes, translator of as many more works, and veteran literary critic of the *Times Literary Supplement*, Aldington came to the novel with impressive credentials. He had been planning his first novel, *Death of a Hero*, for nearly a decade before he actually began the writing in 1928. Part of the novel was written at Port-Cros on the French Riviera during one of Aldington's twice-

yearly "escapes" to the Continent. Although he had been fortunate in finding employment with the *Times* and successful in placing his work for publication when he returned from the war, Aldington confessed to considerable difficulty readjusting to England and to his former acquaintances in literary circles. One might argue that *Death of a Hero* represents the story of its author's struggle and failure to readjust.

The novel opens with a prologue which reveals all. The novel should not be read, Aldington tells us in his autobiography, "for the trivial purpose of finding out what happened." The conclusion of the story is already known from the outset; George Winterbourne, a sensitive young painter-turned-soldier, is dead. Through the voice of a fellow officer, Aldington traces the causes of that death. What emerges from this narrative is a social indictment, a meticulous and unsparing satire of Victorian and contemporary England directed not only at George's parents and others of their generation but also at his fellow officers, his wife Elizabeth, his mistress Fanny, and assorted members of English literary society. Almost no one in the cast is spared. The Victorians, the author argues, were the architects of the war and the root cause of the death of George Winterbourne, a young man who stands as a symbol of the thousands who died needlessly.

Winterbourne might easily have been modeled on Wilfred Owen, another sensitive young artist-turned-soldier who died during some of the last action of the war, only a week before the Armistice. Indeed, Aldington has written a memorial to this fellow poet ("In Memory of Wilfred Owen"). Whatever the inspiration for Winterbourne, the novel stands as an important historical as well as literary document. It has been favorably and justifiably compared with Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and with Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929).

By 1928, Aldington had given up trying to adjust to an England that was becoming increasingly alien to him. Like D. H. Lawrence, Aldington chose voluntary exile, first in Paris, then Italy, and later in America. His second novel, *The Colonel's Daughter* (1931), although inspired by the country folk he knew during his years at Chapel Farm Cottage in Berkshire, where he lived from 1919 to 1927, was written in Paris and Italy. At the center of the novel is Georgina Smithers, perhaps a spiritual sister of George Winterbourne of *Death of a Hero*. Georgina, the only child of a retired lieutenant colonel, is steeped in Victorian rules of conduct. Her conflict is a simple one; she wants a husband,

but she is an unfortunate remnant of the old order, doomed to spinsterhood by a code which prevents her from seeking a husband among the few eligible bachelors with whom she comes in contact. Good Victorian that she is, she must wait to be selected by a proper mate; unfortunately, her station, her lack of talent, of wit, of beauty all legislate against her. This central plot seems thin, but it must have described a social reality for many young women in postwar England, when a whole generation of young men had been severely depleted.

The several subplots of *The Colonel's Daughter* exist mostly for satirical purposes. Yet beneath Aldington's satire one senses a genuine compassion. In his second novel Aldington allows his reader, less affected by the author's intrusions, to judge the characters. There is social condemnation, of course, but one could argue that Aldington's studies of Voltaire only a few years earlier had begun to take effect: he could now allow society to condemn itself. The satire of *The Colonel's Daughter* is tempered with many purely comic illustrations, revealing Aldington's efforts to depend more on dramatic or ironic presentation of his characters' foibles than on direct condemnation of them.



Richard Aldington, early 1930s

Aldington's domestic harmony during this period failed to match his professional success. Even before World War I ended and he returned to England to continue his writing career, Aldington's marriage to Hilda Doolittle was already crumbling. By 1919, their relationship all but finished, Aldington and Doolittle separated, although they were not divorced until 1938. Between 1919 and 1938, two women figured prominently in Aldington's life: Dorothy Yorke, an American art student whom he had met while on leave during the war and with whom he remained intimate after separating from Hilda Doolittle; and Brigit Patmore, a friend from the London days before the war and a member of the literary circle that included Violet Hunt, Ezra Pound, and Hilda Doolittle, among others. In 1938 Aldington married Netta McCulloch. Their daughter Catherine was born shortly thereafter.

Even with what might be considered an unquiet domestic life, Aldington produced during this period a score of critical works, six of his eight novels, and a dozen or more translations, not counting his poetry. His work in the novel, surprisingly, spans only about sixteen years or so of his career, from about 1929 through 1946. His third and fourth novels, *All Men Are Enemies* (1933) and *Women Must Work* (1934), are a continuation of the artistic direction he had established in his first two novels—social satire.

The first of these, *All Men Are Enemies*, traces the progress of Antony Clarendon, the protagonist, in his struggle toward what "he believes to be a finer and fuller life," as Aldington terms it in his prefatory note to the first American edition novel. Antony moves from despair, through spiritual death, and finally to rebirth in the course of the novel. Part one, which takes the reader from 1900-1914 through Clarendon's childhood and emergence into manhood, is stylistically pastoral. From the opening on Mount Olympus, where a council of the gods discusses Antony's birth and prophesies his struggle for a "life like unto our own," to the end of part one, Aldington strives to capture the atmosphere of prewar England through scenes reminiscent of several in D. H. Lawrence's early novels. Here time seems almost to stand still, keyed to nature's cycle of growth and harvest rather than to the more frenetic pace of a society dominated by the machine.

In part two, which begins in 1919, Aldington presents a stark contrast. Here, symbolically, may be seen the death of the old order. For Antony too the long nightmare of death, during which he is