

Introduction

The bulk of the material in this volume is the result of trawling through the archival papers of Richard Aldington and F.S. Flint in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, Austin, Texas. The letters presented in this book concentrate on the Imagist poets Richard Aldington and F.S. Flint (151 letters from Aldington to Flint, 4 letters from Flint to Aldington, and a further 97 letters from and to Flint, involving English, American, French, and Belgian correspondents). These letters are given complete, while a few additional ones have been edited to focus on the main points within them.

Apart from whole or partial letters further texts drawn from these archives have been added for reasons of relevance or supplementary information. Dates of letters, given in square brackets, are taken from the postmark of a reliably associated envelope, or based on internal evidence.

Richard Aldington (1892-1962)

While still a young man he became immersed in the literary life of London. He was one of the four main protagonists of the modernist Anglo-American poetic movement, Imagism (the others being Ezra Pound, H[ilda]. D[oolittle]., and F.S. Flint). He acted as literary editor of *The Egoist*, the 'little' magazine that functioned as an important organ of the *avant-garde*. His published poetry includes *Images* (1915), *Images of War* (1919), and *Images of Desire* (1919). He served in the First World War, and was later to write the scathing anti-war novel, *Death of a Hero* (1929), that was both a vivid depiction of that war and a powerful indictment of the social, intellectual, and political climate of pre-war England. From the 1930s onward he gradually abandoned poetry to concentrate on writing novels and biographies, although free-lance reviewing and translation work were to be an important source of income.

F.S. Flint (1885-1960)

Frank Stewart Flint came from a very deprived background, yet, in spite of his poverty and limited education (he left school at 13), he managed to master ten languages, mostly self-taught.¹ He quickly gained a reputation in literary circles as *the* authority on contemporary French poetry. His first volume of poetry, *In the Net of the Stars* (1909), contained fairly conventional love poems. But after meeting T.E. Hulme and Ezra Pound his poetry developed, and, in his next volume, *Cadences* (1915), became more imagist. He was a committed contributor to, and publicist of, Imagism. After his third volume of verse, *Otherworld: Cadences* (1920), he wrote no more poetry. He served in the army in 1918-19, and later became Chief of Overseas Section, Statistics Division, in the Ministry of Labour (unlike Aldington, he chose regular employment for his source of income). After 1920 he wrote mainly articles, translations and reviews for various journals.

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Aldington and Flint became the closest of friends, and, in their various roles as poet, critic, translator, editor, and reviewer, made significant contributions to the development and achievement of early Anglo-American literary modernism, that is, Imagism.

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The overwhelming majority of the letters in this selection, 233 out of 253, are to be found in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center. Eight (1, 40, 205, 215, 216, 225, 237, 239) are from the private papers of the Flint family. Two (132, 134) are in the collection of the author. Ten (30, 38, 55, 57, 59, 64, 66, 83, 113, 128) are held in the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

The imbalance in the number of letters surviving from Aldington to Flint, 151, as opposed to the number of letters from Flint to Aldington, 4, is frustrating and unfortunate, but explicable and unavoidable. Flint was a more careful preserver of his early letters (mainly those that he received, but also copies of some that he sent), than was Aldington, who, as he moved around, destroyed much of his correspondence.

Apart from these I have, for the most part, included only letters either written by Flint or sent to him. There are just five exceptions to this rule: two letters from Aldington to Flint's first wife, Violet

1. According to Kitty Cannell, the wife of the American poet, Skipwith Cannell (cited in Mizener, p. 238).

(166, 181), and two from Aldington to Flint's second wife, Ruth (232, 233), who was Violet's sister. These are relevant because they indicate Aldington's rapidly growing concern in the early 1920s that Flint was on the verge of abandoning creative writing. In this respect, Aldington's fears were well founded; Flint did indeed stop writing poetry, and instead produced translations and occasional critical pieces. The fifth letter, from Aldington to Amy Lowell (83), is included as a special case.

The correspondence as presented here comprises the following:

151 letters from Richard Aldington to:

F.S. Flint (10-15, 18-20, 24-29, 31, 33-36, 39, 40, 43, 47-50, 52, 65, 69, 70, 72, 75, 76, 80, 84-87, 89-92, 101-105, 107, 108, 111, 112, 115, 116, 118-120, 124, 126, 131, 135, 139, 141-143, 145-154, 157-164, 167, 168, 172-177, 179, 180, 182-188, 190-197, 199, 201-209, 211-220, 222-224, 226-231, 234, 236, 238, 240-242, 244-251).

50 letters from Flint to:

Richard Aldington (32, 73, 125, 127);
 Charles Vildrac (5);
 T.E. Hulme (7);
 Paul Claudel (8, 17);
 Robert Frost (9, 130);
 Gaston Gallimard (16);
 Harriet Monroe (37, 46, 54, 56, 61, 67, 71);
 Amy Lowell (30, 38, 55, 57, 59, 64, 66, 113, 128);
 Ezra Pound (22, 41);
 Alec Randall (44);
 Emile Verhaeren (45);
 Margaret C. Anderson (51);
 Edward Hutton (53, 60, 62, 63, 74);
 Harold Monro (58);
 H.W. Massingham (68, 98);
 H.D. (77, 133);
 Naomi Royde-Smith (96);
 J.C. Squire (114, 117);
 Harriet Shaw Weaver (122);
 James Louis Garvin (129);
 André Spire (134, 165);
 Bruce Richmond (170).

47 letters to Flint from:

T.E. Hulme (1);
 Aleister Crowley (2, 3);
 Michael Sadler (4, 140);
 Robert Frost (6);
 Guillaume Apollinaire (21);
 Ford Madox Ford (23, 110, 121, 189, 198, 200, 210, 235);
 Jean de Bosschère (81, 100, 106, 109, 136-138, 145);
 H.D. (42, 78, 88, 93-95);
 John Cournos (79, 82, 97, 99, 123, 155);
 André Spire (132);
 Edward Hutton (156);
 Jean Cocteau (169);
 René Arcos (171, 178);
 Clifford Bax (221);
 T.S. Eliot (225, 237, 239);
 R. Cobden-Sanderson (243);
 Richard Church (252, 253).

2 letters from Aldington to:

Violet Flint (166, 181).

2 letters from Aldington to:

Ruth Flint (232, 233).

1 letter from Aldington to:

Amy Lowell (83).

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The letters span a period of sixteen years, from 1909 to 1925. They thus cover the period when early Anglo-American literary modernism was developing an identity, and also include the Imagist period, in which Aldington and Flint played an important role, the war years, during which both men experienced military service, and, from 1919 onwards, their problematic readjustment to post-war life. The letters illuminate a complex network of literary relationships, the principal one being, of course, between Aldington and Flint, but also between them and other literary figures: English, American, French, and Belgian poets, writers, editors, and publishers. They wrote to like-minded, sympathetic friends, as well as to people they had to negotiate with in order to get their work published, publicised, disseminated, criticised, and, they hoped, properly understood and fairly appreciated. The mutual support and encouragement that

Aldington and Flint gave each other over these years, especially during their occasional bouts of deep depression, is a striking testimony to the closeness of their friendship and to the esteem they had for each other.

Three substantial collections of Aldington's letters have already been published. One charts Aldington's letter-writing life from 1912 to 1962.¹ A second deals with Aldington's relationship with H.D., and covers the years 1918-1961.² The third traces the friendship between Aldington and Lawrence Durrell, from 1933 to 1962.³

The present selection focuses on a much narrower time-span than these three collections, and includes just seven letters from Gates's book (25, 43, 49, 65, 105, 115, 116), but none from the other two. Two letters, (41, 117), were previously published in Christopher Middleton, 'Documents on Imagism from the papers of F.S. Flint' in *The Review*, No. 15 (April 1965), pp. 35-51. Six letters (42, 78, 88, 93-95) were previously published in Cyrena Pondrom, 'Selected Letters from H.D. to F.S. Flint: A Commentary on the Imagist Period', in *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Autumn 1969), pp. 557-586. Two letters (23, 235) were previously published in *The Ford Madox Ford Reader* (edited by Sondra J. Stang). Six letters (110, 121, 189, 198, 200, 210) were previously published in *Letters of Ford Madox Ford* (edited by Richard M. Ludwig). One letter (22) was previously published in *The Letters of Ezra Pound to Alice Corbin Henderson* (edited by Ira B. Nadel). One letter (9) was previously published in *Selected Letters of Robert Frost* (edited by Lawrence Thompson). This, then, is the first time that the remaining 228 letters have been published.

I have opted to retain the letters, or parts of letters, that Aldington and Flint wrote to each other in French, Latin, and Italian in their original versions, and to provide English translations of all such texts because the original language is very much part of each man's personality. Aldington's command of these languages is much less secure than Flint's, but I have not, as a general rule, drawn attention to, or corrected, Aldington's stylistic idiosyncracies (inventions and Anglicisms) or grammatical errors (verb forms, agreements, genders, etc.). All translations from the French are my own.

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1. Norman T. Gates (ed.), *Richard Aldington: An Autobiography in Letters*.
 2. Caroline Zilboorg (ed.). *Richard Aldington & H.D.: Their Lives in Letters, 1918-1961*.
 3. Ian S. MacNiven and Harry T. Moore (eds.), *Literary Lifelines: The Richard Aldington-Lawrence Durrell Correspondence*.