



# The Poetry Of Lord Alfred Douglas: "I am the Love that Dare not Speak its Name"

*Lord Alfred Douglas*

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Lord Alfred Douglas, affectionately known as Bosie was born on October 22nd 1870 and is unfortunately known more for his relationship with Oscar Wilde than for his poetry. Douglas was educated at Winchester and then Magdalen College, Oxford. In the summer of 1891 he was introduced to Oscar Wilde and from there the friendship blossomed to one of lovers. Most of Douglas's homoerotic poetry was written between 1893 and 1896 and appeared in undergraduate literary journals or small circulation magazines. Perhaps his best known work is 'Two Loves' that concludes with "I am the Love that dare not speak its name". In 1895, Douglas's father was sued by Wilde. When the 'Not Guilty' verdict was handed down Wilde was promptly put on trial. After the first was hung he was found guilty at the second and sentenced to two years hard labour. Wilde was to die a broken man in 1900. Soon after that tragic event Douglas renounced his homosexuality and married Olive Custance in 1902 and she bore him a son, Raymond. In 1911 Douglas converted to Roman Catholicism in 1911. He and his wife separated two years later. By his own account, Douglas remained celibate thereafter. From 1907 to 1910, Douglas edited the journal *The Academy*. He revived it again in 1920 and 1921 as *Plain English*. The journal was mildly successful. Editorially, however, it was simply a forum for Douglas's considerable collection of bigotries. A pamphlet libeling Winston Churchill caused him to spend six months in Wormwood Scrubs prison. There he turned again to poetry, writing a sonnet sequence 'In Excelsis'. Douglas spent the remaining twenty-one years of his life quietly, living in Hove or Brighton on allowances provided by his mother and wife.

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