

# The New Criterion

## Features

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### Edwin Muir's journey

by [Robert Richman](#)

On the Scottish poet & his work

In his *Autobiography* (1954), the Scottish poet Edwin Muir expressed bitterness at the late start he got on poetry. "I was thirty-five ... and passing through a stage which, if things had been different, I should have reached ten years earlier. I began to write poetry at thirty-five instead of at twenty-five or twenty." In fact, his *First Poems* was published in 1925, when Muir was thirty-eight. It had been preceded by a ten-year spell of odd jobs, unsettled opinions (Nietzsche, socialism), and unhappy love affairs. He had already produced a volume of aphoristic essays, *We Moderns* (1918), which show Muir under the spell of Nietzsche and which he later disowned. In 1922, on a visit to Dresden with his wife, Muir had a kind of revelation: "I must live over again the years which I had lived wrongly ... everyone should live his life twice, for the first attempt is always blind." The theme of ...

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