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AUDEN DOUBLE NUMBER

Contributors: CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD, LOUIS MACNEICE, STEPHEN SPENDER, GEOFFREY GRIGSON, KENNETH ALLOTT, CECIL DAY LEWIS, HERBERT READ, EDWIN MUIR, EDGELL RICKWORD, ALLEN TATE, Etc.

THE REASON FOR THIS

WE SALUTE IN AUDEN (though we do not forget all that can be said against him) the first English poet for many years who is a poet all the way round. There are angles from which Mr. Eliot seems a ghost and even Mr. Yeats a gleam. Most authors still belong to the 1900 in which Mr. Sturge Moore, one of the spectres attendant on Mr. Yeats, said that "art seeks to reveal beauty, and that contemplation of beauty exhilarates, refines and elevates." Some others stick in those curious years when the limitations of Eliot and Pound were made into a system because their virtues were considerable and rare. But Auden does live in a new day. He is solid enough, poke him where you will, not crumbling like fudge. He is traditional, revolutionary, energetic, inquisitive, critical, and intelligent.

Some of the older living writers, Yeats, Wyndham Lewis and Eliot among them, have recognised this and committed themselves publicly (Lewis in "Blasting and Bombardiering") in Auden's praise. Others are peevish, petty, jealous and silent. But, as this number shows, there are plenty of writers who do recognise Auden's broad power of raising ordinary speech into strong and strange incantation, and do see no reason for waiting to praise and criticise Auden until he has been dead a hundred years.

D O V E R

Steep roads, a tunnel through the downs, are the approaches ;
A ruined pharos overlooks a constructed bay ;
The sea-front is almost elegant ; all this show
Has, somewhere inland, a vague and dirty root :
 Nothing is made in this town.

No, the dominant Norman castle floodlit at night
And the trains that fume in the station built on the sea
Testify to the interests of its regular life.
Here live the experts on what the soldiers want,
 And who the travellers are

Whom the ships carry in and out between the lighthouses
That guard for ever the made privacy of this bay
Like twin stone dogs opposed on a gentleman's gate.
Within these breakwaters English is spoken ; without
 Is the immense improbable atlas.

The eyes of the departing migrants are fixed on the sea
To conjure their special fates from the impersonal water :
'I see an important decision made on a lake,
An illness, a beard, Arabia found in a bed,
 Nanny defeated, money.'

And, filled with the tears of the beaten, or calm with fame,
The eyes of the returning thank the historical cliffs :
'The heart has at last ceased to lie and the clock to accuse.
In the shadow under the yew, at the children's party
 Everything will be explained.'

And the old town with its keep and its Georgian houses
Has built its routine on these unusual moments.
The vows, the tears, the slight emotional signals
Are here eternal and unremarkable gestures
 Like ploughing or soldiers' songs.

The soldiers swarm in the pubs in their pretty clothes,
As fresh and silly as girls from a high-class academy.
The Lion, the Rose, the Crown will not ask them to die,
Not now, not here. All they are killing is time,
 Their pauper civilian future.

Above them, expensive and lovely as a rich child's toy,
The aeroplanes fly in the new European air,
On the edge of that air that makes England of little
 importance,
And the tides warn bronzing bathers of a cooling star
 With half its history done.

High over France, the full moon, cold and exciting,
Like one of those dangerous flatterers one meets and loves
When one is very unhappy, returns the human stare.
The night has many recruits. For thousands of pilgrims
 The Mecca is coldness of heart.

And the cry of the gulls at dawn is sad like work.
The soldier guards the traveller who pays for the soldier.
Each one prays for himself in the dusk, and neither
Controls the years. Some are temporary heroes.
 Some of these people are happy.

W. H. AUDEN.

SOME NOTES ON AUDEN'S EARLY POETRY

If I were told to introduce a reader to the poetry of W. H. Auden, I should begin by asking him to remember three things :

First, that Auden is essentially a scientist : perhaps I should add, ' a schoolboy scientist.' He has, that is to say, the scientific training and the scientific interests of a very intelligent schoolboy. He has covered the groundwork, but doesn't propose to go any further : he has no intention of specialising. Nevertheless, he has acquired the scientific outlook and technique of approach ; and this is really all he needs for his writing.

Second, that Auden is a musician and a ritualist. As a child, he enjoyed a high Anglican upbringing, coupled with a sound musical education. The Anglicanism has evaporated, leaving only the height : he is still much preoccupied with ritual, in all its forms. When we collaborate, I have to keep a sharp eye on him—or down flop the characters on their knees (see ' F.6.' passim) : another constant danger is that of choral interruptions by angel-voices. If Auden had his way, he would turn every play into a cross between grand opera and high mass.

Third, that Auden is a Scandinavian. The Auden family came originally from Iceland. Auden himself was brought up on the sagas, and their influence upon his work has been profound.

Auden began writing poetry comparatively late ; when he had already been several terms at his public school. At our prep-school, he showed no literary interests whatever : his ambition was to become a mining-engineer. His first poems, unlike Stephen Spender's, were competent but entirely imitative : Hardy, Thomas and Frost were his models :

THE CARTER'S FUNERAL

*Sixty odd years of poaching and drink
And rain-sodden waggons with scarcely a friend,
Chained to this life ; rust fractures a link,
So the end.*

*Sexton at last has pressed down the loam,
He blows on his fingers and prays for the sun,
Parson unvests and turns to his home,
Duty done.*

*Little enough stays musing upon
The passing of one of the masters of things,
Only a bird looks peak-faced on,
Looks and sings.*

ALLENDALE

*The smelting-mill stack is crumbling, no smoke is alive there,
Down in the valley the furnace no lead ore of worth burns ;
Now tombs of decaying industries, not to strive there
Many more earth-turns.*

*The chimney still stands at the top of the hill like a finger
Skywardly pointing as if it were asking : ' What lies there ?'
And thither we stray to dream of those things as we linger,
Nature denies here.*

*Dark looming around the fell-folds stretch desolate, crag-scarred,
Seeming to murmur : ' Why beat you the bars of your prison ?'
What matter ? To us the world-face is glowing and flag-starred,
Lit by a vision.*

*So under it stand we, all swept by the rain and the wind there,
Muttering : ' What look you for, creatures that die in a season ?'
We care not, but turn to our dreams and the comfort we find there,
Asking no reason.*

The saga-world is a schoolboy world, with its feuds, its practical jokes, its dark threats conveyed in puns and riddles and under-statements : ' I think this day will end unluckily for some ; but chiefly for those who least expect harm.' I once remarked to Auden that the atmosphere of *Gisli the Outlaw* very much reminded me of our schooldays. He was pleased with the idea : and, soon after this, he produced his first play : *Paid on Both Sides*, in

which the two worlds are so inextricably confused that it is impossible to say whether the characters are really epic heroes or only members of a school O.T.C.

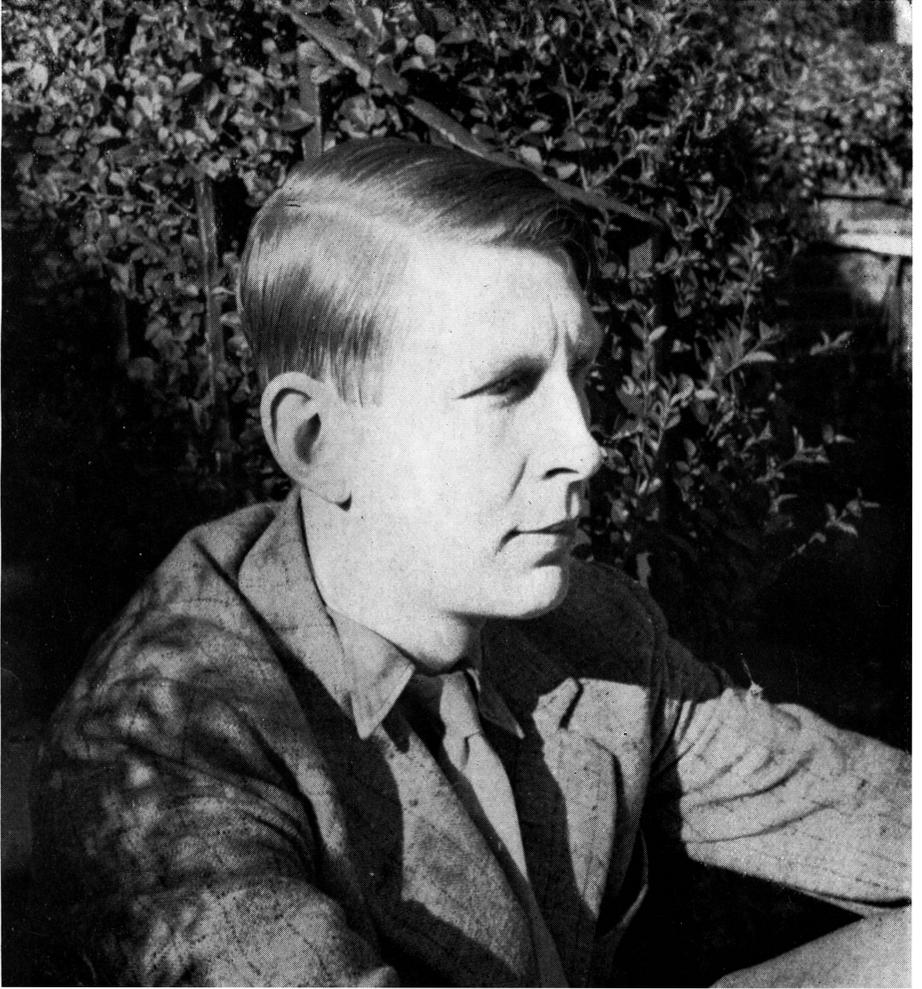
Auden is, and always has been, a most prolific writer. Problems of form and technique seem to bother him very little. You could say to him: 'Please write me a double ballade on the virtues of a certain brand of toothpaste, which also contains' at least ten anagrams on the names of well-known politicians, and of which the refrain is as follows. . . .' Within twenty-four hours, your ballade would be ready—and it would be good.

When Auden was younger, he was very lazy. He hated polishing and making corrections. If I didn't like a poem, he threw it away and wrote another. If I liked one line, he would keep it and work it into a new poem. In this way, whole poems were constructed which were simply anthologies of my favourite lines, entirely regardless of grammar or sense. This is the simple explanation of much of Auden's celebrated obscurity.

While Auden was up at Oxford, he read T. S. Eliot. The discovery of *The Waste Land* marked a turning-point in his work—for the better, certainly; though the earliest symptoms of Eliot-influence were most alarming. Like a patient who has received an over-powerful inoculation, Auden developed a severe attack of allusions, jargonitis and private jokes. He began to write lines like: *Inexorable Rembrandt rays that stab . . .* or *'Love mutual has reached its first eutectic . . .'* Nearly all the poems of that early Eliot period are now scrapped.

In 1928, Spender, who had a private press, printed a little orange paper volume of Auden's poems. (This booklet, limited to 'about 45 copies,' is now a bibliophile's prize: the mis-prints alone are worth about ten shillings each.) Most of the poems were reprinted two years later, when Messrs. Faber and Faber published the first edition of their Auden volume: here is one of the few which were not:

*Consider if you will how lovers stand
In brief adherence, straining to preserve
Too long the suction of good-bye: others,
Less clinically-minded, will admire
An evening like a coloured photograph,
A music stultified across the water.*



WYSTAN AUDEN

*The desert opens here, and if, though we
Have ligatured the ends of a farewell,
Sporadic heartburn show in evidence
Of love uneconomically slain,
It is for the last time, the last look back,
The heel upon the finishing blade of grass,
To dazzling cities of the plain where lust
Threatened a sinister rod, and we shall turn
To our study of stones, to split Eve's apple,
Absorbed, content if we can say 'because';
Unanswerable like any other pedant,
Like Solomon and Sheba, wrong for years.*

I think this poem illustrates very clearly Auden's state of mind at that period: in this respect, its weakness is its virtue. Auden was very busy trying to regard things 'clinically,' as he called it. Poetry, he said, must concern itself with shapes and volumes. Colours and smells were condemned as romantic: Form alone was significant. Auden loathed (and still rather dislikes) the Sea—for the Sea, besides being deplorably wet and sloppy, is formless. (Note 'ligatured'—a typical specimen of the 'clinical' vocabulary.)

Another, and even more powerful influence upon Auden's early work was non-literary in its origin—in 1929, during a visit to Berlin, he came into contact with the doctrines of the American psychologist, Homer Lane. (Cf. Auden's own account of this, in his *Letter to Lord Byron*, Part Four.) Auden was particularly interested in Lane's theories of the psychological causes of disease—if you refuse to make use of your creative powers, you grow a cancer instead, etc. References to these theories can be found in many of the early poems, and, more generally, in *The Orators*. Lane's teachings provide a key to most of the obscurities in the *Journal of an Airman* (Mr. John Layard, one of Lane's most brilliant followers, has pointed out the psychological relationship between epilepsy and the idea of flight.)

The first collaboration between Auden and myself was in a play called *The Enemies of a Bishop*. The Bishop is the hero of the play: he represents sanity, and is an idealised portrait of Lane himself. His enemies are the pseudo-healers, the wilfully ill and the mad. The final curtain goes down on his complete victory. The play was no more than a charade, very loosely put together

and full of private jokes. We revised the best parts of it and used them again, five years later, in *The Dog Beneath the Skin*.

It is typical of Auden's astonishing adaptability that, after two or three months in Berlin, he began to write poems in German. Their style can be best imagined by supposing that a German writer should attempt a sonnet-sequence in a mixture of Cockney and Tennysonian English, without being able to command either idiom. A German critic of great sensibility to whom I afterwards showed these sonnets was much intrigued. He assured me that their writer was a poet of the first rank, despite his absurd grammatical howlers. The critic himself had never heard of Auden and was certainly quite unaware of his English reputation.

The scenery of Auden's early poetry is, almost invariably, mountainous. As a boy, he visited Westmorland, the Peak District of Derbyshire, and Wales. For urban scenery, he preferred the industrial Midlands; particularly in districts where an industry is decaying. His romantic travel-wish was always towards the North. He could never understand how anybody could long for the sun, the blue sky, the palm-trees of the South. His favourite weather was autumnal; high wind and driving rain. He loved industrial ruins, a disused factory or an abandoned mill: a ruined abbey would leave him quite cold. He has always had a special feeling for caves and mines. At school, one of his favourite books was Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*.

A final word about Influences—or perhaps I should say, crazes. For Auden is deeply rooted in the English tradition, and his debt to most of the great writers of the past is too obvious to need comment here. The crazes were all short-lived: they left plenty of temporary damage but few lasting traces. The earliest I remember was for Edwin Arlington Robinson. It found expression in about half a dozen poems (all scrapped) and notably in some lines about 'a Shape' in an Irish mackintosh which malice urges but friendship forbids me to quote. Then came Emily Dickinson. You will find her footprints here and there among the earlier poems: for example,

*Nor sorrow take
His endless look.*

Then Bridges published *The Testament of Beauty*, and Auden wrote the poem beginning: 'Which of you waking early and watch-

ing daybreak . . .' which appeared in the first Faber edition, but was removed from later impressions. Finally, there was Hopkins : but, by this time, Auden's literary digestive powers were stronger : he made a virtue of imitation, and produced the brilliant parody-ode to a rugger fifteen which appears at the end of *The Orators*.

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD.

OXFORD TO COMMUNISM

I first knew Auden during his last year and my first year at Oxford. Then he had a rather sinister public reputation for keeping a revolver in his desk and for working at midday in artificial light with all the blinds of his room drawn. He had comparatively few friends, but I believe he influenced them greatly ; perhaps more in the conduct of their lives than in their work. Amongst these were Cecil Day Lewis and Rex Warner. I may add that, although Auden's, Day Lewis's and my name have been linked together ever since the publication of *New Signatures*, I had never met Day Lewis or read any of his work until some time after my own *Poems* were published : so that if there is a common factor in Day Lewis and me, it must be the influence of Auden.

When I was at Oxford, I did not understand Auden's poems, yet they gripped my imagination, and, although I have a very bad memory for poetry, I found myself involuntarily remembering lines and phrases of his. It was something analytical, objective, self-consciously clinical, deliberately impersonal which fascinated me. In those days, his fantasies of the necessary impersonality of poets led him at once to a distrust of politics and to extravagance. I remember him once saying that " the poet " would " enjoy," in a civil war, lying on a roof and shooting at his best friend, who was on the other side. I was always interested in politics, but his interests were poetry, psycho-analysis and medicine. I think he disapproved of my politics, just as, at that time, he disapproved of my writing prose or going to concerts to hear classical music.

Auden " arrived at " politics, by way of psychology. His early poems begin by being preoccupied with neurosis in individuals,

but this gradually extends (at the time when he had left Oxford and gone to live in Berlin) to an interest in the epoch and capitalist society. At first though this interest was clinical ; he was content to state what he beautifully and profoundly saw without implying an attitude or a remedy.

Yet the strength of socialism or communism and its appeal to the poet lies in the fact that the mere statement of social realities today, if it goes far enough, both suggests a remedy and involves one in taking sides. For example, in post-war and pre-Hitler Berlin, one began by noticing symptoms of decadence, suffering and unemployment ; one looked further and one saw beneath the decay of the liberal state, the virulent reaction of the Nazis and the struggle for a new life of the Communists. The one side stood for the suppression of the very objectivity which the poet required, perhaps also his life, certainly his intellectual standards ; the other, however painful and disillusioning its birth pangs, promised finally a world in which one could see and tell the truth.

From the point of view of the working-class movement the ultimate criticism of Auden and the poets associated with him is that we haven't deliberately and consciously transferred ourselves to the working class. The subject of his poetry is the struggle, but the struggle seen, as it were, by someone who whilst living in one camp, sympathises with the other ; a struggle in fact which while existing externally is also taking place within the mind of the poet himself, who remains a bourgeois. This argument is put very forcibly by Christopher Caudwell in the last chapter of his book *Illusion and Reality*. Whilst accepting its validity as a critical attitude, may we not say that the position of the writer who sees the conflict as something which is at once subjective to himself and having its external reality in the world—the position outlined in Auden's Spain—is one of the most creative, realistic and valid positions for the artist in our time ?

STEPHEN SPENDER.

LETTER TO W. H. AUDEN

October 21st, 1937.

DEAR WYSTAN,

I have to write you a letter in a great hurry and so it would be out of the question to try to assess your importance. I take it that you are important and, before that, that poetry itself is important. Poets are not legislators (what is an "unacknowledged legislator" anyway?), but they put facts and feelings in italics, which makes people think about them and such thinking may in the end have an outcome in action.

Poets have different methods of italicisation. What are yours? What is it in your poetry which shakes people up?

It is, I take it, a freshness—sometimes of form, sometimes of content, usually of both. You are very fertile in pregnant and unusual phrases and have an aptitude for stark and compelling texture. With regard to content, the subject-matter of your poems is always interesting and it is a blessing to our generation, though one in the eye for Bloomsbury, that you discharged into poetry the subject-matters of psycho-analysis, politics and economics. Mr. Eliot brought back ideas into poetry but he uses the ideas, say, of anthropology more academically and less humanly than you use Marx or Groddeck. This is because you are always taking sides.

It may be bad taste to take sides but it is a more vital habit than the detachment of the pure aesthete. The taunt of being a school-boy (which, when in the mood, I should certainly apply myself) is itself a compliment because it implies that you expect the world and yourself to develop. This expectation inevitably seems vulgar to that bevy of second-rate sensitive minds who write in our cultured weeklies.

"Other philosophies have described the world; our business is to change it." Add that if we are not interested in changing it, there is really very little to describe. There is just an assortment of heterogeneous objects to make Pure Form out of.

You go to extremes, of course, but that is all to the good. There is still a place in the sun for the novels of Virginia Woolf, for still-life painting and for the nature-lover. But these would probably not survive if you and your like, who have no use for them, did not plump entirely for something different.

Like most poets you are limited. Your poems are strongly physical but not fastidiously physical. This is what I should expect from someone who does not like flowers in his room.

Your return to a versification in more regular stanzas and rhymes is, I think, a very good thing. The simple poem, however, does not always wear too well. At first sight we are very pleased to get the swing of it so easily and understand it so quickly, but after first acquaintance it sometimes grows stale. A. E. Housman, whom I join you in admiring, was a virtuoso who could get away with cliché images and hymn-tune metres, but, as you would, I think, admit, his methods are not suitable to anyone who has a creed which is either profound or elaborate.

I am therefore a little doubtful about your present use of the ballad form. It is very good fun but it does not seem to me to be your *natural* form as I doubt if you can put over what you want to say in it. Of course if you can put over half of what you want to say to a thousand people, that may well be better than putting over two thirds of it to a hundred people. But I hope that you will not start writing down to the crowd for, if you write down far enough, you will have to be careful to give them nothing that they don't know already and then your own end will be defeated. Compromise is necessary here, as always, in poetry.

I think you have shown great sense in not writing "proletarian" stuff (though some reviewers, who presumably did not read your poems, have accused you of it). You realise that one must write about what one knows. One may not hold the bourgeois creed, but if one knows only bourgeois one must write about them. They all after all contain the germ of their opposite. It is an excellent thing (lie quiet Ezra, Cambridge, Gordon Square, with your pure images, pure cerebration, pure pattern, your scrap-albums of ornament torn eclectically from history) that you should have written poems about preparatory schools. Some of the Pure Poets maintained that one could make poems out of anything, but on the ground, not that subject was important, but that it didn't matter. You also would admit that anything can go into poetry, but the poet must first be interested in the thing in itself.

As for poetic drama, you are now swinging away from the Queer Play. This, like the formal change in your lyrics, is also a good thing and also has its danger. But the danger is not so great for you as it would be for some. Whatever the shape of your work,

it will always have ideas in it. Still, when authors like Denis Johnston, who can write excellent straight plays, feel impelled to go over to crooked plays and "poetic writing," there must be some good reason for it and it may appear perverse in you to forget your birthright and pass them in the opposite direction to a realism which may not be much more natural to you than poetry is to them.

These are the criticisms which occur to me at the moment. I have no time to expand on your virtues, but I must say that what I especially admire in you is your unflagging curiosity about people and events. Poetry is related to the sermon and you have your penchant for preaching, but it is more closely related to conversation and you, my dear, if any, are a born gossip.

Yours ever,

LOUIS MACNEICE.

AUDEN AS A MONSTER

Auden does not fit. Auden is no gentleman. Auden does not write, or exist, by any of the codes, by the Bloomsbury rules, by the Hampstead rules, by the Oxford, the Cambridge, or the Russell Square rules. Auden writes about boys at school. Auden bites his nails. Auden uses rhyme. Auden uses any kind of form. Auden does not dislike A. E. Housman. Auden resembles Kipling more than he resembles William Carlos Williams. Auden prefers Daumier to Mondrian. Auden would sooner read the Laxdœla saga than "The Waves." And so on.

Auden is a monster :

*The sad and bearded fires, the monsters fair,
The prodigies appearing in the air . . .*

It is a long time since an able monster has been included among English poets, and since monsters are beings extremely difficult to measure up or confine, I shall only write a little about a monstrous quality in Auden's verse. One of the most frequent images used by Auden is the image of the frontier, the line between

the known and the feared, the past and the future, and the conscious and everything beyond control, the region of society and the region of trolls and hulders (and Goebbelses). Auden lives very much in this frightening border territory (Dover is a border town). The uses of it as a symbol, at the present time, are so obvious that I do not understand why so many of Auden's critics—even Mr. Edgell Rickword—so incongruously treat it as the consequence *only*, and the expression *only*, of Auden's middle-class position.

There is much of it in one of the poems by Auden I like best—*The Witnesses* (it would be worth while working out just why this poem has been scrapped). I read "The Witnesses" once in a paper on Auden to a women's club. Afterwards a Russian woman in exile came up, much excited and moved :

*And the bolt is sliding in its groove
Outside the window is the black remov-
er's van,
And now with sudden swift emergence
Come the women in dark glasses, the hump-backed surgeons
And the scissor-man*

This is Auden on the dangerous side of the frontier, and the woman held her hands together tightly, and said how it reminded her of a Russian poem in which a child is ill in a room. By the window a clock is tick-tocking, with a long pendulum. The moment the dwarf comes to the window, and puts his hand in, and catches hold of the pendulum, the child dies. If you are neither a poet just of form and ideas—an "embodied mind" is the only mind we know and Auden would agree that "Man's spirit will be flesh-bound when found at best"—nor a poet just of objects, then you can be most effective if you are able to combine two "magics," if you are able to combine images of the frontier with the right incantation, symbol with sound :

*In his green den the murmuring seal
Close by his sleek companion lies. . . .*

*The cocks did crow to-who, to-who
And the sun did shine so cold !*

Coleridge noticed a passage in Scott's *Pirate*, "Many prodigious stories of these marine monsters (the Kraken and the sea-snake) . . . were then universally received among the Zetlanders, whose descendants have not as yet by any means abandoned faith in them," and he wrote in the margin "No wonder! for I believe in the Sea-snake; Robert Southey in the Kraken; and Linnæus in both." Auden believes in the troll:

*Starving through the leafless wood
Trolls run scolding for their food;
And the nightingale is dumb,
And the angel will not come;*

and no doubt, if the belief fitted them, he and Coleridge and Southey would equally have believed in Eskimo eye-goblins whose eyes open from top to bottom. There is something about Auden of the benign wizard casting out devils, but enjoying the devils and the wizardry.

If Auden was only a monstrous (if you like call it "romantic") phrase or line or passage maker, there would not be much more to say about him. Then he would be small and simple, and patchy, like Christopher Smart, or Clare, or Darley or Edward Thomas. The frontier images are natural to Auden, but Auden is an energetic intelligent explorer who is always filling himself with observations and ideas, and so he uses images of the kind deliberately as well well as naturally. Also he can manage patterns and forms, and so one of his best poems can produce the full effect of poetry. If you have, then, a medical, moral and practical view, more or less, about the arts, if art is a releaser of tension, something which cleans and polishes up the raggedness of the soul, something which "can help us immensely by casting light upon the ground on which we stand, and dissolving by its warmth the cold mist of indifference and unconscious falsehood in which we are all more or less enclosed," then you must find Auden perhaps the most valuable poet alive.

Mr. Herbert Read complains further on in this number that in Auden's work there is "a backsliding in the technique of verse," that "artificial verse [but is there a natural verse?] is only worth doing if done supremely well, as by Pope," that Auden apes the antics of Kipling and Byron. The liberation of verse form, he thinks, from Blake through Whitman and Lawrence has something

to do with political, moral and intellectual liberation. This is not easy to understand. Strict verse form has never made anyone a worse poet. If there is liberation, there is also anarchy. Human physiology has not changed, and rhythmical repetitions and variations are as much desired by us now as by Esquimaux or Melanesians. It is hard to see (i) how liberation could go any further, or just continue, (ii) how Auden's monstrous image-making could work in "liberated" forms, which are all very well for generalising statements or simple statements with little more than their first meaning. When Lawrence is a good image-maker and is most moved by what he is saying, he is least free in his form, as in the *Ballad of Another Ophelia*.

Peace be with Mr. Read, but he reminds me in his complaint of Carl Sandburg, one of whose favourite remarks is said to be "Think what Shakespeare could have done with the emotion behind the sonnets if he had been free, not bound by any verse form."

Also I am glad that people disparage Auden by means of Kipling. It is a compliment. Kipling was an Auden gone wrong. (When I read *Danny Deever* the other day I thought just how Auden would have made it exactly right.) The fault of the celebrated Kipling was not exuberance or energy. It was falsity of premiss, cheapness of feeling, atrophy of morals, mistraining of intellect and inefficiency of technique. Kipling was a remarkable human being wrong, Auden is a remarkable human being right, more or less; many worse poets than Auden who are "better" poets than Kipling are only pencils and pens.

Auden does not obey the codes. But when a monster who writes so much is so fidgety and inquisitive, so interested in things and ideas, so human and generous, and so rude to the infinite, it does not matter at all if the lines of his development are twisted and obscure, if he writes plenty of verse which is slack, ordinary, dull, or silly, or if for a year, or two, he seems to be no poet at all. I wish some critics of Auden would remember this. One expects ignorance and impudence from *Evening Standard* reviewers (Mr. Howard Spring wrote "Mr. W. H. Auden, I understand, is a celebrated young man. Mr. Louis MacNeice, I believe, is also not unknown to juvenile cognoscenti") or scurfy rudeness from an old bull like Mr. St. John Irvine, but the authors of the malignant and silly ineptitudes thrown from Cambridge and the

weeklies are educated men: *The Ascent of F6* "should be very successful, but it looks unpleasantly like the end of Auden's talent." A wet day in April is not the end of the summer. Will these proud persons look through the collected writings of good poets or the paintings and sketches of good painters? Then they will know that life is not over at thirty, that great men can at times be as otiose and empty as if they lacked all their abilities.

It is much to Auden's honour that he is so entirely and successfully a poet. Coleridge said about Milton that "the age in which the foundations of his mind were laid was congenial to it as one golden aera of profound erudition and individual genius." The era in which Auden has grown up has been one of bewildered mediocrity, triviality and fudge.

GEOFFREY GRIGSON.

AUDEN IN THE THEATRE

"We should leave theory about the contemporary drama until we have produced some contemporary drama to theorise about."

I do not believe that the dramatic pieces of Auden, or of Auden and Isherwood, are good plays: but *The Dog Beneath the Skin* and *The Ascent Of F6* are exciting and interesting (if mainly for irrelevant reasons) and as good plays as we can expect to see on the English stage today. I am not going to use the yardstick of Shakespeare to beat Auden with—as Humphrey Jennings did in the special theatre number of *New Verse*.* I want to show that the plays would be better if Auden and Isherwood were free of certain pre-conceptions. I am sure Auden is a good poet. I am equally sure that he is a wrong-headed dramatist.

A word about *Paid on Both Sides* and *The Dance Of Death*—Auden's solo flights in the vacuum of the modern theatre. Isherwood explains the genesis of the former. It is fun to act (I suppose), but too puzzling for anything except an audience of personal friends—this frame of mind is not one you can reasonably

* The projection of horrid self into hateful works is true of any play or novel or poem ever written. It is a matter of how consciously the thing is done, and of the size and amiability of the resulting world.

expect "anybody" to assume. It is written in the telegraphese of Auden's early period: a clipped utterance, without colour, without amazing news. The Manchester Guardian dialect of the *Poems* as against the Daily Express gaiety of *Look, Stranger! The Dance of Death* is what the Group Theatre imagines to be "good theatre." It satisfies all Auden's precepts for drama printed in a Group Theatre programme. There is a myth, acting in the auditorium, plenty of dancing and dance lyrics. I think it is the worst thing Auden has done.

The precepts. They are an attempt to define what areas of experience can be realised on the stage. Like the Thirty-Nine Articles these dogmas often contradict each other. They are best considered as the Auden antithesis to current theatrical superstitions—nothing in the theatre rises to a belief—e.g., that the realistic theatre is the only one, that gesture and rhetoric are funny in themselves, that Gielgud is a good actor. "Drama is essentially an art of the body." Auden means acting. "Drama began as the act of a whole community. Ideally there would be no spectators." This is a matter of degree of attention. A man may participate in and be a spectator of different parts of a single play. Even at High Mass (community drama in excelsis) the most recollected come down to earth as the plate goes round, when the drama is broken for the sermon, when a dog runs up the aisle. Origins are not always helpful. Must we strum a ukulele as we read *The Witnesses*, because Jubal struck the corded shell?

The Way of the World and *The Cherry-Orchard* (best plays by Congreve and Tchekov) were flops. The success of *Murder In The Cathedral* and the Auden plays is due to the fact that they are "modern" and "experimental." Leave experiment to stagehands and phoneys like Gordon Craig. A play which needs an oval stage is probably a bad play. No good dramatist has ever gone outside the dramatic conventions of his time. N.B. Almost every good dramatist has opposed the dramatic taste of his own day. This is quite another matter.

Auden would leave documentation to films, character to the novel. The theatre should deal with the familiar stories of the generation (We should know what is going to happen next). Characters should be simplified and over life-size. This is conceding too much. The real limitations of the stage are that it is dangerous

to monkey with space (and to a less degree with time) without the sacrifice of illusion. A true objection of genre can be made against *The Ascent Of F6*, where B.B.C. announcers, the Press and the Government are part of a sub-plot (Mr. and Mrs. A are a chorus) only linked to the main action because Sir James (the Colonial Office) and Michael (Hero) are brothers. Graphically the play is a phrase of morse—a series of dots and dashes representing a broken continuity line. This is film technique.

The lack of character-drawing is plain in the poverty of the speeches between Michael and his mother in the Lakeland inn. Stagmantle, Lady Isabel (née Houston) and the General are broad, adequate caricatures, but the main characters are only mouth-pieces for poor rhetoric. "I have no purpose but to see you happy . . . James! Was there no other name you could remember . . . ?"

In *The Dog Beneath The Skin* (graphically a straight line) Auden makes up for lack of character-drawing (1) by the caricatures being an integral part of the picaresque progress—there is no plot, (2) by his excellent understanding of *things*—e.g., in the choruses:

Paddington. King's Cross. Euston. Liverpool Street.
Each hiding behind a Gothic hotel its gigantic greenhouse.

(Trains are much more real to Auden than people. Cf. the commentary to *Night Mail* with its pleasing anthropomorphism.)

"I cannot believe," says Auden, "that any artist can be good who is not more than a bit of a reporting journalist." I agree with this and I appreciate the speech about Sudoland by the B.B.C. lecturer, the chatter of medical students in *The Dog Beneath The Skin*: but they gainsay Auden's statement that the theatre should leave documentation to the film. They are pure documentary, like much of *The Orators*.

"The familiar stories of our generation" are not yet myths. Cocteau uses classical myth, Yeats Irish heroic legend, for the support given by tradition and to reduce surprise—old wine in new bottles. The search for an heir, and the Everest expedition, are only in the process of becoming myths *in the plays*. We cannot foresee the endings. We can only guess them. It is new wine.

The Ascent of F6 is poorer entertainment than *The Dog Beneath*

The Skin. The latter has some of the life of a good musical-comedy and it has the advantage of Auden's magnificent choruses. The plays justify themselves by the poetry they evoke. A situation is an excuse for a poem for which it would be hard to find an excuse in the economy of life outside the stage-door. N.B. This is not parallel to liking the plays of Yeats for the songs they contain. The insignificance of character in some of Yeats' plays is fully justified (1) by the distance of the fable from reality, (2) by the element of formal plot. Aristotle v. Coleridge. Auden's plays, like most Elizabethan and Jacobean plays, invite the realistic criterion. William Archer and "the naughty life-forcer in the Norfolk jacket" are as often right as wrong in attacking Webster or Shakespeare. *The Ascent Of F6*, although poorer entertainment, is a better play than *The Dog Beneath The Skin* because, for one thing, the conflict is kept steadily in view all the time. In the earlier play there is no actual conflict till the discovery of Francis.

The Dog Beneath The Skin : man and society.

The Ascent Of F6 : man and his own conscience.

Cheaply, Marxist man and Freudian man.

The Dog Beneath The Skin has several very effective scenes : the hero undressing the dummy (excuse for a superb epithalamium), the palace executions of the workers to church music, the Destructive Desmond cabaret turn (echoing "Which shall I release unto you? Christ or Barabbas?"). It is interesting that in production the last two scenes were omitted, the point of the first stupidly missed by the substitution of a real woman.

The thesis of the second play gives less opportunity for twopence-coloured scenes. Three scenes are of importance : the interview with the mother, the interview with the abbot, the interview between Ransom and his own fears—the subjective nature of the last scene is suggested by the repetition of scraps of previously used dialogue, a device employed extremely well in the brothel scenes of *Ulysses* and here adapted to the cruder substance of the stage.

Of course we have not seen the plays yet. The Group Theatre productions have been notable only for slack production, poorish acting and too much art and craftiness. Mr. Rupert Doone claims "I serve art in the Gothic mode." So did Pugin. If Auden and Isherwood would only forget that they are amateurs, would only remember that, however little they may know about

the theatre, all actors and most producers know less, their plays would begin to become expert.

I have an idea that poets still feel uneasy in the theatre, and still trust some "man of the theatre" to put them right about craftsmanship.

KENNETH ALLOTT.

AUDEN AND POLITICS

Auden expresses, more poetically than any of his contemporaries, the feeling of insecurity that afflicts a section of the middle-classes as the ceaseless concentration of capital into fewer hands undermines their comparatively privileged position. His early verse prophesies and threatens the imminent downfall of a system which has become inimical to good living. Ruined boys, handsome and diseased youngsters, stupid valetudinarians, implacable gangsters in a meaningless feud, these are some of the symbols that haunt his first volume of poems. They show the impact of after-the-war reality in a certain environment on the dream-world of the growing boy.

"Ours was a Renaissance, we were going to have lovely fun," but something has happened; that world of culture, of the free exercise of the mind and body which seems a possibility for those brought up in a well-to-do household, has collapsed, and the poet sees round him only deadly dullness or cocktail corruption. His whole dream cannot be salvaged, so he jettisons the need for intellectual standards: "Knowledge no need to us . . ." (Poem xviii.) and in "The Orators"

*Living in one place with a satisfied face
All of the women and most of the men
Shall work with their hands and not think again . . .*

I don't for a moment suggest that Auden followed out the implications of that last couplet, the essence of Nazi demagogy with its degradation of women and regimentation of the "Strength through Joy" variety. Perhaps that is to take a "mere poem" too

seriously, for Auden has expressed his detestation of Fascism definitely enough, but his failure to analyse the social movement which so profoundly affects his work often leads him into emotionally irresponsible statements. In his poem "Spain" he says :

*To-day the expending of powers
On the flat ephemeral pamphlet and the boring meeting,*

which is an extraordinary example of what used to be accepted as the aloofness proper to the intellectual, in one who has recently been to Spain and had the opportunity of observing the immense vitality which the people are bringing to the task of simultaneously defeating the invaders and creating a free culture. "To-day the struggle, to-morrow the poetry and the fun," that attitude of Auden's would be completely incomprehensible to the Spanish intellectuals to-day.

The setting-up of a pamphlet-poem antagonism, *i.e.*, social struggle *versus* inner struggle, is a reflection of the poet's continuing isolation, falsifying the perspective of social development and delaying the re-integration of the poet into the body of society. It is that need of re-integration, I feel, which underlies the neurotic character of the dramas Auden and Isherwood write, and they are really evading the issue by tackling the problem in psychological terms.

The lyric grace of Auden's later poems is achieved at the expense of that sensuous consciousness of social change which made his early poems such exciting discoveries. Auden is too good a poet to fall back into the simple exploration of individuality, after having originated a poetry of the social type along the lines of which there are so many fertile experiments to be made.

EDGELL RICKWORD.

SIXTEEN COMMENTS ON AUDEN

EDWIN MUIR

Auden has imaginative and intellectual power, moral passion, and wit. I should range his gifts in that order. His imagination, which is mainly grotesque, is, I think, of the finest quality, his intellect subtle but circumscribed, his moral passion less subtle and more circumscribed, and his wit of a lower order altogether. Where the first three qualities come together, his poetry has the natural fullness and intensity of major poetry. His intellectual view of the contemporary world is, nevertheless, I think, vitiated by fashion and mass feeling, and his morality a morality of emergency, derived from that view; on the other hand his imaginative picture of the world always strikes me by its profound truth. I often find myself therefore disagreeing with his particular statements, while assenting to something beneath them. It may be that he belongs in too particular a sense to his age, but such direct control of language and boldness of imagination are given only to poets of genius.

GEORGE BARKER

I like Auden's work because it exhilarates me in a way which height, ozone, speed, love, drink, and violent exercise do not: I mean it has the singular effect of poetry upon my senses. I dislike aspects of it because behind or through the poetry I discern a clumsy interrogatory finger questioning me about my matriculation certificate, my antecedents and my annual income. I sense also a sort of general conspiratorial wink being made behind my back to a young man who sometimes has the name Christopher, sometimes Stephen, sometimes Derek and sometimes Wystan. Briefly I criticise its snobbery of clique—which in itself is not much, but which indicates a definitely restricted angle of glance at things.

This, however, seems to matter not much in the long run, since I find that in reading a good or goodish poem by Auden my responses experience an exhilaration and excitement in a way, as I say, which only poetry, and by this I mean calling things felicitous names, can give.

FREDERIC PROKOSCH

The big thing about Auden is the quality of his memory. The roots of all poetry, presumably, dwell in memory: in Auden's case, the memory is of an oddly limitless and invigorating kind. It constitutes a sort of "negative capability"—at any point the impulse, the thought, calls forth a whole vista of objects—phrases from other poets (even Shakespeare), fears, hallucinations, aspirations. Sometimes this gives a surrealist sheen to his poetry, more often to his prose. But the mode of resuscitation is the opposite of that employed by surrealists, as far as I can see: not the process but the stimulus is important, the unity of the décor and not the discordance.

He does, thus, juxtapose tradition and actuality in a startling and often moving fashion. The process is dangerous; but he, more than anyone I know, has created for himself a fairly natural and decently authentic, if wildly uneven, path between past and present. The future is always intruding, of course, and always unsolved (*v.* the bad endings to his plays, the badness of the Iceland book). There is something a bit wrong about it all, I suspect: and he knows it: the feelings of guilt, of withdrawal, of self-pity, of hysteria, creep in. There are technical dangers too—glibness, theatricality, cocksureness, opportunism, laziness—to put it harshly. But the talents are really immense.

DAVID GASCOYNE

There is such a thing as lyrical complacency, lyrical irresponsibility. It would be a great deal better for poetry, for both its readers and its writers, if nine out of every ten contemporary poets became silent. W. H. Auden is one of the rare exceptions.

The traditional wisdom of the poet is that of one who stands outside; it is "unfairly" won; and, though vaguely comforting, impractical. As soon as the purely lyrical poet becomes implicated in real life, he loses this wisdom, to find that what he has learnt through struggle, instead of grasped through intuition, he cannot write about. W. H. Auden is one of the rare exceptions.

One has only to compare such widely varied poems as "A Bride in the 30's," "Casino," and "Spain," for instance, with the efforts of most of Auden's contemporaries to deal critically and con-

structively with other people's problems, or even with their own, to see that strength of character and depth of experience are inseparable, ultimately, from important poetry. Without them, poetry may be ravishingly beautiful, but *merely* decorative, *merely* lyrical.

DYLAN THOMAS

I sometimes think of Mr. Auden's poetry as a hygiene, a knowledge and practice, based on a brilliantly prejudiced analysis of contemporary disorders, relating to the preservation and promotion of health, a sanitary science and a flusher of melancholies. I sometimes think of his poetry as a great war, admire intensely the mature, religious, and logical fighter, and deprecate the boy bushranger.

I think he is a wide and deep poet, and that his first narrow angles, of pedantry and careful obscurity, are worn almost all away. I think he is as technically sufficient, and as potentially productive of greatness, as any poet writing in English. He makes Mr. Yeats's isolation guilty as a trance.

P.S.—Congratulations on Auden's seventieth birthday.

BERTHOLD VIERTTEL

That Auden exercised the social function of a schoolmaster may have contributed essentially to his mental development. Young himself, among young people, he became an observer of the vital impetus in all its forms. Himself in process of development, he had to develop others. Himself a struggler, he had to lead the way. A teacher who knows his lesson by heart and has only to reach the grammar of conventional life has an easy task. Auden, marching along new roads, must have been like an adept who studies the mysteries at night in order to be prepared to answer the questions of the pious in the morning. Thus he developed responsibility and a trained perspective: he learned, if necessary, not only to cast out the weak, but also to challenge the courage of the strong.

Many voices are harmonised in his individual voice, according to the rules of a severe counterpoint. Polyphony, a chorus-quality, seems to be one of Auden's most outstanding characteristics:

he has become a master of the spoken chorus, both the pathetic and the satirical. In his verses, in his pulsating and flowing rhythms, humanity seems on the march towards an unknown future, away from an insufficient past, looking to better and higher possibilities. He is never still. He continually changes his perspective, from the bird's eye to the frog's view, as though his mind were a swinging camera. This ever-changing prospect has a Swiftian quality, a radical and modernised Gulliverism. It is this quality which equips Auden so well for satire. He is apt to indulge in a cosmic humour which is sometimes side-tracked into sheer joking, even into a kind of practical joking—reminding us that the school-teacher still harbours traces of the schoolboy.

But wherever Auden stands (or rather, moves), whatever queer angles or abbreviations his vision (and his diction) dare to employ, he is always dynamically in the midst of Life. He is bound, therefore, to approach the region of popular appeal and comprehension, and he does so in his highly contemporary plays, written in collaboration with the excellent Christopher Isherwood. I do believe and know by experience that the theatre must by no means remain a family circle and an after-dinner club, devoted to the placid process of digestion. That is why these plays should be more than welcome (I say *should*) in that paradise of escapists known as the all-too-legitimate stage.

C. DAY LEWIS

It is a good thing when writers can express in public their affection and respect for a distinguished colleague. I met Auden first at Oxford eleven years ago: I knew very soon that he was and would be the best poet of my generation, and I have never had any reason to change my mind. Other contributors will no doubt be calling attention to his unusual powers of assimilation, to the vigour of his personal idiom and its revolutionising effect upon the verse of our day, to the extraordinarily consistent development of his own work—a true imaginative growth emerging at each stage without precociousness or hesitation from the previous stage. I would like to add this note on the revolutionary content of his writing. His satire has been criticised at times as irresponsible: this is to misunderstand its motive and aim: in so far as it proceeds from the life of one social class, a class which has lost its responsibility

and civilising impetus, the terms of this satire are bound to be superficially irresponsible. But no contemporary writing shows so clearly the revulsion of the artist from a society which can no longer support him, his need to identify himself with a class that can provide for his imagination.

ALLEN TATE

I haven't read any of Auden's new work, that is, in the past two years. Of course, I admire very much what I do know, but I have never rated him as highly as, I suppose, you do. He is the best of his "group," but not much ahead of MacNeice. As of two years ago I may say that both Auden and Spender seem to be caught in a juvenile and provincial point of view. The well-brought up young men discovered that people work in factories and mines, and they want to know more about these people. But it seems to me that instead of finding out about them, they write poems calling them Comrades from a distance. But they are excellent technicians, and Auden and MacNeice, at least, are both tough minds and real poets.

BERNARD SPENCER

Auden doesn't go soft and sermonize. Because our pity is appealed to so much, an emotion you can't live with for long at a stretch, sermonizing is a particular fault of contemporary poets. He succeeds in brutalizing his thought and language to the level from which important poetry proceeds.

CHARLES MADGE

His energy is admirable. As when I first read it, "Paid on both Sides" seems full of this energy. Since then, there has been a diffusion of it. The original, but gawky, style has not developed. Its immature quality, once an attraction, becomes an embarrassment. There is too much morality extraneous to the poetry. The "Hope for Poetry" is too conscious. The plays are catch-penny without being truly popular. But there is still so much

energy left that his personality, if not his poetry, is certain to have an increasing effect. For myself, I would like to ask him to help with a Mass-Observation survey of Birmingham, his native city.

HERBERT READ

For. Auden has brought a new vitality into English verse, an exuberance and inventiveness which it has lacked since Browning's death. His idiom is contemporary, his outlook is revolutionary. He is human and observant, witty and masculine. He has an honest handshake. He is fond of fells, fosses and screees; his landscape is northern, his mind cosmopolitan. His poetic diction is good speech, as Montaigne would have it: rather difficult than tedious, void of affection, free, loose, and bold; not donnish, nor marxian, nor neo-catholic, but downright, comrade-like. Fondled by fortune, but not likely to be fuddled by praise.

Against. A certain retardation in growth. Schoolboy jokes and undergraduate humour. A cruel handshake. But more seriously: a definite backsliding in the technique of verse. The "evolution" of verse form is a doubtful historical phenomenon; but I personally cannot help regarding a certain tradition in poetry which begins perhaps with Blake, and passes through Whitman and D. H. Lawrence as an important liberation (very intimately related to liberation in the political, moral and intellectual spheres). It is sad, therefore, to see a poet of Auden's ability aping the antics of Kipling and Byron. It is good enough as a pastime, but we have no time to pass. Artificial verse is only worth doing if done supremely well, as by Pope. He is a little sentimental and indifferent to objective beauty. He has a dangerous memory. A little too teutonicising; has probably never read *Les liaisons dangereuses*, and wouldn't like it if he had. Climbs mountains.

EZRA POUND

I might be inclined to answer yr note IF I cd. discover why your little lot neglects to import cumming; W.C.W. and one or two other items of interest.

If Auden were man enough to review EIMI .. etc ..

JOHN MASEFIELD

All good wishes for the success of your tribute to Mr. Auden.

GRAHAM GREENE

No room for criticism, only for the personal statement—that to me Mr. Auden is a long way the finest living poet—and a few personal notes. Mr. Auden, unlike the other members of the famous trio, has developed away from politics. There is no reason why a poet shouldn't share a political or any other ideology, but he shouldn't preach it: among the preachers Browning and—lately—Eliot. Unlike Allen Tate he has become more lucid on the surface with every book he has published. A popular poet—as distinct from a popular versifier—is probably, at this time of day, a fabulous creature, but at any rate Mr. Auden puts no barrier between himself and his public. The obscurity is where it should be, in the layers of suggestion under the lucid surface. A last personal statement: that, with the exception of *The Tower*, no volume of poetry has

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given me more excitement than *Look, Stranger*. One is the more grateful, because with every year that passes one finds that the capacity for any fresh æsthetic appreciation weakens.

SIR HUGH WALPOLE

I delight in Auden's poetry, and for the reasons, I don't doubt, of which he would himself least approve.

It is as Teacher and Reformer—as a leader of the children of darkness into light—that he sees himself appointed, not too solemnly, because his sense of humour is constant and there is as much of the schoolboy in him as the teacher.

In this rôle, though, he is superior, a little arrogant, thinking well of himself and speaking 'above the Battle.' Here he is not truly himself which was why 'Letters from Iceland' so grievously disappointed.

When he forgets that he is a schoolmaster he is a wonderful companion, making discoveries, seeing beauty, happily forgetful of everything but his vision.

So forgetful he *does* become a leader and writes some of the finest poetry of our time.

W. J. TURNER

What can I say about Auden except that I think he is extremely gifted, but that in my opinion he has not yet satisfied the hopes his first two books raised in me?

But this is the fate of every talented young artist. We all begin promisingly; then there is a period when we disappoint; the few grow from strength to strength, the rest wither or run to seed. I have no prophecy to make of Auden; as for literary criticism, that is a special job for which one would need all his work before one, plenty of time for thought and a large fee for wasting space and time.

Facsimile of the MS. of the poem which appeared in "NEW VERSE," No. 4 

Poem

The fruit in which your parents hid you, boy,
Their death, is ~~summer~~ perfect: at its core
You grow already; soon you will not be
One of the young for whom all wish to care.
Having at last the matter for a story,
For you will know what people mean by looking;
Some you will beckon closer and be sorry,
You will not have to guess at what is lacking.

But you are death this summer, we the hurt
For whose profoundest sigh you give no penny
Though, calmer than us all, you mourn our lives;
Send back the ^{writer} howling to his art,
And the mad ~~man~~ ^{driver} pulling on his gloves
Start in a snowstorm on his deadly journey.

W. H. Auden
A.A.

WRITINGS BY W. H. AUDEN

This check list is for readers, not for bibliographers or collectors. We shall be glad of additions, corrections, etc.

BOOKS

1. OXFORD POETRY 1926. Edited by Charles Plumb and W. H. Auden. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1926.

The two editors contribute a preface, and the anthology begins with "Thomas Epilogises," "The Letter" and "Cinders" by W. H. Auden (Christ Church).

2. OXFORD POETRY 1927. Edited by W. H. Auden and Cecil Day Lewis. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 1927.

A critical preface is signed by the two editors. The anthology begins with "Extract (For J. B. A.)" by W. H. Auden (Christ Church).

For "Oxford Poetry 1928" see "Poems in Periodicals and Anthologies."

3. POEMS. W. H. Auden. S. H. S. 1928.

Hand-printed at Oxford in 1928 by Stephen Spender, who corrected the frequent misprints in his own hand. It is stated on the reverse of the dedication (*For Christopher Isherwood*) that 45 copies were printed, but probably there were not so many.

CONTENTS

- I. (a) "The sprinkler on the lawn"
(b) "Bones wrenched, weak whimper, lids wrinkled, first dazzle known"
(c) "We saw in Spring"
(d) "This peace can last no longer than the storm"
(e) "'Buzzards' I heard you say"
(f) "Consider if you will how lovers stand"
(g) "Amoeba in the running water"
(h) "Upon the ridge the mill-sails glow" (*inserted erratum slip*)
- II. "I chose this lean country"
- III. "No trenchant parting this"
- IV. "Suppose they met, the inevitable procedure"
- V. "On the frontier at dawn getting down"
- VI. "Who stands, the crux left of the watershed"
- VII. "Nor was that final, for about that time"
- VIII. "The crowing of the cock"
- IX. "Because sap fell away"
- X. "The mind to body spoke the whole night through"
- XI. "From the very first coming down"
- XII. "The four sat on in the bare room"

- XIII. "To-night when a full storm surrounds the house "
- XIV. "Night strives with darkness, right with wrong "
- XV. "Control of the Passes was, he saw, the key "
- XVI. "Taller to-day, we remember similar evenings "
- XVII. "The spring will come "
- XVIII. "The summer quickens grass "
- XIX. "Some say that handsome raider still at large "
- XX. "To throw away the key and walk away "

4. POEMS. Faber and Faber. September 1930.

First Edition.

CONTENTS

- I. "Will you turn a deaf ear "
- II. "Which of you waking early and watching daybreak "
- III. "Since you are going to begin today "
- IV. "Watch any day his nonchalant pauses, see "
- V. "From the very first coming down "
- VI. "To have found a place for nowhere "
- VII. "Upon this line between adventure "
- VIII. "Again in conversations "
- IX. "The crowing of the cock "
- X. "Who stands, the crux left of the watershed "
- XI. "Love by ambition "
- XII. "We made all possible preparations "
- XIII. "Bones wrenched, weak whimper, lids wrinkled, first
dazzle known "
- XIV. "Sentries against inner and outer "
- XV. "Control of the passes was, he saw, the key "
- XVI. 1. "It was Easter as I walked in the public gardens "
- 2. "Coming out of me living is always thinking "
- 3. "Order to stewarts and the study of time "
- 4. "It is time for the destruction of error "
- XVII. "This lunar beauty "
- XVIII. "Before this loved one "
- XIX. "The silly fool, the silly fool "
- XX. "The stings' excitement, the applauding drum "
- XXI. "On Sunday walks "
- XXII. "Get there if you can and see the land you once were
proud to own "
- XXIII. "Nor was that final, for about that time "
- XXIV. "From scars where kestrels hover "
- XXV. "Suppose they met, the inevitable procedure "
- XXVI. "Taller to-day, we remember similar evenings "
- XXVII. "No trenchant parting this "
- XXVIII. "Under boughs between our tentative endearments,
how should we hear "
- XXIX. "Consider this and in our time "
- XXX. "Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all "

5. THE ORATORS. An English Study. Faber and Faber. 1932.

First Edition.

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6. POEMS. Faber and Faber. 1932.

Second Edition of No. 4.

A short note was added on p. 7 and for poems: II, VI, IX, XIII, XXV and XXVII were substituted —“Doom is dark and deeper than any sea-dingle,” “Between attention and attention,” “It’s no use raising a shout,” “What’s on your mind, my dove, my coney,” “Look there! The sunk road winding,” “Who will endure” and “To ask the hard question is simple.”

7. THE DANCE OF DEATH. Faber and Faber. November 1933.

8. THE ORATORS. Faber and Faber. September 1934.

Second Edition.

9. POEMS. Random House, New York. 1934.

Text of the second English edition of “Poems” (No. 6). “The Orators” (First edition, No. 5) and “The Dance of Death” (No. 7).

10. THE DOG BENEATH THE SKIN *or* *Where is Francis?* A play in three acts by W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood. Faber and Faber. May 1935.

Also published in the same year by Random House, New York.

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11. THE POET'S TONGUE. An Anthology chosen by W. H. Auden and John Garrett. Two volumes. G. Bell and Sons. 1935.
School edition.
12. THE POET'S TONGUE. An Anthology chosen by W. H. Auden and John Garrett. G. Bell and Sons. 1935.
This edition in one volume was published some weeks later. It omits from the introduction four paragraphs about schools and poetry.
13. THE ASCENT OF F6. A Tragedy in two acts by W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood. Faber and Faber. September 1936.
An American edition was published by Random House, New York, in 1937.
14. LOOK, STRANGER! Poems by W. H. Auden. Faber and Faber. October 1936.

CONTENTS

- I. "O love, the interest itself in thoughtless Heaven"
- II. "Out on the lawn I lie in bed"
- III. "Our hunting fathers told the story"

- IV. "Let the florid music praise "
- V. "Look stranger, at this island now "
- VI. "O what is that sound which so thrills the ear "
- VII. "Hearing of harvests rotting in the valleys "
- VIII. "Now the leaves are falling fast "
- IX. "The earth turns over, our side feels the cold "
- X. "Now from my window-sill I watch the night "
- XI. "Just as his dream foretold, he met them all "
- XII. "As it is, plenty "
- XIII. "A shilling life will give you all the facts "
- XIV. "Brothers, who when the sirens roar " (*First published in "The Twentieth Century" as "A Communist to Others," Vol. IV. No. 19. September 1932.*)
- XV. "The chimneys are smoking, the crocus is out in the border "
- XVI. "May with its light behaving "
- XVII. "Here on the cropped grass of the narrow ridge I stand "
- XVIII. "The sun shines down on the ships at sea "
- XIX. "To lie flat on the back with the knees flexed "
- XX. "Fleeing the short-haired mad executives "
- XXI. "Easily, my dear, you move, easily your head "
- XXII. I. "Night covers up the rigid land "
- II. "Underneath the abject willow "
- XXIII. "To settle in this village of the heart "
- XXIV. "O for doors to be open and an invite with gilded edges "
- XXV. "Only the hands are living ; to the wheel attracted "
- XXVI. "That night when joy began "
- XXVII. "Fish in the unruffled lakes "
- XXVIII. "Dear, though the night is gone "
- XXIX. "Love had him fast, but though he fought for breath "
- XXX. "August for the people and their favourite islands "
- XXXI. "Certainly our city—with the byres of poverty down to "

15. ON THIS ISLAND. Random House, New York. 1937.

American edition of No. 14. The title of the English edition was not chosen by the author.

16. NO MORE PEACE. By Ernst Toller. Translated by Edward Crankshaw, Lyrics adapted by W. H. Auden. Music by Herbert Murrill. Bodley Head 1937.

17. SPAIN. Faber and Faber. May 1937.

18. LETTERS FROM ICELAND. W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice. Faber and Faber. July 1937.

Actually published in August. The wrapper of early copies gave the price as 12s. 6d. On all later copies this was changed to 9s.

The unsigned section XII., "Hetty to Nancy," was written by Louis MacNeice.

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1. "It is a lovely sight and good
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In "Public Schools Verse, 1923-1924." Edited by Martin Gilkes,
Richard Hughes and P. H. B. Lyon. Heinemann. 1924. The
author's name is misprinted as W. H. Anden.
2. THOMAS EPILOGISES.
3. THE LETTER.
4. CINDERS.
2, 3, 4 appeared in "Oxford Poetry 1926" See "Books" No. 1.
5. IN DUE SEASON.
First published in "Oxford Outlook," December, 1926. Re-
printed in "Oxford Poetry 1928," edited by Clere Parsons and B. B.
6. TWO CASE HISTORIES.
In The "Adelphi," June, 1931.
7. THREE CAUTIONARY RHYMES.
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8. "For what is easy."
In "New Signatures," edited by Michael Roberts, Hogarth Press, February, 1932.
9. SONG : "I have a handsome profile."
In "New Verse," No. 1, January, 1933.
10. TO A YOUNG MAN ON HIS TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY.
In "New Oxford Outlook," May, 1933.
Partly reprinted as Poem XVIII. in "Look, Stranger !"
11. THE WITNESSES.
First printed in "The Listener," July 12th, 1933. Reprinted in "Recent Poetry 1923-1933," edited by Alida Monro, Howe, 1933, and in "Poems of Tomorrow," edited by Janet Adam Smith, Chatto and Windus, 1935.
Partly reprinted on pp. 15 and 16 of "The Dog Beneath The Skin."
12. "The fruit in which your parents hid you, boy"
In "New Verse," No. 4, July, 1933.
13. INTERVIEW : "Having abdicated with comparative ease"
In "Cambridge Left" Summer, 1933.
14. Five Sonnets.
In "New Verse," No. 5, October, 1933.
Of these the fifth is Poem XXIX. in "Look, Stranger !"
15. "Me, March, you do with your movements master and rock"
16. A HAPPY NEW YEAR.
15 and 16 in "New Country," edited by Michael Roberts, Hogarth Press, 1933.
17. THE MALVERNS.
In "New Oxford Outlook," November, 1934. A long poem.
18. SPEECH FROM A PLAY : ". . . You too are patients"
In "New Verse," No. 13 February, 1935.
19. "This is the night mail crossing the border."
In "G.P.O. Film Library Notes and Synopses, 1937. For the use of Teachers and Lecturers." Fifty-four line commentary written in 1935 for the Post Office film "Night Mail."
20. FOXTROT FROM A PLAY : "The soldier loves his rifle"
In "New Verse" No. 20. April-May, 1936.
Partly reprinted on p. 96 of "The Ascent of F6."
21. THE ECONOMIC MAN : "And the age ended, and the last deliverer died"
In "New Verse," No. 21. June-July, 1936.

22. **SONG FOR THE NEW YEAR** : " It's farewell to the drawing-room's civilised cry "
- In " The Listener," February 17th, 1937.
Also in " The Year's Poetry 1937," edited by Denys Kilham Roberts and Geoffrey Grigson, Bodley Head, 1937.
23. **BLUES** : " Ladies and Gentlemen sitting here "
- In " New Verse," No. 25, May, 1937.
24. **ORPHEUS** : " What does the song hope for? And the moved hands "
- In " The London Mercury," June, 1937.
25. " Lay your sleeping head, my love "
- In " New Writing," Spring, 1937.
26. **HEGEL AND THE SCHOOLCHILDREN.**
- In " The Listener," July 21st 1937.

ARTICLES IN BOOKS

1. **WRITING OR THE PATTERN BETWEEN PEOPLE**, in " An Outline For Boys And Girls," edited by Naomi Mitchinson. Gollancz. 1932.

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2. HONOUR (GRESHAM'S SCHOOL, HOLT), in "The Old School, Essays by Divers Hands," edited by Graham Greene. Cape. 1934. An account of Auden's school life.
3. THE GROUP MOVEMENT AND THE MIDDLE CLASSES, in "Oxford and the Groups," edited by Richard Crossman. Basil Blackwell. 1934.
4. SKELTON, in "The Great Tudors," edited by K. Garvin. Nicholson and Watson. 1935.
5. ART AND PSYCHOLOGY, in "The Arts To-day," edited by Geoffrey Grigson. The Bodley Head. 1935.
6. THE GOOD LIFE, in "Christianity and The Social Revolution," edited by John Lewis. Gollancz. 1935.
7. INTRODUCTORY ESSAY, in "Selected Poems by Robert Frost." Cape. 1936. The other essays were by Cecil Day Lewis, Paul Engle and Edwin Muir.
8. POPE, in "From Anne to Victoria," edited by Bonamy Dobre. Cassell. 1937.

BOOK REVIEWS

1. Review of "Instinct and Intuition" by G. B. Dibblee.
In "The Criterion," April, 1930.
2. Review of "The Complete Works of John Skelton."
3. Note on "Edda and Saga," by Dame Philpotts.
(Signed W. H. A.)
2 and 3 in "The Criterion," January, 1932.
4. Note on "The Prisoner's Soul And Our Own" by E. Berggrav.
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In "The Criterion," July, 1932.
5. PROBLEMS OF EDUCATION: a review of "Education and the Social Order" by Bertrand Russell,
In "The New Statesman and Nation," October 15th, 1932.
6. Review of "The Evolution of Sex" by Dr Maranon, and
"The Biological Tragedy of Women" by Anton Nemilov.
In "The Criterion," January, 1933.

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7. GENTLEMAN VERSUS PLAYER : a review of " Thoughts and Adventures " by Winston Churchill.
In " Scrutiny " March, 1933.
8. Note on " Dark Places in Education " by Dr Schohaus.
(Signed W. H. A.)
In " The Criterion," April, 1933.
9. Review of " The Poems of William Dunbar."
 - In " The Criterion," July, 1933.
10. Review of " The Book of Talbot " by Violet Clifton.
In " The Criterion," October, 1933.
11. LIFE'S OLD BOY : a review of " Lessons from the Varsity of Life " by Baden Powell.
In " Scrutiny," March, 1934.
12. Review of " Gerard Manley Hopkins " by E. E. Phare.
In " The Criterion," April, 1934.
13. T. E. LAWRENCE : a review of " T. E. Lawrence " by Liddell Hart.
In " Now and Then " (*House Organ of Jonathan Cape*), Spring, 1934. Reprinted in anthology from above " Then and Now," 1935.
14. Note on " English Poetry for Children " by R. L. Mégroz.
In " The Criterion," July, 1934.
15. TO UNRAVEL UNHAPPINESS : a review of " A Life of One's Own " by Joanna Field.
In " The Listener," November 28th, 1934.
16. Review of " Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson " by E. M. Forster.
In " Scrutiny," December, 1934.
17. EVERYMAN'S FREEDOM : a review of " Plain Ordinary Man " by Arthur Radford, and " Education and the Citizen " by Colonel Loftus.
In " The New Statesman and Nation," March 23rd, 1935.
18. THE BOND AND THE FREE : a review of " Growing Opinions " edited by Alan Campbell Johnson, " I was a Prisoner " by W. Holt, " Means Test Man " by W. Brierley, and " Caliban Shrieks " by Jack Hilton.
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In " New Verse," No. 20, April-May, 1936.
20. **THE AVERAGE MAN** : a review of " Portrait of an Unknown
Victorian " by R. H. Mottram.
In " The New Statesman and Nation," November 7th, 1936.
21. **ADVENTURES IN THE AIR** : a review of " High Failure "
by John Grierson.
In " The Listener," December 2nd, 1936.
22. **A NOVELIST'S POEMS** : a review of " Visiting The Caves "
by William Plomer.
In " Poetry," Chicago, January, 1937.
23. Review of " Illusion and Reality " by Christopher Caudwell.
In " New Verse," No. 25, May, 1937.

MISCELLANEOUS PROSE

1. **THE POET TELLS US HOW TO MASTER THE MACHINE.**
Article in the "Daily Herald," April 28, 1933.
2. **SERMON BY AN ARMAMENT MANUFACTURER.**
In "Life and Letters," May, 1934.
3. **WHAT I WANT THE THEATRE TO BE.**
In programme of Group Theatre production of "The Dance of Death," and "Sweeney Agonistes," Autumn, 1935.
4. **POETRY AND THE FILM.**
In "Janus," May, 1936. Authorised and corrected report of a lecture.
5. **HONEST DOUBT—Some Questions on Surrealism.**
In "New Verse," No. 21, June-July, 1936.
6. **SELLING THE GROUP THEATRE.**
In "Group Theatre Paper," No. 1, June, 1936.
7. **ALFRED : A Cabaret Sketch.**
In "New Writing," Autumn, 1936.
8. **POETRY AND THE PUBLIC.**
In "Highway," December, 1936.
9. **Commentary to the third, semi-lyrical part of "The Way to the Sea," film describing the electrification of the Portsmouth line made by the Strand Film Company, 1937.**
This has not been published in any printed form.
10. **IMPRESSIONS OF VALENCIA.**
In "New Statesmen and Nation," January 30, 1937.

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