RICE UNIVERSITY

ANTI-ROMANTIC ELEMENTS IN THE BIOGRAPHICAL-CRITICAL
POEMS OF W. H. AUDEN'S ANOTHER TIME

by

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ABSTRACT

ANTI-ROMANTIC ELEMENTS IN THE BIOGRAPHICAL-CRITICAL
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W. H. Auden first published the volume of poems entitled Another Time on February 7, 1940. There has been no study of the volume as an artistic entity, and only a few of the poems have received detailed commentary. This thesis will consider a selected group of poems from Another Time, the biographical-critical poems, in some detail. They have been selected for major emphasis because they reflect the dominant concerns of the volume. Furthermore, because each biographical portrait is based on an informed knowledge of the life and work of the writer it depicts, the reader must be similarly informed before he can appreciate the richness of reference and astuteness of judgment which characterize these poems. The poems will be viewed from two perspectives: that suggested by Auden's prose writings on Romanticism and that provided by the context of the volume as a whole.

The second chapter of this thesis surveys the wealth of primary sources in prose available to the critic interested in Auden's attitude towards Romanticism. The prose written from 1937-1941 is pervaded by Auden's concern with the implications of Romanticism. The address given at Smith College in 1940 contains Auden's most explicit statement of the
relationship of Romanticism to the then current political situation. The urgency of his preoccupation results from his conviction that the Romantics' failure to grasp the proper relationship of freedom to necessity has an immediate and direct bearing on the rise of fascism. This preoccupation appears repeatedly in the many book reviews Auden wrote during this period. There are two additional prose sources in which Auden deals with Romanticism: The Enchafed Flood and the introductions to volumes four and five of Poets of the English Language which he edited with N. H. Pearson. The Enchafed Flood was published in 1950; Poets of the English Language appeared in 1952. However, since Auden's assessment of Romanticism remains remarkably unchanged, these writings may be regarded as elaborations of the ideas discussed in the prose of 1937-1941. They are descriptive works and as such are particularly useful in filling in the details of Auden's analysis of Romanticism as a literary movement.

The discussion of the biographical-critical poems in Chapter three of this thesis is preceded by a commentary on a small number of other poems from Another Time. The selection and the discussion emphasize the psychological analysis which Auden applies to the historical situation in Europe. In the course of the discussion of the biographical-critical poems, they will be further connected to the context of the volume. I will show some of the interrelationships between poems in order to indicate the importance of the selection and arrangement of poems in the original volume. The discussion of the biographical-critical poems themselves centers around Auden's search
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for the proper poetic role, his attempt to find an adequate formulation of the dialectic of freedom and necessity, and his criticism of the Romantics' view of the world and the artist's relation to it.

This is emphatically a volume of exploration; a careful study of the poems reveals a multiplicity of attitudes and stances. The volume is unified by virtue of the recurrence of the problems considered, rather than by any single formula for their resolution.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

W. H. Auden first published the volume of poems entitled *Another Time* on February 7, 1940. The importance of the volume, which contains some of Auden's finest poems, was doubtlessly obscured by the urgency of the recently declared war; moreover, contemporary reviews reflect a greater concern with Auden's "irresponsibility" in emigrating to America than with the merit of the work. *Another Time* has, surprisingly, continued to be ignored despite the growing critical interest in Auden. There has been no study of the volume as an artistic entity, and only a few of the poems have received detailed commentary.

This thesis will consider a selected group of poems from *Another Time*, the biographical-critical poems, in some detail. They have been selected for major emphasis because they reflect the dominant concerns of the volume. Furthermore, because each biographical portrait is based on an informed knowledge of the life and work of the writer it depicts, the reader must be similarly informed before he can appreciate the richness of reference and astuteness of judgment which characterize these poems. The poems will be viewed from two perspectives: that suggested by Auden's prose writings on Romanticism and that provided by the context of the volume as a whole.

The second chapter of this thesis surveys the wealth of primary sources in prose available to the critic interested in Auden's attitude towards Romanticism. The prose written from 1937-1941 is pervaded by
Auden's concern with the implications of Romanticism. The address given at Smith College in 1940 contains Auden's most explicit statement of the relationship of Romanticism to the then current political situation. The urgency of his preoccupation results from his conviction that the Romantics' failure to grasp the proper relationship of freedom to necessity has an immediate and direct bearing on the rise of fascism. This preoccupation appears repeatedly in the many book reviews Auden wrote during this period. These book reviews are invaluable because each one is a personal statement. Auden often uses the book he reviews as a point of departure for the discussion of the ideas with which he is involved at that time. For this reason, Auden's prose often anticipates formulations which subsequently appear in his poems.

There are two additional prose sources in which Auden deals with Romanticism: The Enchafed Flood and the introductions to volumes four and five of Poets of the English Language which he edited with N. H. Pearson. The Enchafed Flood was published in 1950; Poets of the English Language appeared in 1952. However, since Auden's assessment of Romanticism remains remarkably unchanged, these writings may be regarded as elaborations of the ideas discussed in the prose of 1937-1941. They are descriptive works and as such are particularly useful in filling in the details of Auden's analysis of Romanticism as a literary movement. Moreover, in Poets of the English Language, Auden again points out the political implications of the Romantic world view. This material documents Auden's rejection of the Romantic view of the role
of the artist as well as of their view of the world. In the biographical-critical sketches, he seeks a new estimate of the proper role of the artist in relation to his talent, to his selfhood, to his public, and to truth. He also repeatedly attempts to formulate the right relationship between freedom and necessity.

The discussion of the biographical-critical poems in Chapter three of this thesis is preceded by a commentary on a small number of other poems from Another Time. The selection and the discussion emphasize the psychological analysis which Auden applies to the historical situation in Europe. Psychology is stressed because Auden always sees political renewal in terms of psychological growth and health. In addition, this preliminary discussion familiarizes the reader with the methods of analysis which will be brought to bear on childhood and development in the biographical-critical poems. In the course of the discussion of the biographical-critical poems, they will be further connected to the context of the volume. I will show some of the interrelationships between poems in order to indicate the importance of the selection and arrangement of poems in the original volume.

The discussion of the biographical-critical poems themselves centers around Auden's search for the proper poetic role, his attempt to find an adequate formulation of the dialectic of freedom and necessity, and his criticism of the Romantics' view of the world and the artist's relation to it. This is emphatically a volume of exploration; a careful study of the poems reveals a multiplicity of attitudes and stances. The volume is unified by virtue of the recurrence of the problems considered, rather than by any single formula for their resolution.
CHAPTER II

ANTI-ROMANTICISM IN AUDEN'S PROSE

Auden's most outspoken remarks in prose on Romanticism appear in the address given at the Smith College Commencement on June 17, 1940. This address is useful because Auden explains why and how he relates historical Romanticism to the demise of the open society threatened by fascism. For Auden the term "Romantic" describes

all those who in one way or another reject the paradoxical, dialectic nature of freedom. Perhaps heretic would have been a more accurate term, but I chose romantic partly to avoid purely clerical associations and partly because the particular forms in which these eternal heresies appear today took shape in the period that is historically called the Romantic Revival.9

Through laziness or impatience the Romantic fails to see the interrelationship between freedom and necessity. This understanding is essential if we are to establish a completely open society. In Auden's opinion

the significance of the world-wide conflict in which we are all willy-nilly engaged is this: The failure of the human race to behave in the way that an open society demands, if it is to function properly, has led an increasing number of people to the conclusion that an open society is impossible and therefore that the only escape from economic and spiritual disaster is to return as quickly as possible to a closed type of society.10

One who fails to understand the paradoxical nature of freedom may go to either of two extremes, both of which are Romantic errors. He can either believe in absolute free will or believe that he has no free will at all.
Imagine that you have absolute free will, ignore causal necessity, and your thinking is at its mercy. Imagine you have no will at all, deny logical necessity, and you cannot think at all. One speaks in ethical terms but refuses the psychology that could define them; the other speaks in psychological terms, but by refusing to admit that psychology implies ethics, is incapable of choosing one direction rather than another.11

The twentieth century most often falls victim to the second error, the belief that man has no free will at all:

The shock of discovering through Freud and Marx that when we thought we were being perfectly responsible, logical, and loving we were nothing of the kind, has led us to believe that responsibility and logic and love are meaningless words; instead of bringing us to repentance, it has brought us to a nihilistic despair.12

Auden elaborates on this theme in a review of Walter de la Mare's anthology *Behold This Dreamer*:

... both in art and life, above all in social and political life, we are today confronted by the spectacle, not of a Utilitarian rationalism that dismisses all that cannot be expressed in prose and statistics as silly childish stuff, but rather by an ecstatic and morbid abdication of the free-willing and individual before the collective and daemonic. We have become obscene night worshippers who, having discovered that we cannot live exactly as we will, deny the possibility of willing anything and are content masochistically to be lived, a denial that betrays not only us but our daemon itself.13

Using the story of Jacob and the angel, he arrives in this review at a lucid formulation of the dialectic of freedom and necessity. He admits that "... in the last analysis we are lived" in that

the night brings forth the day, the unconscious it fashions the conscious fore-brain; the historical epoch grows the idea; the subject matter creates the technique.13

But he insists that

... it does so precisely that it may itself escape the bonds of the determined and the natural. The daemon creates Jacob
the prudent ego, not for the latter to lead, in self-isolation and contempt, a frozen attic life of its own, but to be a loving and reverent antagonist; for it is only through that wrestling bout of which the sex act and the mystical union are typical symbols that the future is born, that Jacob acquires the power and the will to live and the demon is transformed into an angel.\textsuperscript{13}

In this review, as in the introduction to volume five of \textit{Poets of the English Language}, Auden connects the threat of political Romanticism with the failure of liberalism.\textsuperscript{14} Auden does not define liberalism in detailed terms, nor does he specify any individuals or group of individuals as leading proponents of liberal doctrines. His comments must therefore be accepted with the reservations appropriate to the consideration of any generalization. At the same time, these remarks justify the generalization by affording valuable insights into the relationship of some nineteenth century assumptions about the nature of man and society to political developments in our century. According to Auden, nineteenth century liberal humanism was based on the belief in man's free will as well as on the assumption that men know what they want. The liberals believed that if socially imposed restrictions were removed, men would be able to attain happiness. Auden feels that too great a proportion of freedom combined with the failure of the laissez-faire approach to the open society made men willing to give up the freedom, which they did not know how to exercise productively, in favor of certainty, in this case the certainty of tyranny and political Romanticism. In 1939 he says that after World War I the realization by the masses of "the inadequacy of rationalist Liberalism to guarantee material happiness" made political Romanticism "a great force and a great menace."\textsuperscript{15} His
statement in 1952 is much more explicit. He quotes from Dostoevski's

*Notes from the Underground* and comments:

> So speaks the victim of the French revolution and liberalism. Emancipated from the traditional beliefs of a closed society, he can no longer believe simply because his forefathers did and he cannot imagine not believing—he has found no source or principle of direction to replace them. He is not a genius, he is not socially gifted, his work is not important or interesting, so that self-love and the thirst for glory cannot motivate his life; his self-consciousness can only turn in destructively on himself, his freedom waste itself in freakish, arbitrary, spiteful little acts.16

Liberalism cannot help such a man; "the only thing liberalism knows to offer is more freedom, and it is precisely freedom in the sense of lack of necessity that is his trouble."16 This is the situation in which political Romanticism thrives. The Underground Man

is desperate and can only imagine destructive change. . . . The thought of a tyrant who will provide him with a myth of terror, of the prospect of total war as cult, are not unwelcome to him.17

The Liberal Bards, as Auden calls the poets of the Victorian period, are for him the spokesmen of a Romanticism which has become the official and accepted poetic creed.18 They

preach a religion in which the values and even the cult are to remain Christian but the Christian dogmas are to be regarded as myth, that is, poetic truth. If this is the case, then the poets are, of course, the real priests of society, the oracles on all social problems and values.19

"Their trouble was," Auden says, "that they could never quite believe it."19 They were aware that the liberal creed could not answer the fundamental question of the meaning of existence. The only poem of the period which confronts this problem is Lewis Carroll's "The Hunting of the Snark." Only in the guise of nonsense could this central question
be raised, and in Carroll's poem the answer is that existence is meaningless. For Auden, this poem is a revealing statement of the implications latent in the Romantics' view of man's position and function in the universe. He quotes from it often in The Enchafed Flood to illustrate his description of Romantic iconography.

Liberal humanism, according to these statements, is unsatisfactory because it ignores man's desperate need for certainty in its fascination with the productive potential of freedom. Accordingly, it calls forth its opposite, political Romanticism (fascism), which offers certainty at the expense of freedom. In the thirties, Communism was often hailed as the antidote to fascism. Despite his sympathy with the left, Auden "apparently had no Communist phase, however brief... partly because he refused to believe that political exigency ever justified lying." That is, Auden rejects Communism because it too means the abandonment of freedom, in this case the freedom of moral choice. Marxism is important to Auden because it illuminates the inadequacies of the bourgeois solution, but it does not offer him a satisfactory alternative. Auden's earliest published poetry deals with the inadequacy of the bourgeois way of life and the need for a new order. But it is in the poetry and prose of 1937-41 that Auden begins to define the essential problem in terms of the relation between freedom and necessity. Another Time does not arrive at the definitive resolution of the two; it is written in a time of doubt and questioning in which various solutions are to be entertained, explored, and tested.
Liberal humanism is based on the notion that evil results not from man's inherent nature but from society's failure to provide him with the necessary freedom and opportunity to realize his innate potential for good. Auden's early poetry subscribes to a very similar formulation, that of the "pure in heart," which he derived primarily from Homer Lane and D. H. Lawrence. Disease, both socio-political and physical, stems from the repression of Eros. The "pure in heart" are never ill because they allow Eros its natural expression. The resemblance to Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is obvious. Monroe Spears points out that "in *Another Time* and *The Double Man* Auden carries further the tendency seen in *On This Island* to reverse the 'pure in heart' concept in the direction of orthodoxy: nobody is pure in heart because the law of our own nature is corrupt; Eros, being selfish, tends toward evil." It should be clearly understood that both the earlier notion of the importance of Eros in curing man and society and the increasing suspicion that Eros alone is inadequate to do so, appear in *Another Time*. This is another matter which Auden views from a variety of perspectives within the volume.

The Christian Church, to which Auden returned in the next decade, provided him with a resolution of freedom and necessity as well as with a pattern of redemptive love, but *Another Time* was published well before this reconversion. Therefore, it is not a volume of decision or commitment. Instead, Auden tests various alternatives and assumes several very different points of view. The volume's unity derives from this very striving to attack the problem from as many points of view as possible.
The description of Romanticism in *The Enchafed Flood* and the introduction to volume four of *The Poets of the English Language* provide Auden's assessment of Romanticism as a literary movement. These analyses supplement the commentaries on Romanticism of the prose of 1937-1941, and make it possible to establish more clearly the connections between historical Romanticism and political Romanticism.

The uniqueness of the Romantic period results from the basic realignment of values which occurs towards the end of the eighteenth century.

The divine element in man is now held to be neither power nor free will nor reason, but self-consciousness. Like God, and unlike the rest of nature, man can say "I": his ego stands over against his self, which to the ego is a part of nature.23

The Romantic attitudes towards art and the artist depend on this presupposition. For Auden, the most suggestive and symptomatic of its implications is that the poet is to be his own hero.

The characteristic of the Romantic period is that the artist, the maker himself, becomes the epic hero, the daring thinker whose deeds he has to record. Between about 1770 and 1914 the great heroic figures are not men of action but individual geniuses . . . artists . . . with a religious dedication to furthering knowledge, and the kind of knowledge the artist could obtain was chiefly from himself.24

The Romantic hero acts "not for the sake of the act, but in order to know what it feels like to act."25 He must therefore, like Goethe's Faust, seek experience for its own sake. With this new conception of duty comes also a new criterion of failure. As Auden explains

The definition of Mephistopheles as the spirit who denies would be meaningless if Faust were a hero of will, for the will is as much tempted by Yes as by No; it is only the
consciousness, the imagination, which is tempted solely by refusal to accept what it experiences.\(^{26}\)

Auden further illustrates his argument with an example from Coleridge. The Ancient Mariner's redemption is initiated, not by any penance directly connected to his sin, but by his blessing of the water snakes, an action which symbolizes his acceptance of experience.\(^{27}\)

Therefore the important aspect of the Romantic quest is the act of questing rather than the attainment of a fixed goal.

Further to become so dedicated to a lonely task, done not for the public but for the sake of truth, mere talent is insufficient. The romantic artist is a \textit{poete maudit}, i.e. an individual marked out by some catastrophe like Ahab's which supplies the driving passion to go ever forward, to the limits of exhaustion.\(^{28}\)

The Romantic poet-hero is, then, a man who is driven, cursed, possessed. Or, in other words, despite his rebellion against conventional codes of morality and despite his living essentially outside of the social structure, his life is ruled more by necessity than by freedom.

Historically, Auden explains this by pointing out that "the Calvinist tradition of the Reformation" made "the contemplative man, whether as artist or as religious, the passive instrument of daemonic powers."\(^{29}\) The adoption of the Aeolian harp as a metaphor for the mind reflects this attitude as does Wordsworth's advice that we confront nature with "wise passiveness." As for the pantheism implicit in such views, Auden feels that a "pantheistic god immanent in nature" is the logical choice for the "idol of consciousness."\(^{30}\) Speaking as if he were a Romantic poet he explains
to my consciousness nature is a diversity of particular images which have one thing in common, namely that they are my images: they are all flavored by the same invisible presence, myself.30

If the Romantic fails to see the dialectical nature of freedom, he also has difficulty with the interrelationship between good and evil.31 "I do not think," Auden comments in a review of Darwin, Marx, and Wagner by Jacques Barzun,

either Romanticism or its successors can be understood unless we see all of their thinking as an attempt to explain the existence of evil on the assumption that man's essential nature is uncorrupted, i.e. on a non-Christian basis.32 This is obviously related to the liberal humanist view discussed above that if social institutions are reformed, men will be happy. It also recalls two themes common in Romantic literature: primitivism and the idealization of childhood. Auden attacked both of these in an essay published in a collection entitled I Believe:

for example, we frequently admire the "goodness" of illiterate peasants as compared with the "badness" of many townies. But this is a romantic confusion. The goodness we admire in the former is a natural, not a moral, goodness. Once, the life of the peasant represented the highest use of the powers of man, the farthest limit of his freedom of action. This is no longer true. The townie has a wider range of choice and fuller opportunities of using his power. He frequently chooses wrongly, and so becomes morally bad. We are right to condemn him for this, but to suggest that we should all return to the life of the peasant is to deny the possibility of moral progress. Worship of youth is another romantic pessimism of this kind.33

Instead of attributing to man an innate moral sense, Auden places the emphasis on man's capacity for moral growth. At the heart of this question is the problem of man's ability to love his fellow man. Auden's changing formulations of the nature of this love have already been discussed.
The change in poetic practice correlative to the appearance of the poet-hero is, of course, the shift from a pragmatic to an expressive theory of art. If the poet is to draw his material from his own consciousness, the best poem will be that which contains the most accurate expression of his inner self. Poetry will be "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." It is perhaps unnecessary to point out that it is the feelings, not the reason, which are of interest to the Romantic:

the enemies of consciousness are abstract intellectualizing and conventional codes of morality, which neglect and suppress the capacity of the consciousness to experience. Reason has to distinguish between true and false; the will, between right and wrong; consciousness can make no such distinctions; it can only ask "What is there?" For it there is not an "either/or" but a "both-and."

The Romantics professed great admiration for the spontaneous poetic statement uncensored by the reason. "Kubla Khan" was celebrated as much as a perfect example of the poem written in a trance state as for its poetic merit. This denigration of the role of the conscious powers in composition elicits Auden's comment that by the time of Rimbaud

Poetry was being pushed closer and closer toward the dark corner of the unconscious where, since expression is a conscious activity, it would be impossible to write.

The difficulty with the notion that poetry is the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling" is that it is too exclusive. It does not allow for the free play of all of a writer's creative potential because it dismisses the reason and the will as irrelevant or even inimical to poetry. The Romantics rejected the eighteenth century's dictates as to
poetic decorum and diction; they insisted that poetry could deal with "humble and rustic life" in natural speech rhythms. They made poetry a highly successful medium for self-expression. But at the same time, they narrowed the province of poetry by setting up their own rigid distinctions between subject matter suitable for poetry and subject matter appropriate only to prose. Moreover, in their preoccupation with self-expression, they abandoned the idea that poetry was to instruct by pleasing and came to view any effort at instruction with suspicion and distaste.

Auden has never accepted the Romantic limitations on poetic content. He has always experimented with his material, with diction, and with verse forms. In Another Time he demonstrates that the biographical portrait, the character sketch, the critical essay, and the public event are proper and provocative poetic materials. The volume is not, therefore, simply a vocal protest against certain Romantic attitudes, but also a refutation by example of Romantic poetic theory.
Auden's prose habitually attempts to understand and control the forces threatening the open society by relating them to historical Romanticism. Another of Auden's characteristic modes for defining the ills of society will be established by prefacing the discussion of the biographical-critical poems with an examination of a selected number of other poems from Another Time. These poems were chosen because they illustrate Auden's use of psychological analysis to describe the dilemma of modern man and modern society.

The first of the poems in which Auden assesses the contemporary situation is the epigraph to the volume:

Every eye must weep alone
Till I Will be overthrown

But I Will can be removed,
Not having sense enough
To guard against I Know,
But I Will can be removed.

Then all I's can meet and grow,
I Am become I Love,
I Have Not I Am Loved,
Then all I's can meet and grow.

Till I Will be overthrown
Every eye must weep alone.37

The poem is a reversal of all the Romantic estimates of the sources of man's unhappiness. To begin with, man is presented, not as naturally good, but as naturally selfish. The source of the failure of a successful relationship between men comes not, therefore, as a result of any
external condition. Accordingly, the solution cannot be found in changing laws or institutions, it can only be effected by a deliberate inner change in each man: "Till I Will be overthrown/Every eye must weep alone." Moreover, the emphasis is squarely placed on man's capacity to learn to love rather than on his innate ability to do so. The real hope for man is that he will learn to replace his selfishness and will to power with love:

But I Will can be removed,
Not having sense enough
To guard against I Know,

Auden substitutes the ability to feel and show love for the concern with self-consciousness and the ability to express one's consciousness: "I Am" must become "I Love." For the Romantics, isolation, though painful, was the necessary condition of the hero. Undistracted by the clamor of the marketplace, the Romantic could thus come in closest contact with his own consciousness and with the pantheistic gods who reflect this consciousness. In this poem, isolation is given no such positive role; true growth cannot occur in isolation. Instead when selfishness has been removed from the heart, men will attain the true community: "Then all I's can meet and grow." The "I's" may also refer to conflicting elements within one man which must be reconciled and integrated before he can attain psychological wholeness.

In this poem, man is presented as a country ruled by the tyrannical "I Will." The choice of analogy is a clever one. The Romantics took from the theorists of the French Revolution the idea that man's nature is potentially perfect if only he can be freed from the tyrannous
social and political institutions which restrict his individuality. Auden takes this as a metaphor for his completely opposite view that the real threat to man's happiness comes from the tyranny of his own selfish nature. But the tyrant is vulnerable because he underestimates the rebel forces. Because of its faith in potential of these forces ("I Know") to depose the tyrant and institute a new and loving society, this is the most optimistic of the poems examined in this chapter.

Man's estrangement from nature, a theme which recurs throughout the volume, is introduced in the song "Wrapped in a Yielding Air" (CP, 179, retitled "As He Is"). In the first three stanzas, "man's pretensions are ironically exposed and the human condition is compared to that of plants and animals."\(^{33}\) Nature is not a benevolent and nurturing teacher as it was in Wordsworth's *Prelude*. Instead, it is unconscious: "large and dumb." For the miserable man whose consciousness serves only to make him aware of needs and desires he cannot fulfill, the rest of nature's lack of self-consciousness is a source of envy. The stone has no emotions; if it is therefore "friendless," it is also "unhated." The implication is that since man realizes his potential for hatred more often than he exercises his capacity for love, a state which admitted of neither would be preferable. Man is also mocked by the security of the rest of nature which is "timeless and rooted." In contrast, he must always be calculating and recalculating his position in the units he has created, in terms of "His money and his time."

In the fourth and fifth stanzas, Auden analyzes in Freudian terms the reasons why this man cannot realize the human potential for
love and explains the basis of his insecurity and dread of hatred. In the fourth stanza, the child is influenced and betrayed by the three important adults in his life: his mother, his nurse, and his father. Auden seems to be referring to the oedipal period as it is experienced by a child whose father is an excessively harsh authority figure. As the child begins to feel a sexual love for his mother, the father appears to be a threatening rival for her affections.

If, for example, the father is an extremely severe person who has always been frightening to his son, he may during the oedipal phase appear overwhelmingly dangerous. The little boy may then regress from this level of development, feeling safer in maintaining a dependent relationship with the mother. According to Freud, this faulty resolution of the oedipal conflict, if uncorrected, may prevent the child from later attaining successful heterosexual relationships. In the poem, Auden speaks of the "legal father," indicating a lack of paternal love and making the father simply an authority figure. As such he "tricks" the child into returning to a dependency relation with his mother. Genetically, the father has given the child his maleness, but psychologically he has rendered the child incapable of expressing it: his son therefore inherits "The tall and gorgeous tower, / Gorgeous, but locked, but locked."

Another implication of this regression is that the child will not be able to assert his own individuality. In this poem, the child takes for his goals "the fading hopes" of the mother on whom he remains dependent and whom he therefore very much wishes to please. They prove to be "dull wives" simply because they are not the goals based on his own needs and abilities. Here too is the suggestion that the mother
encourages dependency because she wishes to gratify her frustrated hopes through the child. The nurse is a "fond betrayer" for, while she may love the child, her ignorance and repressive morality further inhibit the free play of his spirits. Auden is deploring the custom of entrusting the care of a child to a woman whose services are often available because she is not intellectually equipped for other work.

In stanza five, the child has become a dunce, the duped one "Upon the stool of madness set/Or stool of desolation." His life has been determined "By dead men never met," that is, by the genetic make-up transferred to him by his ancestors, and by the endless chain of psychological ills transmitted from parent to child. This may also refer to other more public figures who have defined his values, his expectations, his guilt long before he was born. He combines this dubious heritage with his willingness to conform to whatever he thinks may be required in order to be a lovable person: he is "By pious guess deluded." His potential for effecting his desires has been hopelessly imprisoned; all that remains is a fine capacity for fantasy:

Enormous beauties round him move,
For grandiose is his vision
And grandiose his love.

This is a far cry from the childhood of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," a time of "glad animal movements," of "aching joys and dizzy raptures." It is superficially more closely related to the account in the Ode on Intimations of Immortality: "the little actor cons another part . . . As if his whole vocation / Were endless imitation" or "Shades of the prison-house begin to close/Upon the growing Boy." But Auden's
child does not come into the world "trailing clouds of glory." Wordsworth's infant has been in possession of truths of knowledge which he forgets as he grows older. For Auden, the child comes into the world only with a potential for knowledge and growth; what he loses is the opportunity to realize this potential. This poem presents man as he sees himself in the twentieth century. Before he ever has an opportunity to exercise his powers of choice, the individual is deprived of his freedom by biological and psychological forces beyond his control.

In stanza six, the narrator speaks of a hard, but "determined" fact of life: the endless struggle between the weak and the aggressive. Although he is faithless, not a Christian, he hopes that this struggle he can never win will somehow come to an end. Here again, he has lost the means to fulfill his hope, but the desire remains unabated. Christ would intercede with the awesome and authoritarian God the Father, would bring release from guilt and fear of punishment, so that the "Hunter and victim" might be "reconciled." But for the twentieth century man, this is only a "dream of vaguer ages." This stanza may be interpreted as a comment on the Romantic hope for a non-Christian millenium such as that expressed in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. It may also be a rueful reappraisal of the hopes Auden himself express in such an early poem as "Petition."

The last stanza shows the lifelong implications of his damaged childhood. "Fresh loves betray him" because he himself is incapable of love, but more importantly because the demands of an individual who can relate only in a dependent way are too great to be satisfied in any
adult relationship. His life is still ruled by his childhood experiences: he still relates as he did then, and although he is really less vulnerable, he still lives in fear "Of ambush and of treason." Unable to assert himself in a positive way

To fresh defeats he still must move
To further griefs and greater
And the defeat of grief.

"As I walked Out One Evening" (CP, 197) is the third of the poems selected to establish the context of the volume. It begins with a song in which the singer portrays himself as one whose love will be eternal. The clock's reply shows him in quite another light. Although he would like to see himself as a romantic hero, his is the curse, not of the genius, but of the unexceptional man. His self-consciousness serves only to give him an undefined sense of loss and futility as "In headaches and in worry/Vaguely life leaks away." The romantic hero quests endlessly for experience; this man's life is no more than an aggregation of meaningless details, perhaps because in his misery he cannot accept those experiences which it would be possible for him to have: "Life remains a blessing/Although you cannot bless." Unheroic as he is, the most defiant gesture against the tyranny of time he can muster is the one the clock sarcastically suggests

O plunge your hands in water,
Plunge them in up to the wrist;
Stare, stare in the basin
And wonder what you've missed.

Haunted by images of impotence and infertility ("The glacier knocks in the cupboard;/The desert sighs in the Bed"), he retreats into
a world of fantasy. But because of his limited imagination, it is anything but a transcendent realm. Auden calls it "the land of the dead."

> Where the beggars raffle the banknotes  
> And the Giant is enchanting to Jack,  
> And the Lily-white boy is a Roarer,  
> And Jill goes down on her back.

Such fantasies are like the dreams Auden deplores in "Jacob and the Angel":

> dreams that are in no sense visions but only, to use a phrase of Mr. de la Mare's, "the aimless silly secretions" of a frustrated ego.

The clock's verdict, "O stand, stand at the window/As the tears scald and start;" parallels the situation described in the epigraph. Because the man cannot overcome his selfishness, "I Am" cannot become "I Love," and therefore "Every eye must weep alone." Despite his aspirations to an idealized and perfect love, the man is told that he must settle for a crippled compromise, "You shall love your crooked neighbor/With your crooked heart." In the epigraph "I Know" is the key to the inner change necessary for love. The far more pessimistic conclusion of this poem is due to its emphasis on the man's inability to understand the nature of his dissatisfaction with life as well as to its insistence on man's bondage to time.

The last of the poems we will use to provide the foundation on which to build our examination of the biographical-critical poems is "Crisis" (CP, 169). The poem's central point is that the evil we fear, "those whom we so much dread," comes from within ourselves. We regard the approaching decline of our way of life ("Our culture like a West of..."
wonder") as an external socio-political event for which the individual cannot be responsible; instead, it is "the revenge of the Unconscious for our sense of guilt and failure to love." Dr. Spears has pointed out that this poem deals with ideas discussed in the Smith College Address, namely with the contemporary belief that we are lived by an unconscious whose motives often betray and dismay our conscious desire to be loving and responsible. The poem dramatized Auden's statement that Hitler "comes uncomfortably near to being the unconscious of most of us."

The other element of interest to us in this poem is the attitude towards nature. Unlike the Romantics, Auden depicts nature as unconscious and indifferent: in "Wrapped in a Yielding Air," nature is "large and dumb"; in "Crisis," "the woods are deaf and the sky/Nurses no one." The "Terrible Presences" which we call forth from our unconscious would seem to be an ironic reversal of the powerful but benevolent "presences" which guide the growing Wordsworth towards a fuller moral sense in The Prelude. Recalling that Auden sees such Romantic pantheism as the worship of an image projected from the self, the relation of the two "presences" becomes more apparent as does Auden's opinion of the Romantic psychology of The Prelude.

The plausibility of this interpretation is reinforced by the reference in the thirteenth stanza to the ape and the tiger. According to Dr. Spears this recalls the lines from Tennyson's In Memoriam "Move upward, working out the beast/And let the ape and tiger die." Auden has called this "an expression of doctrine proved false by psychology."
In Tennyson's version of evolution, man's animal side becomes less and less predominant. In contrast, Auden finds that man has all the rapacious impulses associated with animals. He differs only in that he regards these animal instincts with marked distaste. While the tiger can murder "with style," "We have/Failed as their pupils"; we are unable to accept the murderous desires which emerge from our unconscious. On the other hand, we cannot escape them:

... the crooked that dreads to be straight
Cannot alter its prayer but summons
Out of the dark a horrible rector.

Caught between what we are and what we would like to think we are, we can never be "really at home" with ourselves. Reflecting the ambivalence which results from this unresolved polarity of desires, "even our armies/Have to express our need of forgiveness."
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION OF THE BIOGRAPHICAL-CRITICAL POEMS

The prose and poems which I have discussed above emphasize two major points. First, Auden is acutely aware of the importance of the historical crisis facing Europe; second, he believes that the health of society is the result (not the cause) of the psychological health of the individuals who comprise it. In the biographical-critical poems, Auden tries to evaluate just how the artist should react and relate to times of historical crisis in which crucial choices must be made.

Although I refer to this group of poems as a whole as biographical-critical, the three poems which will be considered first are solely critical. The first two are character sketches of a generalized type such as delighted the eighteenth-century reader. "The Composer" and "The Novelist" combine the "character" with the critical essay. It is useful to discuss these poems first because Auden defines the role of the poet in a general way by contrasting it with that of the novelist and the composer. The statements he arrives at are meant to be striking and thought-provoking rather than balanced scholarly estimates. In both, he assumes a mock-serious tone. He pretends unbounded envy for the composer's lot and great relief at having escaped being a novelist. Taken together, these two sonnets provide the reader with some idea of Auden's opinion of the limitations and licenses of poetry.

"The Composer" (CP, 5) presents a comparison of the kind of reality represented by art, poetry, and music. Both painting and poetry are
imitations or translations of reality. The painter tries to imitate inner or psychological reality and to show relationships. While the painter gives us a world "to love or reject," the poet shows us the nature of love or rejection. But both are translators adapting from life to art. The copy is necessarily imperfect, and the reader must make his contribution in order to "cover the rift." Poetry and painting, then, are directed to an actively participating audience who help the artist recreate reality by filling in the transitions and expanding the ellipses.

Only the composer creates his own reality. The painter and poet are dependent on external reality for their raw material; their imagination transforms rather than creates. But the composer's work is a work of pure imagination which depends not at all on the objective universe. The Romantics believed that the poet was in touch with the sublime, that he worked from some sort of divine inspiration. On the other hand, they introduced the idea that the poet could create, like God, out of himself. Auden, however, transfers the poet back to mimesis while the composer receives all of the talents necessary to expressive art:

"Only your notes are pure contraption, /Only your song is absolute gift."

The sestet, which describes the effect of the music on the listener, is couched in terms of supplication. The music becomes water flowing through the man who is described in topographical terms. The point of this unexpected metaphor is that only music can break down the barriers which isolate man from his environment. Man is a miserable microcosm with a "climate of silence and doubt." Music invades bringing
delight and possibly revitalization to a skeletal existence. In the final lines the water has become wine; the delight, forgiveness. This exaggerated petition to song, when combined with the preposterous metaphor of "falls" and "weirs," gives the poem an ironic tone. This tone is appropriate because Auden's attitude toward "imaginary song" is at best ambivalent. The song does not "say existence is wrong" because it is unable to. Neither could it say existence is right. It has no relation to our world; it is "pure contraption." It may well be that Auden is having the last word on pure poetry. He has certainly carried the expressive theory to its logical limits, and suggested that art should not ignore either the world or its audience.

Anthony Trollope scandalized the literary world by claiming that he sat down every day and wrote an allotted number of words until he had completed a novel. Then he took a clean sheet of paper and started another. In "The Novelist" (CP, 39) Auden contrasts a similarly workaday picture of the novelist with the popular conception of the poet as eccentric. The first five lines of the octet are concerned with the remarkable latitude allowed poets: "They can amaze us like a thunderstorm, / Or die so young, or live for years alone." Meanwhile the novelist must turn his back on extravagant language "and learn/How to be plain and awkward." The sestet describes the task of the novelist in pitying tones. The poor novelist must write from life; it is therefore necessary for him to experience life in all of its reality first. At first glance, the reader wonders that the novelist would bother with reality since it is described as boring, vulgar, and filthy. But Auden
uses this discouraging diction to undercut terms which are of the highest importance to him: love and the Just. This second thread of meaning is climaxed by the comparison of the novelist to Christ: "In his own weak person, if he can," he "must suffer dully all the wrongs of Man."

The tone of the entire poem is one of humorous exaggeration; in the sestet it becomes obvious that the contrast between the poet and the novelist is not merely exaggerated, but ironic. In "The Composer," the poet is presented as a mimetic artist who "fetches out images that hurt and connect." Suddenly, in this poem the novelist is imitating reality while the poet is entertaining himself and the public "encased in talent like a uniform." The poem is a humorous, but devastating caricature of the posturing, self-conscious poets of the Romantic period from Chatterton to Rimbaud to Ernest Dowson. It satirizes the themes of divine madness, the poet-hero, and the isolated genius. The implication is that the poet too must "suffer dully all the wrongs of Man" and that his language should be as restrained and sensible as that of the novelist.

The last of the non-biographical poems is "Musée des Beaux Arts" (CP, 3), an appreciative verse essay on the Old Masters whom Auden admires for their balanced perspective. They understood that man suffers alone in an alien world which is unaffected and unconcerned. While events of crucial importance to some are taking place, "There must always be/Children who did not specially want it to happen."

This praise, by implication becomes a commentary on the distortion of the Romantic vision which sees the whole universe in terms of self. When the Romantic suffers, all of nature moans in sympathy. When
he visualizes a scene, all of the elements are arranged to converge on
the center of interest which is usually the poet-hero himself.

Robert Roth discusses this poem in his illuminating article "The
Sophistication of W. H. Auden: A Sketch in Longinian Method." He
points out that the sort of experience described in "Musee des Beaux
Arts"

terminating in a realization of the disparateness of man and
nature and man and man, was . . . consummated in the late nine¬
teenth century, when it was attended with considerable emotion¬
al excitement, ranging from enthusiastic acceptance (Spencer)
through bitterness (Hardy) to a kind of tragic resolution in
Conrad. As such, it was already a part of the assimilated ex¬
perience of a sophisticated man of the twentieth century for
whom it would be unbecoming, or, by the principle of diminish¬
ing intensity, impossible to show the same degree of excitement
before it.46

Roth is explaining why a tone of "quiet reflection" is the only possible
one for a poet in Auden's historical position. But we can also infer
from his analysis why a poet of Auden's sophistication would not only
reject the scheme of relations elaborated by the Romantics, but would
also transcend the stage of disillusionment experienced by the late Vic¬
torians and move to a new, more positive position. This, of course, is
the process we are attempting to chronicle in our discussion of the
poems of Another Time.

The biographical-critical poems analyze each writer in terms of
his relation to his own talent, to his audience, and the truth. These
three relationships are basic to the perspective of Auden's criticism
of each artist's work. In addition, Auden makes great use of Freudian
psychology to relate biographical details to central aspects of the
writer's chosen role as well as to important characteristics of his work. Auden came under Freud's influence early, and not only became very familiar with his writings, but assimilated them to the point that Freudian formulations have been an integral part of his analysis of the ills of society since the publication of his first volumes: Poems, 1930 and The Orators. In this early period, Auden wholeheartedly subscribed to the notion that man's emotional ills stemmed principally from repression and distortion of Eros. As we noted in our discussion of Auden's changing attitudes towards love, this viewpoint was undergoing a change in the period in which Another Time was written. The biographical-critical poem "In Memory of Sigmund Freud" (CP, 163) reflects Auden's earlier position.

But he would have us remember most of all
To be enthusiastic over the night
Not only for the sense of wonder
It alone has to offer, but also

Because it needs our love: for with sad eyes
Its delectable creatures look up and beg
Us dumbly to ask them to follow;
They are exiles who long for the future

That lies in our power. They too would rejoice
If allowed to serve enlightenment like him,
Even to bear our cry of "Judas,"
As he did and all must bear who serve it.

One rational voice is dumb: over a grave
The household of Impulse mourns one dearly loved.
Sad is Eros, builder of cities,
And weeping anarchic Aphrodite.

In this passage Auden stresses the irrational and the unconscious as potentially productive forces. His changing viewpoint may be best understood by comparing this passage to his comments in "Jacob and the Angel."
Here he warns that the assertions of the importance of the unconscious have become exaggerated. We have given over to an ecstatic and morbid abdication of the free-willing and individual before the collective and daemonic. We have become obscene night-worshippers who, having discovered that we cannot live exactly as we will, deny the possibility anything and are content masochistically to be lived, a denial that betrays not only us but our daemon itself.47

In order to appreciate the consistency which underlies the apparent differences of these two statements of the role of the unconscious, it is necessary to notice that in both cases Auden seeks a proper balance between the conscious and the unconscious, between freedom and necessity. Even in the poem on Freud, which is consistent with Auden's early views on Eros, he does not advocate a self dominated by the irrational. The "night" or the unconscious side of the mind "needs our love," "long for the future that lies in our power," "would rejoice/ If allowed to serve our enlightenment like him." "Our" in each case clearly refers to man as a conscious and rational creature. These two sides of man's nature are imaged as the man in power (the rational) and the exile (the irrational). Auden wishes for man to integrate these two sides so that he may enjoy the health of a whole and balanced personality. In "Jacob and the Angel" the final counsel is the same, but the emphasis has changed. Auden does not deny the value of the unconscious, he simply warns that the tyranny of the unconscious and the exclusion of the rational is as unsatisfactory as the reverse situation. Once again, the ideal is one of balance. The "unconscious It fashions the conscious forebrain" in order
that it may itself escape the bonds of the determined and the
natural. The daemon created Jacob the prudent ego, not for the
latter to lead, in self-isolation and contempt, a frozen attic
life of its own, but to be a loving and reverent antagonist:
for it is only through that wrestling bout of which the sex act
and the mystical union are typical symbols that the future is
born, that Jacob acquires the power and will to live and the
demon is transformed into an angel.\(^{49}\)

Auden's reworking of the elegaic form in *Another Time* will be
discussed in detail with reference to "In Memory of W. B. Yeats." The
most notable characteristic of this elegy is the careful use of under-
statement. Instead of making extravagant claims on the importance of
Freud's death, Auden stresses the difficulty of writing any tribute in
1939.

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When there are so many we shall have to mourn
When grief has been made so public, and exposed
To the critique of a whole epoch
The fraility of our conscience and anguish

Of whom shall we speak? For every day they die
Among us, those who were doing us some good.
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He summarizes Freud's achievement in modest terms. He did us good

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Simply by looking back with no false regrets;
All that he did was to remember
Like the old and be honest like children.

He wasn't clever at all: he merely told
The unhappy present to recite the Past
Like a poetry lesson till sooner
Or later it faltered at the line which

Long ago the accusations had begun,
And suddenly by whom it had been judged,
How rich life had been and how silly
And was life-forgiven and more humble.

Able to approach the Future as a friend
Without a wardrobe of excuses, without
A set mask of rectitude or an
Embarrassing over-familiar gesture.
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I will not discuss the poem in detail; despite the richness of its reference to Freud's writings, it is not a text for explication, but a poem which needs only to be read to be understood and appreciated. The most quoted lines of the poem, "To us he is no more a person/Now but a whole climate of opinion," admirably state the pervasiveness of Freud's psychology. It is impossible to understand the biographical-critical poems unless one places them in this very "climate of opinion," for Auden uses Freudian psychology to organize the reality he describes in these poems.

The poem on A. E. Housman is primarily concerned with the problem of self-expression, that is, the poet's relation to his creative potential. In Auden's view, Housman's potential was suppressed and distorted and this poem attempts to analyze the reasons for this failure of expression.

No one, not even Cambridge, was to blame;
--Blame if you like the human situation--
Heart-injured in North London, he became
the leading classic of his generation.

Deliberately he chose the dry-as-dust,
Kept tears like dirty postcards in a drawer;
Food was his public love, his private lust
Something to do with violence and the poor.

In savage footnotes on unjust editions
He timidly attacked the life he led.
And put the money of his feelings on

The uncritical relations of the dead,
Where purely geographical divisions
Parted the coarse hanged soldier from the don.

Auden entitled his review of Laurence Housman's *A. E. H.: A Memoir*, "Jehovah Housman and Satan Housman" and presented the poet as a "classic
case history" of the hostility between the "Conscious Mind and Unconscious." He concludes that Housman's divided nature is just a purer form of the conflict suffered by most intellectuals and that perhaps only the "exercise of what Christians call Charity" can bring a true resolution to the conflict. This quality, however, is one for which "neither Jehovah nor Satan had much use, but of which perhaps they were both a little frightened." The review presents two possible explanations for the conflict: that the hostility between the Conscious Mind and the Unconscious is "a temporary and curable neurosis due to our particular pattern of culture" or that it is "intrinsic to the nature of these faculties." In the poem, it is the "human situation" which, if anything, is to blame; Auden has found a phrase which encompasses both possibilities.

The biographical facts which Auden is working with are supplied in A. E. H. A Memoir. In spite of his obvious aptitude for scholarly work, Housman failed to obtain a pass in "Greats" at Oxford. He therefore was forced to take a minor, and unsatisfactory, job in the Patent Office. This is presumably referred to in the poem by "Heart-injured in North London." It was at this time that he became a recluse. He did not even allow his family to visit him from 1882-1892. During this period he wrote not poetry, but scholarly articles on classical subjects which won him the recognition which made possible his appointment as Professor of Latin at University College, London. "He became a leading classic of his generation" refers both to his prominence as a classical scholar and to the popularity of his poems. The allusion to
Cambridge refers not only to the fact that he later became a professor there, but perhaps also to his brother's ineffectual attempt to justify his failure at Oxford by explaining that Cambridge would have been a better school for him.

Whatever the reason for Housman's conflict, his reaction to it was repression of the unconscious and emotional. Although Auden never goes into the dynamics of this repression, it is probable that he expects his audience to be familiar with the generally held opinion that Housman was a latent homosexual. It is these homosexual tendencies which Housman attempts to suppress by "deliberately choosing the dry-as-dust," and it is these emotional needs that he denies by hiding his "tears like dirty postcards in a drawer." They emerge instead as a public love for food and a private lust which has "Something to do with violence and the poor." This presumed homosexuality also explains why Auden says in his review that both Jehovah and Satan Housman are frightened of the charity which could have reconciled them.

In the third stanza we find Housman venting the hostility which grows out of the frustrations of a life dedicated to the "dry-as-dust." His unhappy victims were other classicists; he stored his venom in notebooks with pages of insults ready for instant application to the offending scholar. Auden seems to feel that he was projecting his own self-contempt on his colleagues.

Housman could only express his more positive feelings by channeling them to the "uncritical relations of the dead." "Uncritical" carries both the connotations of unreproaching and unthreatening. As
Auden's review says, the two sides of Housman's nature have "one common ground upon which they could meet: the grave. Dead texts; dead soldiers; Death the Reconciler, beyond sex and beyond thought."  

The poem's position in the volume, between "Oxford" and "Edward Lear" is significant. The comparison to the Lear poem will be postponed until we have discussed that poem in detail. The Oxford poem (CP, 80) may be viewed as definitely supplementary because of Oxford's importance in Housman's biography and because its theme is the failure to love. In this poem Eros is in itself incapable of uniting with a love object.

Eros Paidagogos  
Weeps on his virginal bed.

Ah, if that thoughtless almost natural world  
Would snatch his sorrow to her loving sensual heart!  
But he is Eros and must hate what he most loves  
And she is of Nature; Nature  
Can only love herself.

Those at Oxford, wrapped away from the world by their studies, are no better off than the thousands who "fidget and poke and spend their money" for

Wisdom is a beautiful bird; but to the wise  
Often, often it is denied  
To be beautiful or good.

Viewing the poems together we realize that Auden believes that Housman's popularity stems from the fact that he writes for an audience which to some degree shares his failure and his fear and therefore welcomes the poetry which grows out of them. The poem becomes a parody of the expressive theory: Housman's poems inadvertently reveal his inner
self because his very defences and repressions give us the clues necessary to surmise what lies behind them. This is perhaps the harshest poem of the group. All of Housman's poetry and scholarship is reduced to a symptom of his divided nature. He suffers, but he is unable to learn and therefore unable to share anything of value with his audience. Instead, he becomes popular because his audience feels safe with his dead heroes. They can enjoy feeling sympathy with the dead, knowing that Housman will never confront them with the inadequacy of their relations with the living.

This poem was the only one from the "People and Places" section of Another Time which was not reprinted in the Collected Poetry. We may guess that Auden may have decided that it was too harsh. Certainly Housman is the only one of the figures except perhaps for Pascal Auden deals with who comes out with nothing of value to add to the tradition or to Auden's list of possibilities for the poetic role.

The poem on Matthew Arnold (CP, 54) also concentrates on the relationship of the writer to his gift. The crux in Arnold's career is his abandonment of poetry in order to write criticism. Auden explains this in terms of Arnold's relationship with his father, Thomas Arnold. The first two stanzas describe what Auden feels to be Arnold's true nature.

His gift knew what he was—a dark disordered city;  
Doubt hid it from the father's fond chastising sky;  
Where once the mother-farms had glowed protectively,  
Stood the haphazard alleys of the neighbor's pity.

Underlying this analysis is a contrast between maternal and paternal love.
The mother's love is unconditional, but the father's is conditional, i.e. it is given or refused on the basis of performance. His gift, his creative potential, knows that he is a "dark disordered city," but doubt, the fear of disapproval and loss of his father's love, makes Arnold hide this self from view. The "mother-farms" metaphor captures the security of the young child's relation to his mother as contrasted to the "haphazard alleys of the neighbor's pity," the less certain and more conditional, even capricious kind of love he must be satisfied with after he outgrows the dependent relation with his mother. The identification of father with a "fond chastising sky" refers to the fact that the father creates the atmosphere in which the child develops. To oversimplify outrageously, he is one to whom the child submits the various aspects of his emerging self for acceptance or rejection. But, according to this poem, Arnold is never able to bring himself to risk such a confrontation; he assumes that his father would disapprove of a disorderly mind and hides it from his view.

But this explanation, relevant as it is to the central concern of the poem as a whole, does not fully exhaust the implications of the city-farm metaphor. This metaphor makes Arnold's development a recapitulation in little of the migration from the farm to England's industrial centers. Arnold was writing at a time when more and more people had to exchange the rooted security of the agrarian community for the dark and disordered urban life. The use of this metaphor points up the fact that Arnold's nature was very much a product of his age; it reflects the doubt and uncertainty of a society which has lost its unquestioning faith in old
values and beliefs, but is not yet ready to formulate and assert new ones.

The disorder of Arnold's mind is made up of the rubble of old belief and the variety of new possibilities. His gift could have thrived in this environment:

Yet would have gladly lived in him and learned his ways,
And grown observant like a beggar, and become
Familiar with each square and boulevard and slum,
And found in the disorder a whole world to praise.

But as Auden says more than once in the prose selections discussed in chapter two, man cannot cope with too large an overbalance of freedom, and he therefore becomes willing to trade all of his freedom for certainty.

But all his homeless reverence, revolted, cried:
"I am my father's forum and he shall be heard,
Nothing shall contradict his holy final word,
Nothing." And thrust his gift in prison till it died.

Arnold's "homeless reverence" is his tendency towards faith and religion which is homeless because Arnold can find no deity in which he can believe. There is a suppressed pun on God the Father and Arnold's natural father, and the implication is that Arnold has got the two a bit mixed up, or at least that he has substituted Thomas Arnold for God. For Auden's generation, Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby, is a horrible example of the subordination of intellectual concerns to moral preachiness. Lytton Strachey, who popularized this view of Thomas Arnold, somewhat unfairly presents him as a narrow minded and shallow man who can always find a justification for his prejudices by appealing to General Principles. 59 Thomas Arnold had hoped for a better society
through the agency of Christianity; Matthew Arnold undertakes to remake the world into that better place his father had envisioned using culture instead of Christianity as the spiritualizing force. When Arnold becomes a mouthpiece for his father's desire to reform and stabilize society, he ceases to write the poetry which expresses his own unstable and chaotic inner self. Instead, like any good convert, he goes out to preach the "holy final word" and to rid the country of non-believers. Unfortunately one of these is his own gift which is convicted of heresy and sentenced to life in prison. This then is Auden's interpretation of Arnold's abandonment of poetry.

Instead of finding in "disorder a whole world to praise," Arnold assumes the Hellenic mask and writes in praise of "sweetness and light."

His gift has died

And left him nothing but a jailor's voice and face,
And all rang hollow but the clear denunciation
Of a gregarious optimistic generation
That saw itself already in a father's place.

Auden limits his discussion of Arnold's criticism to two evaluations. First, most of his ideas ring hollow because they are not his but Thomas Arnold's, and second, the one note which rings clear is his denunciation of the cheerful and shallow Victorians with their facile belief in the necessary progress to be attained by the English people, a progress which according to Arnold in Culture and Anarchy they define in terms of coal, machinery, and material prosperity.

In Another Time "Matthew Arnold" is followed by "Dover 1937" (CP, 111). It seems clear therefore that on at least one level this
The visual images carry the illusion of beauty and tranquility while the auditory images "bring/The eternal note of sadness in" reminding the poet that the "Sea of Faith" has retreated with a "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar."

Auden's poem is concerned with Dover as the port which is used by all who come and go to and from Europe. The diction indicates that the period of impassioned disillusionment is long past as is the time when one can say, "Ay, love, let us be true/To one another" with any sort of conviction. While Arnold emphasizes the beach as a scene of natural beauty, Auden concentrates on the city's artificiality:

The sea-front is almost elegant; all this show
Has somewhere inland, a vague and dirty root;
Nothing is made in this town.

Arnold's tide is laden with import; it is the "Sea of Faith." Auden's tide is simply a cold and factual reporter who without a single moan warns "bronzing bathers of a cooling star/With half its history done."

But perhaps the most important point of contrast is that Arnold is able to make a definite and generalized statement about life on the "darkling plain" and his relationship to it. He universalizes this statement by the allusion to Sophocles and the address to the lover who shares his position. Therefore, although from one point of view the
lovers are isolated and can turn only to one another, the effect of the poem is to make the reader feel that this indeed is his own situation. The world of the Auden poem is more heavily populated and more fragmented. General statements about such a world are either false or meaningless. Instead of two people creating an island of security through love in a time of uncertainty and confusion,

The soldier guards the traveler who pays for the soldier
Each one prays in the dusk for himself and neither
Controls the years. Some are temporary heroes.
Some of these people are happy.

This sense of fragmentation relates back to the poem on Arnold himself.

And perhaps Auden's transcription of the traveler's thoughts

"I see an important decision made on a lake
An illness, a beard, Arabia found in a bed,
Nanny defeated, Money."

and

"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.

is meant to point up the fact that despite the sobering influence of war and depression Arnold's denunciation of his own optimistic generation still has relevance in our time.

Auden finds in Arnold a microcosm of the problems facing his age as well as an example of one response which these problems often elicit, i.e. the adoption of a stifling allegiance to outworn certainties in order to avoid having no certainties at all. But unlike Housman, Arnold is not just a case history of a failure of self-expression,
because in the end he is able to see through and denounce the gregarious optimism with which the Victorians tried to shield themselves from the awareness of that nagging and unanswerable question which only Lewis Carroll could ask aloud: is there any meaning to my existence?

The poem on Pascal (CP, 86) is the third and most complicated of the analyses which emphasize the relation of the writer to his gift. It contains the most detailed and the most eccentric of the psychological explanations given in any of the biographical-critical poems. The basic idea informing this analysis is the Freudian notion that man is driven to extraordinary achievement by a need to compensate for a feeling of inadequacy. Auden attempts to explain Pascal's feeling of inadequacy by referring to prenatal influences, but admits in the poem that such an effort to identify the causes must remain conjectural. His description of Pascal's abnormal childhood is a great deal more convincing than his explanation of the reasons for it.

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Whatever happened, he was born deserted
And lonelier than any adult: they at least
Had dwelt in childhoods once where dogs were hopeful
And chairs could fly and doors remove a tyrant;
Even the ablest could recall a day
Of diagnosis when the first stab of his talent
Ran through the beardless boy and spoil the sadness
Of the closed life the stupid never leave.

However primitive, all others had their ferry
Over the dreadful water to those woods from which,
Irrelevant like flies that win a coward's battle,
The flutes and laughter of the happily diverted
Broke in effectively across his will
To build a life upon original disorder:
How could he doubt the evidence he had
Of Paris and the earth? His misery was real.
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All dreams led back into the nightmare garden
Where the great families who should have loved him slept
Loving each other, not a single rose
Dared leave its self-regard, and he alone was kneeling,
Submitting to a night that promised nothing,
Not even punishment, but let him pray;
Prayer bled to death in its abyssal spaces,
Mocked by the silence of their unbelief.

It is at this point that Pascal unconsciously begins to cope with his estrangement and misery by compensating with intellectual successes, primarily in mathematics. Auden makes use here of the Freudian notion that art grows out of neurosis. This is the view of the exceptional man which informs *The Quest* (1941). The biographical-critical poems relate neurosis to art in a number of ways. The poem on Pascal formulates the most direct connection between the work and the artist's need to compensate; Housman's psychological problems direct his selection of topics for poetry; Matthew Arnold's flawed relation with his father leads to the denial of his poetic gift; Lear's unhappiness motivates him to create a nonsense world in which he is safe and at home; Yeats is "hurt into poetry," but his work comes to have an integrity separate from his personality and beliefs. From this brief catalogue, it is clear that Auden recognizes the complexity of the relation of personality to productivity. In this poem, the "Gift" becomes a foster-mother, protecting and encouraging this vulnerable Pascal.

Yet like a lucky orphan he had been discovered
And instantly adopted by a Gift;
And she became the sensible protector
Who found a passage through the caves of accusation,
And even in the canyon of distress was able
To use the echo of his weakness as a proof
That joy was probable and took the place
Of the poor lust and hunger he had never known.
And never told him he was different from the others,
Too weak to face their innocently brutal questions,
Assured him he was stronger than Descartes,
And let him think it was his own finesse
That promised him a miracle, and doubt by doubt
Restored the ruined chateau of his faith;
Until at last, one Autumn, all was ready:
And in the night the Unexpected came.

Auden then describes Pascal's famous conversion experience which he
sees also as an outgrowth of Pascal's emotional deprivation.

The empty was transformed into possession,
The cold burst into flames; creation was on fire
And his weak moment blazing like a bush,
A symptom of the order and the praise;
And he had place like Abraham and Jacob,
And was incapable of evil like a star,
For isolation had been utterly consumed,
And everything that could exist was holy.

All that was really willed would be accomplished:
The crooked custom take its final turning
Into the truth it always meant to reach;
The barrack's filthy oath could not arrest
Its move towards the just, nor flesh annihilate
The love that somewhere every day persuades it,
Brought to a sensual incandescence in the dark,
To do the deed that has made all the saints.

Then it was over. By the morning he was cool,
His faculties for sin restored completely,
And eight years to himself. But round his neck
Now hung a louder cry than the familiar tune
Libido Excellendi whistled as he wrote
The lucid and unfair, And still it rings
Wherever there are children doubt and deserts,
Or cities that exist for mercy and for judgment.

It is the last stanza which we would most like to understand, but al¬
though certain things come through, it remains in the end somewhat
elusive. The "eight years" refer to the fact that Pascal lived for
eight years after his conversion experience. "Libido Excellendi" (the
desire for excelling) alludes once more to the Freudian notion of
compensation. Here it is specifically related to the "lucid and unfair" Lettres Provinciales which Pascal wrote defending the Jansenists and attacking the Jesuits. The need to excel is, of course, an inappropriate motive for one who is writing on religion. The obscurity lies in the difficulty in pinning down the "louder cry" which hangs about Pascal's neck like an albatross. This penitential voice obviously emerges after the conversion experience and presumably relates to the Pensees. However, all of Pascal's experience, including his conversion has been hitherto assessed as a direct result of his attempt to compensate. If this louder voice is to be separated from that motivation, it must be given some sort of explanation or foundation. As it is, one is not sure of the intention of the final lines; that is, the crucial question of what this louder voice says to the "children doubt and deserts/Or cities that exist for mercy and for judgment." cannot be answered with any assurance because it has not been adequately prepared for. We can speculate that it may be something similar to the attitudes Auden ascribes to Pascal in a review written at about this time.

Pascal says that all men are wicked and unhappy. They are, but not all the time. People are often happy and do good acts. Pascal says that the human passions are the cause of all evil. They are, but also they are the cause of all good. They are an integral part of the creation.

The poems on Housman, Arnold and Pascal are those which are most centrally concerned with the artist's relation to his gift. Despite the superficially Romantic concern with self-expression, these evaluations end up by saying that while the artist's work can be related to his personality, the relation is anything but a direct one. That is,
Housman writes about dead soldiers because only the dead do not involve a confrontation with the problems of human relationships which so vex his private life. Arnold's criticism is not an expression of his inner self, but of the mask he has assumed in order to protect himself from the bewildering disorder of that inner self. Pascal's writings reveal not his faith, but his need for faith. Unlike Romantic criticism, which reads the work to discover the writer, Auden's verse essays work from a knowledge of both the life and the work to arrive at an indirect and often surprising estimate of their correlation.

The Pascal poem is paired in the volume with "Voltaire at Ferney" (CP, 6). The two poems are as different in their approach as the two great enemies were in life. The poem on Pascal is heavily psychological; great pains are taken to trace and explain his development. "Voltaire at Ferney" is remarkably free of this kind of analysis, perhaps because Auden realizes that explaining motivations often depreciates the value of the act they have resulted in.

Another noticeable feature of the poem is that it approvingly presents Voltaire as a writer of propaganda. Such a view of the writer's role is usually an anathema to Auden: "the unacknowledged legislators of the world describes the secret police, not the poets." It is interesting to contrast Voltaire's conception of the role of the poet with Auden's flat statement in "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" that "poetry
makes nothing happen." This stanza alludes to the various "wrongs" Voltaire undertook to correct. The "earthquakes" recall both Voltaire's poem "On the Lisbon Earthquake" and Candide which was inspired by the same event. The "executions" refer to the many victims whom Voltaire championed against the intolerance and barbarity of French laws.62

The penultimate stanza describes the peculiar isolation which Voltaire faced. Unlike the Romantic artist, Voltaire does not feel estranged or alienated from the rest of society. Instead, he takes as his own problems all the injustice and intolerance around him. His isolation results, not from a flight from society, but from the loneliness of his commitment to the task of reform:

Only Pascal was a great enemy, the rest
Were rats already poisoned; there was much, though, to be done,
And only himself to count upon.
Dear Diderot was dull but did his best.
Rousseau, he's always known, would blubber and give in.

Norman L. Torrey reports that after the case of the Chevalier de la Barre,

Voltaire in all earnestness tried to found a colony of philosophers, to be composed of Diderot, Helvetius, D'Alembert, and others, at Cleves, under the protection of Frederick the Great, where their combined efforts and a hard working printing press could make such atrocities impossible for the future.68

It also refers to Diderot and D'Alembert's work on the Encyclopedie which was to be a great influence for liberalism. The last line of the stanza is based on the fact that Rousseau did finally accept the idea of Pascal's wager and become a Catholic. This isolation also relates to the poem's concern with time. Voltaire is distressed by his finitude. He feels that there is work which must be done and that only he can do it properly. His hurried application to his chosen goal is mocked by
the serenity and permanence of the stars: "Overhead/The uncomplaining stars composed their lucid song." This is the final line of the poem, and the contrast between Voltaire's "verses" and the "lucid song" serves to place Voltaire's undeniably great achievement in the dwarfing context of the timeless.

Auden's admiration results from Voltaire's position on four important questions. The first of these is the relationship between freedom and necessity. Pascal is the "great enemy" because Pascal's extreme view about original sin, by denying to fallen man any free will, makes the intellect useless, all human relations a hindrance and all social forms meaningless. We feel, he says that we must have absolute certainty; therefore absolute certainty exists. Only the Catholic religion professes to offer certainty. Therefore we should accept it.

In contrast, Voltaire is not bothered by the lack of certainty, only by limitations on his freedom. His famous cry, "Écrasez L'infame" is interpreted by Auden to refer to

the assumption, under whatever disguise, religious, philosophical, political, that the final absolute truth has been revealed.

Allow that assumption and tyranny and cruelty are not only inevitable but just and necessary.

Like the liberal humanists of nineteenth century England, Voltaire offers additional freedom of thought and action. Unlike the "Liberal Bards," however, he is able to face the question of the meaning of existence. Stanza two alludes to Voltaire's correspondence on life and death with the blind Mme. du Deffand. Voltaire prepared himself early for the eventuality of death and wrote on the subject willingly and with the utmost calm to his various friends, especially Mme. du Deffand, who would seem often
to have preferred death to the pure boredom into which her life resolved itself.65

The nature of his affirmation of life is the third area in which Voltaire pleases Auden:

"Nothing is better than life." But was it? Yes, the fight Against the false and unfair Was always worth it. So was gardening. Civilize.

Voltaire's response to the evils of society is not the escape into primitivism, but the more cogent, for Auden, recognition that man needs more, rather than less, civilization. *Candide* ends by advising the reader to cultivate his garden. This image suggests productivity, man's dominance of nature, and creation of order. Voltaire's ideal for the open society is based on freedom and enlightenment. Auden's belief, mirrored in the epigraph, that the hope for a true community rests with "I Know," is very much in accord with Voltaire on this point. Voltaire is also attractive because he was able at Ferney to realize his ideal democracy on a small scale.

Voltaire was no social revolutionary, but within the economic and social conditions of his time he attempted at Ferney to create a community of which the members would feel happy enough to allow the spirit of democracy to flower.66

Here again, Auden finds that Voltaire shares one of his own favorite ideas, that the true community must grow from emotional balance rather than from deprivation.

Auden images Voltaire's rebellion against all absolute authority by comparing it to the child's struggle against parental authority. The adults are like the "legal father" of "Wrapped in a Yielding Air"; they give stultifying rules rather than love. The child responds to over-
whelming authority in the manner described in "Crisis": "They arrive, already adroit, having learned/Restraint at the table of a father's rage."

Cajoling, scolding, scheming, cleverest of them all, He'd led the other children in a holy war Against the infamous grown-ups: and, like a child, been sly And humble when there was occasion for The two-faced answer or the plain protective lie, But patient like a peasant waited for their fall.

As in "Crisis," the children are further identified with the "have-nots" who wait for an opportunity to destroy the scheme of things which perpetuates their deprivation. The connection with "Wrapped in a Yielding Air" is reinforced in the last stanza which continues the child analogy. Once again, Auden uses nurses to represent the stupid and ignorant in places of almost unlimited power. Here, however, the image is a great deal more sinister as the nurses do not merely repress the children but are actually "itching to boil" them.

Voltaire is presented at the height of his powers and influence. He is, for Auden, the prototype of the writer as propagator of the open society. Because Auden is so gravely concerned with what the "horrible nurses" of fascism will do with the "children" who turn to them for certainty, he is in sympathy with the role chosen by Voltaire. At the same time, he sets this role in the framework of man's relation to time. This enables him to distance his perspective on Voltaire. His response to Ernst Toller is rather different; this is the only one of the biographical-critical poems which deals with a personal friend, and Auden's emotional involvement with Toller's life and death is evident throughout the poem.
In "Voltaire at Ferney" Auden concentrates on the relationship between that great writer and the goal (Écrasez l'infame) which he set out to achieve. In order to appreciate an artist who concerns himself directly with contemporary problems and abuses in this way, one must first understand the historical situation which resulted in both the problems and the protest. Ernst Toller was also a writer with a historically determined goal. For this reason, the analysis of "In Memory of Ernst Toller," like that of "Voltaire at Ferney" will include more historical detail than some of the others.

Before World War I, Ernst Toller was a bourgeois, nationalistic German Jew who accepted his country's aspirations without question and wished only to prove his loyalty and devotion to the state. By the end of the war he had joined with the socialist demands for peace and internationalism and was actively concerned with the position of the workers in the political and social system. It was at this time that he conceived an ideal for Europe which he strove unsuccessfully to realize throughout his life: "Or had the Europe which took refuge in your head/Already been too injured to get well?" During the German revolution of November, 1918, Bavaria became a socialist republic, and Toller accepted "several leading political posts, in order to prevent further bloodshed." But Munich was soon occupied by the Prussian army, and Toller was sentenced to five years in prison. Auden briefly alludes to this imprisonment with a reference to Toller's story of the swallows which could fly in and out of the prison, but which made their nest in his cell (line 11).
Toller did not seek this political role; it was thrust on him by the critical situation in Germany. He accepted it because he hoped to preserve the principles of peace and brotherhood he had learned from the horror of World War I. Similarly, his writing career was motivated not so much by the need to create as by the desire to show his audience through dramatically rendered experience that each man must be treated as an individual and a brother. W. A. Willibrand supports this view of Toller's career:

Toller was 24 before he completed anything of significance. This fact, coupled with the non-naive reflective character of his work shows that he was not a born poet. Nor was he a born political strategist. Like Hitler, like so many others, Toller was shoved into the arena of politics by a revolutionary age. Nearly all his work, some poems of his scant lyrical output excepted, had its origin not so much in a native urge to create as in the will to record his physical and emotional experiences dramatically.71

In stanza six, Auden tentatively connects Toller's feeling that he must take an active part in these historical struggles to his desire to escape from his political and creative burdens into death.

... the big and friendly death outside
Where people do not occupy or hide;
No towns like Munich; no need to write?

In this same three stanza series of questions, Auden explores the possibility of a Freudian explanation of Toller's suicide:

What was it Ernst that your shadow unwittingly said?
O did the child see something horrid in the woodshed
Long ago? ... 

The "big and friendly death" suggests another Freudian explanation of Toller's suicide by relating it to the death wish.

Hitler exiled Toller and forbade the publication or production of
his works in Nazi Germany. This was a crippling blow to Toller's creative work. He was unable to write in English and had to depend on translators. Moreover, his work was not only audience-oriented, it was oriented to a particular audience facing specific historically determined moral choices. Toller's concern with brotherhood and the importance of each man as an individual would certainly be relevant to our contemporary audiences, but his use of the language and ideology of Marxism to delineate man's moral choices makes his plays seem dated and rather curious today.

But in this poem the formulation of man's relation to necessity, both historical and psychological, comes from neither Freud or Marx but from Georg Groddeck, a psychologist and analyst who has considerable influence on the early Auden. Lawrence Durrell's introduction to Groddeck's major work, *Das Buch Vom Es*, explains that

for Groddeck the whole psyche with its inevitable dualisms seemed merely a function of something else—an unknown quantity—which he chose to discuss under the name of the "It." "The sum total of an individual human being," he says, "physical, mental, and spiritual, the organism with all its forces, the microcosmos, the universe which is a man, I conceive of as a self unknown and forever unknowable, and this I call the "It" as the most indefinite term available... The It-hypothesis I regard not as a truth—for what do any of us know about absolute truth?—but as a useful tool in work and in life... I assume that man is animated by the It, which directs what he does and what he goes through, and that the assertion 'I live' only expresses a small and superficial part of the total experience 'I am lived by the It...""73

The series of questions in stanzas 3 - 5 attempt to account for Toller's life and suicide by referring motivations from his historical situation or from within a disturbed mind. But Auden's final explanation of Toller's life and suicide, the heavily necessitarian stanzas which close
the poem, reject the implied answers to these questions as inadequate because as Groddeck has taught

We are lived by powers we pretend to understand:
They arrange our loves; it is they who direct at the end
The enemy bullet, the sickness, or even our own hand.

It is their tomorrow hangs over the earth of the living
And all that we wish for our friends: but existence is believing
We know for whom we mourn and who is grieving.

Auden comments on Toller's difficult position in America in the opening stanzas of the poem. According to an article by Auden's brother-in-law, Klaus Mann, American fascists boasted that they had driven Toller to suicide. More important, Auden is concerned with the impact on neutral America of the suicide of a man who had made extraordinary sacrifices to oppose fascism. This conclusion is pessimistic, "the friends who are sad and the enemies who rejoice" will not be permitted "to learn without suffering how to forgive."

This poem differs from the majority of biographical-critical poems in that Auden is not really concerned with testing Toller's version of the role of the artist. He does affirm the value of Toller's audience-oriented drama, along with his whole public life:

Dear Ernst, lie shadowless at last among
The other war-horses who existed till they'd done
Something that was an example to the young.

But this poem's major importance for this thesis lies not in Auden's search for his proper poetic role, but with a theme which recurs in all of his writings against romanticism: the dialectic of free-will and necessity. As I pointed out in Chapter II, Auden feels that political
Romanticism results when man, unable to grasp the paradoxical nature of freedom, chooses to believe either that he has absolute free-will or that he has none at all. However in this poem, Auden weights the dialectic so heavily on the necessitarian side that it is hardly a dialectic at all (lines 19-24). Thus, here Auden is not far from the nihilistic despair which, as he says in June, 1940, results from the view that we have no free will at all. The fact that Auden would espouse such a view, particularly in a poem about a man who spent his life opposing political Romanticism and striving for an open society in Europe, points up the fact once more that this is a volume which expresses the variety of viewpoints from which a consistent formulation of man's relation to society and more particularly of the artist's relation to society will later emerge. In Toller, Auden has a contemporary example of the artist who uses his work as a vehicle to influence the current historical struggle. It is therefore interesting that he gives less emphasis to Toller's work than he does to that of any other writer in the volume. This poem is exceptionally bare of literary criticism. It is possible to surmise that while Auden asserts in this volume that the province of poetry must include poems such as "September 1, 1939"; he does not wish to confine himself, even in a time of crisis, to political poetry.

If one poem had to be selected to demonstrate what Auden does with these biographical-critical studies, the choice should be "Herman Melville" (CP, 146). Newton Arvin has stated that Auden's analysis of Moby Dick and Billy Budd in this poem has "More perspective than most
criticism in prose. ... Auden's handling of difficult areas in Melville's biography: the "long quietus," Melville's relationship with his father, the friendship with Hawthorne, and his marriage to Elizabeth Shaw, is competent and offers insights not available in either of the full length biographies of the time. In addition the poem is central to three concerns I have tried to point out in this thesis: the exploration of the poetic role, the rejection of romanticism, and the search for the proper balance between freedom and necessity.

Billy Budd, completed in the year of Melville's death, was his "only prose work of any consequence after The Confidence Man." Auden chooses to portray Melville just as he is about to return to fiction after over thirty years of silence. It is essential to remember that all the critical and biographical analysis is written from this perspective in time. Melville spent the years from 1866-1885 as a District Inspector for the Customs House in New York. The quiet and isolation of these years are described in the first stanza of the poem.

Towards the end he sailed into an extraordinary mildness,
And anchored in his home and reached his wife
And rode within the harbour of her hand,
And went across each morning to an office
As though his occupation were another island.

It is at this time that Melville becomes aware that his formulations in Moby Dick of the relationship between good and evil (as well as between victim and victimizer) are "intricate and false." Auden uses the father-son relationship, discussed above in relation to "Matthew Arnold"
and "Wrapped in the Yielding Air," to characterize the change in Melville's perspective. He views *Moby Dick* as a reflection of Melville's oedipal fantasies. Ahab is "—The maniac hero hunting like a jewel/
The rare ambiguous monster that had maimed his sex." Auden, then, connects the Whale's symbolic castration of Ahab with the typical oedipal dream of being pursued by a beast. But the book describes *Moby Dick* not as pursuer, but pursued. In this way, Ishmael-Melville, who passively acquiesces to Ahab's drive for revenge, imaginatively participates in a projection of the child's necessarily suppressed desire to destroy his threatening rival. This aspect of the book is referred to as "Hatred for hatred ending in a scream/The unexplained survivor breaking off the nightmare—." In *The Enchafed Flood*, Auden explains the wider significance of the oedipal symbols in *Moby Dick*:

> The point is that the sexual symbolism is in its turn symbolic of the aesthetic, i.e., the Oedipus fantasy is a representation in aesthetic terms of the fantasy of being a self-originating god, i.e. of the ego (Father) begetting itself on the self (Mother), and castration is the ultimate symbol of aesthetic failure, of not being an aesthetic hero.82

Having lost his status as an aesthetic hero, Ahab wills to remain exceptional by his defiance of fate. From this time on he can define himself only in terms of his defiance and his determination for revenge.83

Evil in *Moby Dick* is mysterious and violent; Auden associates it with the whale and with the gale of terror. There is a strong necessitarian note to the book. However, the necessity which Melville emphasizes is that of evil. Auden alludes to this in the line from Ecclesiastes, "All, all is vanity," which Melville quotes in chapter ninety-six of
Moby Dick. Here Melville declares that "that mortal man who hath more joy than sorrow in him, that mortal man cannot be true—not true, or undeveloped." But the terror of Melville's vision of evil has blinded him to the existence of good. In such a world, the hero can only affirm his self-hood through defiance and in terms of an endless quest. Because only evil and misery have reality for him, the Melvillean hero of Typee and Mardi cannot stay long in Eden for happiness becomes a threat to his identity.

Goodness existed: that was the new knowledge
His terror had to blow itself out
To let him see it; but it was the gale had blown him
Past the Cape Horn of sensible success
Which cries: "This rock is Eden. Shipwreck here."

Therefore, Melville must arrive at a new formulation of the relationship between good and evil and of the hero's attitude towards this relationship before he can attain the peace described in stanza I. This new insight is only possible after his terror has "blown itself quite out." At last he is able to identify what the storm symbolized and to see the father-son relationship in a new light.

Even the punishment was human and a form of love:
The howling storm has been his father's presence
And all the time he had been carried on his father's breast.

Who now set him gently down and left him.

Auden seems to say that the dependency relation with father could only be renounced when the son is able to see the father's punishment as a "form of love" rather than as a threat of castration and thus ultimately of destruction of the self. If he can see the proper relation of good and evil, he is also now prepared to accept his role in their necessary
conflict. These are the insights Melville delineates in *Billy Budd*.

Evil is unspectacular and always human,
And shares our bed and eats at our table,
And we are introduced to Goodness every day
Even in drawing rooms among a crowd of faults;
He has a name like Billy and is almost perfect
But wears a stammer like a decoration;
And every time they meet the same thing has to happen

It is the Evil that is helpless like a lover
And has to pick a quarrel and succeeds,
And both are openly destroyed before our eyes.

For now he was awake and knew
No one is ever spared except in dreams.

In *Billy Budd*, Melville suggests that "the motive for Claggart's behavior half-stated only to be withdrawn because no motive will really do, is homosexual desire." In contrast to the formulation in *Moby Dick*, evil is helpless; it must attempt to destroy goodness, and it always ends by destroying itself as well. A new kind of necessity is introduced, the continual reenactment of this conflict between good and evil. And now Melville faces this necessity not with defiance or despair but with "exultation and surrender." In Billy's relation with the fatherly Captain Vere, Melville shows that "the punishment was human and a form of love."

Stanza six deals with this attitude of acceptance. Auden uses quotations from Melville of a much earlier date in a new way, emphasizing the change of perspective. "All, all is vanity" is no longer an expression of nihilistic despair; "For now the words descended like the calm of mountains." After Hawthorne's letter praising *Moby Dick,*)
Melville had written him a letter celebrating his illusion that the two had attained a perfect communion, saying

"Whence came you, Hawthorne? By what right do you drink from my flagon of life? And when I put it to my lips—lo, they are yours, and not mine. I feel that the Godhead is broken up like the bread at the Supper, and that we are pieces. Hence, this infinite fraternity of feeling."85

The allusion to Hawthorne shows Melville's realization that their friendship could never have been an "infinite fraternity of feeling." Once again, however, his reaction is neither bitterness nor despair. Instead he repeats "The Godhead is broken like bread. We are the pieces," but with a new meaning: "No one is ever spared except in dreams." Like Billy Budd, each man must be willing to undergo the crucifixion of the inevitable encounter with evil. The goodness within us, as a piece of the broken Godhead, is affirmed and the responsibilities it brings are joyfully accepted. Here Melville truly grasps the dialectical nature of freedom and necessity. He is at last able to affirm his selfhood, his freedom, thereby accepting and making meaningful his place in the framework of the necessary. This solution is the one which the alienated modern man described in "Wrapped in a Yielding Air" cannot attain. Auden refers in this poem to the ever repeated confrontation of good and evil.

Determined on Time's honest shield
The lamb must face the tigress,
Their faithful quarrel never healed.

Unlike Melville, the man of this poem is unable to accept this situation or his role within it and wishes instead for a savior to spare him from this responsibility:
Though, faithless, he consider
His dream of vaguer ages
Hunter and victim reconciled,
The lion and the adder,
The adder and the child.

The sixth stanza in "Herman Melville" is religious in tone, but it seems doubtful that Auden is attempting to describe Melville as Christian in any orthodox way.

The last line of the poem "And sat down at his desk and wrote a story" has two purposes. First, it means that Auden has been discussing the conception of Billy Budd and the insights which informed it rather than the finished work. Auden shows Melville at the point in time at which he is least limited by the Romantic conception of life.

For Auden, the finished story is a partial failure because the Romantics identify innocence and sinlessness.

"If the story were to be simply the story of the Tale . . . , this would not matter, but Melville wants Budd also to be the Second Adam, the sinless victim who suffers voluntarily for the sins of the whole world. But in order to do that he must know what sin is, or his suffering is not redemptive, but only one more sin on our part."86

In addition the Romantics assume that "the beautiful are sinless."87 But according to Auden in The Enchafed Flood, the religious hero must abandon such aesthetic advantages before he can serve as an example for us to imitate.88 Melville attempts to overcome these difficulties with suggested transition to consciousness in the interview with Captain Vere and the "stammer like a decoration." However, since Auden finds these efforts unsuccessful, he chooses to confine his analysis to the insights which inform the conception of Billy Budd.
The second effect of the final line is to portray Melville as working author rather than as poet-hero. Its tone tends to undercut the idea of the poet as transmitter of truths which ordinary men are not able to perceive and to place Melville firmly in the quiet context of stanza one.

Melville is presented as a transitional figure, turning away from Romantic misconceptions towards a more balanced, and less self-dramatizing view of the role of the artist.

In their 1939 arrangement, Auden places "Hell" between the poems on Melville and Rimbaud. This light poem on man's perversity

Yet pride alone could not insist
Did we not hope, if we persist
That one day Hell might actually exist

is an appropriate if ironic link between two romantics distinguished by their fascination with the satanic or dark side of the unconscious.

In the sonnet on Rimbaud, Auden again examines the artist in relation to the "truth" or insight into the nature of things which the artist tries to communicate through his works. In this poem, as with every study of Rimbaud, the critic must deal not only with the life and work, but with the legend of the young man who abandons poetry at the height of his powers. The special relationship Rimbaud believed must exist between the poet and absolute truth is, for Auden, the key to understanding all three. Rimbaud explained his view of the role of the poet in a letter with which Auden must have been familiar since he incorporates a quotation from it into line six of the poem. First of all, the true poet realizes that he himself does not create; rather,
his gift lies in the sensitivity which allows him to receive and transcribe a truth which resides outside himself.

For I is *someone else*. If brass wakes up as a bugle, it is no fault of its own. That is obvious to me: I am present at the hatching of my thought; I watch it; I listen to it; I make a sweep of the bow: the symphony stirs in the depths or leaps in a bound on the stage.

The reader will doubtless notice the similarity of Rimbaud's formulation to Groddeck's theory of the It which was discussed in relation to Ernst Toller. In addition, this isolated passage sounds a great deal like Wordsworth's "wise passiveness," or Shelley's Aeolian harp. In fact, Rimbaud is far from accepting the Aeolian harp as the metaphor of artistic creation. For central to his theory is the idea that the artist must actively seek to expand his consciousness until he overcomes his limitations and sees into the absolute nature of things.

I say that one must be a *visionary* (voyant), make oneself a VISIONARY. The Poet makes himself a *visionary* by a long, immense and reasoned derangement of all the senses. He seeks in himself every kind of love, of suffering, of madness, he exhausts all the poisons in himself in order to keep their quintessences. Unspeakable torment, in which he has need of all faith, all super-human power, in which he becomes among all the great Sick Man, the great Criminal, the great Damned—the supreme Scholar!—For he comes to the unknown.

The poet must create a special language so that, like Prometheus, he can bring his gift to ordinary men.

This language will be of the soul for the soul, inclusive of everything, scents, sounds, colours, thought hooking thought and drawing it one. The poet should define the amount of the unknown awakening in his time, in the universal soul; he should give more than the formula of his thoughts, than the notes of his march to Progress! Enormity becomes normal, absorbed by everybody, he would be really a multiplier of progress!
Eternal art will have its functions, as the poets are citizens. Poetry will no longer sing of action; it will be in advance.

This letter was written May 15, 1871. Auden indicates the preparation for it in the first quatrain. Rimbaud ran away penniless to Paris for the first time at fifteen. He returned to Paris twice more (once tramping to Brussels, too) before the writing of the Lettres du Voyant. Auden telescopes the many confrontations with reality experienced in these three trips into one moment at which "the rhetorician's lie/Burst like a pipe." Enid Starkie similarly sees a dramatic change after the last of these trips: "He was fully conscious himself of the great change that had taken place in him, and that his early poems were false, based as they were on derivative experience.

The second quatrain describes Rimbaud acting out his doctrine in Paris, Brussels, and London with the older poet Verlaine as his companion.

Drinks bought him by his weak and lyrical friend
His senses systematically deranged,
To all accustomed nonsense put an end;
Till he from lyre and weakness was estranged.

Having thus gained access to visions and hallucinations, Rimbaud further follows his theory by creating a new language to express the highly personal reality he sees. But he is not satisfied to fulfill the demands for expressive poetry; he also expects his poetry to be Promethean, to bring the vision into the world of ordinary men. The sestet describes Rimbaud's disillusionment with both parts of his theory. In The Enchafed Flood, Auden uses Rimbaud's disillusionment as an example
of the realization "that the artist is not, as he had thought, Don
Quixote, the Religious Hero, but only Ishmael, the explorer of possi-
bility." He quotes Rimbaud's farewell to poetry, Une Saison d'Enfer,
which is alluded to in the poem as "the hell of childhood."

I! I who called myself magus or angel, dispensed with all mor¬
ality, I am thrown back to the soil, with yet a duty to seek,
and enough actuality to grasp! Peasant! -- I will ask pardon
for having nourished myself on lies. And now let us go.

Poetry fails because it is merely a "special illness of the ear," a
mimesis in words of reality. Rimbaud decides to become reality, rather
than to describe it.

Now, galloping through Africa, he dreamed
Of a new self, the son, the engineer,
His truth acceptable to lying men.

This poem is not just a biography, however, but the legend of
the promising young genius who abandons poetry for the life of action.
Like any saint's legend, the poem opens with an account of his conver-
sion: "the cold made him a poet." But this is balanced by the account,
in lines nine through eleven, of his disillusionment with the dream of
arriving at truth through poetry. Similarly his debilitating life in
Paris is contrasted to the picture of the courageous and active life
as explorer and engineer. The Rimbaud legend usually emphasizes the
voluntary nature of the abandonment of poetry, but Auden presents Rim-
baud as a disillusioned young man who refuses to give up the dream he
had hoped to attain through poetry, that of making "His truth acceptable
to lying men." Rimbaud escapes to Africa, the world not yet corrupted
by civilization. This reflects the primitivism which is so often part
of the Romantic's view of the world.
In Another Time, the poem on Rimbaud is preceded by "Brussels in Winter" (CP, 151). Brussels does figure prominently in the darker parts of Rimbaud's biography and the poem's central metaphor, the city as prostitute, is one which Rimbaud uses in "Paris Repopulated." It is clear that like "The Capital," "Brussels in Winter" is intended as a portrait of the false city, a city which is simply an aggregation of people rather than a true community. Despite the numerous striking images in the poem, it lacks unity. This lack of coherence may be an intentional experiment. That is, Auden may be attempting to capture in the poem the plight of the city.

Wandering the cold streets tangled like old string,
Coming on fountains silent in the frost,
The city still escapes you; it has lost
The qualities that say, "I am a Thing."

The Romantic poet, epitomized by Rimbaud, reacts to the false city by leaving it behind as he embarks on his endless quest. The city is central to Auden's differentiation between the role of the Romantic poet and the role of the contemporary poet. Having quoted Rimbaud's farewell to literature which I cited above, Auden concludes The Enchafed Flood with this contrast:

We live in a new age in which the artist neither can have such a unique heroic importance nor believes in the Art-God enough to desire it, an age, for instance, when the necessity of dogma is once more recognized, not as the contradiction of reason and feeling but as their ground and foundation, in which the heroic image is not the nomad wanderer through the desert or over the ocean, but the less exciting figure of the builder, who renews the ruined walls of the city. Our temptations are not theirs [the Romantics]. We are less likely to be tempted by solitude into Promethean pride; we are far more likely to become cowards in the face of the tyrant who would compel us to lie in service of the False City. It is not madness we need
flee but prostitution. Let us, reading the logs of their fatal but heroic voyages, remember their courage.97

One of the reasons that Rimbaud interests Auden is that he creates a new diction for his poetry; Yeats, the next figure to be considered is also valued for his handling of language. In the elegy on Freud Auden asks which figures should be selected for poetic commemoration in 1939 "When there are so many we shall have to mourn/When grief has been made so public." Moreover, Auden is acutely aware that once the figure has been selected, the modern poet must find a new way of expressing his grief. There is a long tradition of elegaic verse in the English language.

In general, the elegy has opened with expressions of more or less violent personal grief on the part of the speaker for his lost object. This object so fills his mind and is so magnified in importance to him that he feels that the grief is universal, that all nature and its invisible forces join in the lamentation. 

...CUSTOMARILY THE ELEGAIC UTTERANCE MOVES ON TO AMPHIFY FURTHER THE MAGNITUDE OF ITS OBJECT AND THE PATHOS OF HIS LOSS, SPEAKING OF HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS ASPECTS OF HIS PERSONAL GREATNESS, HIS FAME, HIS BEAUTY OR IMPRESSIVENESS EVEN IN DEATH.98

Auden finds these conventions inappropriate for an age which has suffered and must prepare to suffer again the ravages of total war. "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" (CP, 48) clearly illustrates Auden's rejection of the usual elegaic stance. The first and final stanzas of Part I of the poem end in an ironic parody of the pathetic fallacy: "O all the instruments agree/The day of his death was a dark cold day." In contrast to the usual heightening of emotion, the diction of this first section is characterized by neutral words and constant qualification: "almost deserted," "fairly accustomed," "almost convinced," "a few thousand," "slightly unusual."
Having ironically verified the fact that the day of Yeats' death was appropriately dark and cold, Auden moves in the second stanza to a direct denial of the universal effects of Yeats' "disappearance." Nature is, in fact, separate and unaffected:

> Far from his illness
> The wolves ran on through the evergreen forests,
> The peasant river was untempted by the fashionable quays.

Auden's insistence on this point recalls his praise of the "old masters" in "Musee des Beaux Arts" who show "how everything turns away/Quite leisurely from the disaster...." The designation of the forests as "evergreen" underlines his rejection of a responsive nature. The "peasant rivers" and "fashionable quays" also recall Yeats' ambition to preserve and unite in his poetry the order and beauty of the aristocratic way of life with the honesty of expression of a peasantry still close to the land. In this way Auden begins his association of water imagery with the language of poetry. At the same time, the line introduces the separation between the man and the poetry, "By mourning tongues/The death of the poet was kept from his poems" which is central to parts two and three of the elegy.

Stanza three moves to the point of view of the dying man, but the account is quickly depersonalized by the comparison to the internal rebellion and overthrow of a political system. The undercutting reaches its height when the physical disintegration is said to result from a power failure: "The current of his feeling failed."

"He became his admirers" turns out to be as misleading as instrumental verification of the pathetic fallacy. The political analogy is
continued in the fourth stanza. When a country falls, those traditions and attitudes which gave it a sense of nationality are preserved only in the lives of its scattered refugees who must adapt themselves to a new way of life.

Now he is scattered among a hundred cities
And wholly given over to unfamiliar affections
To find his happiness in another kind of world
And be punished under a foreign code of conscience.

The assimilation of immigrants suggests a parallel which implies even less survival of Yeats as a unique individual, the assimilation of food into tissue: "The words of a dead man/Are modified in the guts of the living." Moreover, the use of "words" emphasizes that the work of art is no more permanent as an organic entity than its creator. This is a reference to Yeats' preoccupation with this very problem; some of his greatest poems reflect Yeats' changing perspectives on the relation of the poet and his work of art to time and its destruction.

The final stanza, in comparison with the usual elegy makes very modest claims for the poet's future fame. "Tomorrow" is unpleasantly similar to the present. It is a world of commercialism and poverty in which each man struggles not to become free, but to believe in his illusion of freedom. The "cell" is both the reminder of the isolation deplored in the epigraph to Another Time and a reference to the limitations inherent in the human condition.

Auden wishes in this poem to reevaluate the role of the poet and of poetry. His first task is to examine usual claims for the importance of both and to discard what he finds to be exaggerated or misleading.
The first half of the poem is based on a tension between the expectations raised in the reader by the elegaic mode and Auden's point by point refusal to gratify these expectations. In part one, he is mainly concerned with denying the inflated picture of the importance of the poet's death and fame; in part two he turns the same critical eye on the poet's life. Yeats, whose theory of the masks is based on a desire to make his life in some sense a work of art, is a particularly appropriate figure for Auden's reappraisal. And the reappraisal is a radical one. Auden makes a sharp separation between the life and the art. The beliefs of Yeats the man are dismissed as "silly like us"; his reverence for aristocratic values, his attempts to evade the impotence of old age, his ambition for Ireland become "The parish of rich women, physical decay," and "mad Ireland." As if this were not clear enough, Auden slips "yourself" in the catalogue of those things which Yeats' "gift" "survived." In thus describing Yeats' poetic art, not as a product in any sense of his life, but rather as a separate quality which succeeds in spite of his life, Auden is rejecting three very different formulations of the relation of the poet to his art. If the artist's beliefs are irrelevant, he does not conform to the eighteenth century view of the poet as one who instructs by pleasing. The Romantics replaced this conception with the expressive theory of art, but Auden denies that the life is the basis of the poetry. Finally, this account supplements with the Freudian view that art is motivated by the artist's need to compensate for his neurosis (which Auden himself subscribes to in "Pascal" and "The Quest"). "Mad Ireland hurt
him into poetry"; but in the last analysis his achievement goes far beyond the compulsion of his pain, and must be considered apart from his personality. Auden’s insistence on this complete separation can in part be explained by the fact that in a volume very much concerned with the threats of fascism, Auden is attempting to come to terms with a poet whose sympathy with Mussolini is as undeniable as his obvious literary merit. However, it is a mistake to dismiss Auden’s rejection of these poetic theories as a mere strategy in defense of Yeats. He is, instead, preparing the ground for the second half of the poem in which he intends to present a very different view of the role of the poet.

The last statement of the half of the poem devoted to describing what poetry is not, summarizes the implications of all that has gone before: "poetry makes nothing happen." This realization is at the heart of Rimbaud’s abandonment of poetry; perhaps like Auden he realized that "the 'unacknowledged legislators of the world' describes the secret police, not the poets." Instead

... it survives
In the valley of its sayings where executives
Would never want to tamper; it flows south
From ranches of isolation and busy griefs,
Raw towns we believe and die in; it survives
A way of happening, a mouth.

In part one, Auden has described how the poet dies and is "scattered" and "modified." In part two, he is concerned with what "survives" (the word is used three times in ten lines). Here, he reintroduces the water imagery; the identification with language first implied in
"peasant rivers" is reinforced. Also central to this passage is the imagery of the frontier. In describing man's isolation, Auden has substituted "ranches of isolation" and "raw towns we believe and die in" for "the cell of himself." For all his pride in his civilization, modern man has not yet been able to construct the true community based on love and brotherhood. But, unlike the cell of part one, the frontier implies at least the beginning of the work of civilization and a real, rather than an illusory, freedom. The river of language, which flows south through the newly settled land, provides a means of communication and exchange for these frontier outposts. Poetry does not effect action; it is enough that it determines our articulation of action which, as Auden realizes, in turn controls our attitude towards the action. It is "a mouth" and therefore "a way of happening."

Part III commends Yeats to the soil in the jingly rhythms of "Under Ben Bulben," the epitaph Yeats wrote for himself. Stanzas 2-4 make assumptions of parts one and two clear and explicit. First, the final judge appealed to in any elegy is Time; second, in this elegy, the only element which survives this judgment is language. Because he writes well, Yeats is pardoned for his beliefs. But, Auden does not merely make this a cancellation of debt. In the last five stanzas, he goes on to describe how Yeats' language, apart from and even antithetical to his wrongheaded views, can become a positive force in the contemporary world. First, Auden describes a world clinging to appeasement in which each nation wishes to isolate itself from the dreadful responsibility of opposing Hitler. The poem was first published
March 8, 1939, or in other words, about midway between England's aban-
donment of Czechoslovakia in September, 1938, and the beginning of
World War II in September, 1939.

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark
And the living nations wait
Each sequestered in its hate;

Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.

The water imagery appears again in "seas of pity." In part two, the
river of language to some degree connects the "ranches of isolation."
In the epigraph and in "Wrapped in a Yielding Air," Auden has attrib-
uted man's isolation to his failure to love; in "As I Walked Out One
Evening," he further points out that "Life remains a blessing/Although
you cannot bless." The frozen "seas of pity" refer to man's isolation
in an image which unites the allusions to the power of language with
those to man's failure to love his fellow man and to bless life. How
can language substitute the life-affirming pity of brotherhood for the
impotent self-pity of "As I Walked Out One Evening"? Auden's answer
lies in the paradoxes of the last three stanzas. Their difficulty is
much reduced when we understand the question, but their meaning cannot
be unraveled unless we see them as a formulation of the poet's ability
to grasp and illuminate the proper relationship between freedom and
necessity. So that there will be no accusation of inconsistency, Auden
states again that the "poetry makes nothing happen"; that is, the poet's
voice is "unconstraining." As in part two, however, it can affect our
attitude towards what does happen; in this case it can "persuade us to rejoice." It does this by showing how we can be productive within the framework of our human limitations and necessary failures. "With the farming of a verse," the poet can "Make a vineyard of the curse." Exactly what is this "curse"? There is, of course, a reference to the Biblical account of man's fall. Man has attained knowledge and self-consciousness. However, as Auden points out in the Smith College Address, although man has the knowledge of good and evil, he does not have the god-like power to always choose the good. Therefore, in one sense this knowledge carries with it the curse of guilt. Cast out of the garden of unconsciousness, man must face suffering and failure. How then can the poet "Sing of human unsuccess/In a rapture of distress"? Or in Yeats' own terminology how can man meet life with "tragic joy"? The illusion of complete freedom is just that, an illusion. On the other hand, the man who believes he has no freedom will use necessity as a refuge from responsibility. The "healing fountain" of language can make a "vineyard" in the "deserts of the heart" because it brings both acceptance of necessity and affirmation of freedom. Thus, the true role of the poet is to illuminate this paradox. Thus, he can "In the prison of his days/Teach the free man how to praise."

The reader by now will recognize that Auden is speaking of the same artistic insight which he attributes to Melville in the conception of *Billy Budd*. This poem adds an account of language as the agency through which the artist communicates this insight. It is especially interesting because it is the only poem which explicitly deals with the
connection between the role of the poet and his poetry and the world situation created by "political Romanticism."

I have chosen to discuss "Edward Lear" (CP, 76) last because Auden characteristically undercut the seriousness of the other biographical-critical sketches with this playful portrait of the lovable nonsense poet. Like a skillful line drawing, the portrait of Edward Lear captures the essence of his biography by selecting telling details.

Mr. Lear was an English landscape artist who is remembered as the poet laureate of nonsense. His Book of Nonsense is a collection of nonsense rhymes and limericks accompanied by deliberately crude line drawings. These delightful verses were written to amuse himself and the grandchildren of his patron, the Earl of Darby. A world traveler, Lear left England in 1836 to seek a better climate and to search out the picturesque scenes which he carefully and faithfully copied.

The octet of the poem deals with Lear's relation to the real world. In the first four lines, we see his loneliness and his rueful appraisal of his own ugliness. The next four capture what Holbrook Jackson calls "the something in him that would not grow up." These lines describe an alien universe as seen through the eyes of a child. "They" is the hostile and abstract public of a limerick such as

There was an old man of Whitehaven
Who danced a quadrille with a raven
They said: It's absurd
To encourage this bird
So they smashed the old man of Whitehaven.

The sestet depicts the world which Lear created for himself. "Nonsense," says Jackson,
was the safety-valve of his consciousness responding to most of his approaches to himself and his environment. It became ultimately a world of refuge from the trials and irritations of life: Ill health, lack of means, and above all, an over-strung sensibility.

This unhurried and charming poem is a particularly good example of Auden's mastery of the sonnet form. While the poem is packed, it is never overcrowded.

Using the method outlined in "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," that is through language, Lear creates the kind of true community which is the ideal of this volume. In what could be described as a self-parody of his exploration of the poetic role and rejection of Romanticism, Auden presents Lear as the Romantic poet-hero.

To begin with, he is estranged and lonely; he finds himself in a hostile world inhabited by frightening and faceless masses. Moreover, he has carried the glorification of childhood to its logical extreme; he refuses to remain in the adult world. One may equate his voyage with the charge of escapism so often leveled at Romantics, or one can simply see it as another variation of the quest motif. The unusual thing about Lear as Romantic wanderer is that he finds the land he seeks. Successful completion of the quest is not to be expected. Lear does so by becoming the land he seeks. Auden has combined the quest motif with the conception of the poet as god-like creator. Lear creates a nonsense world with nonsense alphabets, geography, botany, natural history, and anthropology. He is thus transformed from a painter of landscape to a creator of the totally new landscape: "He became a land." The separation of the last line emphasizes his role as a maker. To make the gentle
irony complete Lear fulfills the hitherto unattainable goals of Romanticism. He not only creates a microcosm; he becomes one. He completes the quest; he escapes from the hostile world. He is reintegrated into a new and loving society which he himself has made possible.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The unity of the volume derives not from any one perspective or conclusion, but from Auden's examination from many points of view of the proper role for the poet in a time of historical crisis. His explorations are largely defined by his rejection of the Romantic view of the world and the poet's relation to it.

His anti-Romanticism, in poetry and prose, is motivated not so much by a desire to break with the past, as by the conviction that the errors of Romanticism must be corrected because they threaten to deprive each man, and thus mankind as a whole, of his opportunity to assert his freedom, his humanity, in a productive and responsible way.

Only when man can recognize and accept the nature of his humanity, can he learn to love, and thus begin to achieve the ideal of Another Time: the construction of the true community, the Just City.
NOTES


2 See especially M. Roberts, Spectator, CLXV (July 26, 1940), 100; F. R. Leavis, Scrutiny, IX (September, 1940), 200; Listener, XXIV (August 22, 1940), 282-3.


5 These are too numerous to cite here. They will be identified as they are discussed.

6 (New York, 1950). Afterwards cited EF.


8 It is convenient to mention here my indebtedness to Robert Roth, "The Sophistication of W. H. Auden: a Sketch in the Longinian Method," Modern Philology, XLVIII (1951), 198. He uses three poems from Another Time, "Lay down your sleeping head, my love," "Musée des beaux arts," and "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," to discuss Auden's modernity. His point of view is both valid and rewarding as is his discussion of the individual poem.


9 Smith Alumnae Quarterly, p. 353.

10 Ibid., p. 354.

11 Ibid., p. 353.
12 Ibid., p. 358.


14 Pp. xix-xxii.


16 PEL, V, p. xxi.

17 Ibid., p. xxi.

18 Ibid., p. xvi.

19 Ibid., p. xx.


23 PEL, IV, p. xiv.

24 EE, p. 150.

25 Ibid., p. 151.

26 PEL, IV, p. xvii.

27 Ibid., pp. xvii-xviii.

28 EE, p. 151.

29 Auden, "Jacob and the Angel," p. 252.

30 PEL, IV, p. xvi.

31 With, I think, the obvious exception of Blake. Coleridge attempts such a formulation in "Christobel." His inability to complete the poem may be related to this inadequacy in the Romantic view.


PEL, IV, p. xvi.


Not included in W. H. Auden, *Collected Poetry* (New York, 1945) which is hereafter cited as *CP*.


Ibid., pp. 144-5.


Abrams, pp. 52-69.

*Modern Philology*, XLVIII (1951), 197.

P. 292. This review appeared on December 27, 1939; the poem on Freud was first published in the *Kenyon Review* (Winter, 1940). This will demonstrate that Auden's changing perspectives on Eros do not follow a strict chronological progression. At this period, he merely shifts positions in order to test the validity of each one.


Not included in *CP*.

*New Verse* (January, 1938), 16-17.

Ibid., p. 17.

Ibid.


Ibid., p. 69.

56 Housman, p. 77.


63 P. 43.


65 Alfred Noyes, Voltaire (New York, 1939), p. 577. See also Norman L. Torrey, The Spirit of Voltaire, pp. 316-22. These are the books reviewed by Auden in "A Great Democrat."


67 W. A. Willibrand, Ernst Toller (Norman, Oklahoma, 1941), p. 5.

68 Ibid., p. 17.


70 Ibid.

71 Willibrand, p. 42.

72 Pinthus, p. 7.


74 "Ernst Toller," The New Republic, LXXXIX (June 7, 1939), 133.


76 Raymond M. Weaver, Herman Melville, Mariner and Mystic (New York, 1921), p. 349.
Weaver and Lewis Mumford, *Herman Melville* (New York, 1929).

Mumford, p. 337.

The final line, "And sat down at his desk and wrote a story," brings the account up to the completion of *Billy Budd* in point of fact, but it obviously adds no insights to the pre-composition account.

Auden does not note Melville's retirement in 1885, three years before he began *Billy Budd*. However, the point made about the character of Melville's life is also valid for the period after retirement.


EF, p. 139.

Ibid., p. 140.

Ibid., p. 143.

Mumford, p. 200.

EF, p. 146.

Ibid., p. 146.

Ibid., p. 147.


Rickword, p. 153. Italics and capitals in all passages quoted from Rimbaud are the poet's own.

Ibid., p. 154.


Rickword, p. 153.

EF, pp. 152-3. Auden defines the Religious Hero as "one who is committed to anything with an absolute passion, i.e., to him it is absolute truth, his god" (EF, p. 92).

At nineteen Rimbaud left both France and literature. He reappeared sixteen years later as an engineer and semi-independent chieftain in Africa (Enid Starkie, part III).
In the *Enchafed Flood* Auden defines a true community as "a group of rational beings associated on the basis of common love." (*EF*, p. 31).


A very similar appraisal of Yeats is available in Auden's prose "The Public vs. The Late Mr. W. B. Yeats," *Partisan Review*, VI (1939), 46-51.


See also W. H. Auden, "Yeats, The Master of Diction," *The Saturday Review of Literature*, XXII (June 8, 1940), 14.

Edward Lear did not invent the limerick as is sometimes claimed, but he did make it a popular form for light verse.


*EF*, pp. 27-8.

Jackson, p. x.
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Willibrand, W. A. *Ernst Toller*. Norman, Oklahoma, 1941.
Because *Another Time* is difficult to obtain, I have included this table of contents taken from B. C. Bloomfield's *W. H. Auden, A Bibliography* (pp. 33-6) in order to indicate the arrangement of the poems in the original volume.

Part I  People and Places.

I  Wrapped in a yielding air, beside . . .

II  Law, say the gardeners, is the sun . . .

III  The creatures: They are our past and our future: the poles between which our desire unceasingly is discharged . . .

IV  Schoolchildren: Here are all the captivities; the cells are as real . . .

V  Oxford: Nature is so near: the rooks in the college garden . . .

VI  A. E. Housman: No one, not even Cambridge, was to blame . . .

VII  Edward Lear: Left by his friend to breakfast alone on the white . . .

VIII  It's farewell to the drawing-room's civilised cry . . .

IX  Perhaps I always knew what they were saying . . .

X  Brussels in Winter: Wandering the cold streets tangled like old string . . .

XI  Rimbaud: The nights, the railway-arches, the bad sky . . .

XII  Hell is neither here nor there . . .

XIII  Herman Melville: Towards the end he sailed into an extraordin¬ary mildness . . .

XIV  The capital: Quarter of pleasures where the rich are always waiting . . .

XV  The hour-glass whispers to the lion's paw . . .
XVI Pascal: O had his mother, near her time, been praying...

XVII Voltaire at Ferney: Perfectly happy now, he looked at his estate...

XVIII Lay your sleeping head, my love...

XIX Orpheus: What does the song hope for?

XX The novelist: Encased in talent like a uniform...

XXI Musee des Beaux Arts: About suffering they were never wrong...

XXII The composer: All the others translate: the painter sketches...

XXIII Not as that dream Napoleon, rumour's dread and centre...

XXIV Where do they come from? Those whom we so much dread...

XXV Gare du Midi: A nondescript express in from the South...

XXVI As I walked out one evening...

XXVII Matthew Arnold: His gift knew what he was—-a dark disordered city...

XXVIII Dover: Steep roads, a tunnel through the downs are the approaches...

XXIX Song: Warm are the still and lucky miles...

XXX For us like any other fugitive...

XXXI Underneath the leaves of life...

Part II Lighter poems

I Sharp and silent in the...

II Three ballads

1. Miss Gee: Let me tell you a little story...

2. James Honeyman: James Honeyman was a silent child...

3. Victor: Victor was a little baby...
III Four cabaret songs for Miss Hedli Anderson.

1. Johnny: O the valley in the summer where I and my John . . .

2. O tell me the truth about love: Some say that love's a little boy . . .

3. Funeral Blues: Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone . . .

4. Calypso: Driver, drive faster and make a good run . . .

IV Madrigal: O lurcher-loving collier black as night . . .

V Roman wall blues: Over the heather the wet wind blows . . .

VI Epitaph on a tyrant: Perfection, of a kind, was what he was after . . .

VII The unknown citizen: He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be . . .

VIII Refugee blues: Say this city has ten million souls . . .

Part III Occasional poems.

I Spain 1937: Yesterday all the past. The language of size . . .

II In memory of W. B. Yeats: He disappeared in the dead of winter . . .

III In memory of Ernst Toller: The shining neutral summer has no voice . . .

IV September 1, 1939: I sit in one of the dives . . .

V In memory of Sigmund Freud: When there are so many we shall have to mourn . . .

VI Epithalamion: While explosives blow to dust . . .