

The
W. H. Auden Society
Newsletter

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An Appeal to Members

The Society operates on a proverbial shoestring (almost on a literal one), and membership fees do not quite cover the cost of printing and mailing the *Newsletter*. Because the costs of a sending a reminder letter are prohibitive, we rely on members to send their annual renewals voluntary. If you have not sent a renewal in the past year, could you kindly do so now? Payment can conveniently be made by any of the methods described on the last page of this number.

Excited Talk: The Political Ambivalences of *Look, Stranger!*

Auden's poem later called "1929", written probably between late 1929 and early 1930, tells of workers' street demonstrations and running battles with the police in Berlin, "Shooting and barricade in street", "a friend / Talking excitedly of final war / Of proletariat against police", and ends with a vision of revolutionary apocalypse in October 1929, the month of the Wall Street Crash.¹ Critics have nevertheless consistently sought to dissociate its chiasm from any immediate political application. It is more difficult to deny the political implications of the poem first published as "A Communist to Others" in *The Twentieth Century* in September 1932, though Auden's later repudiation of this embarrassing text has been generally approved. Its publishing history in fact tracks the decisive shift in Comintern policy that occurred during the course of 1934. Julian Symons, reading it when it first appeared, thought its intention "straightforward: an appeal to join the Party. We never doubted that the poet was himself a Party member".² In the article "Left?" which appeared in *Cambridge Left* in the winter of 1933-34, John Cornford commended the poem for its "far more virile and direct revolutionary form" than lines of Stephen Spender's beginning "They walk home remembering the straining red flags", and cited two caustic stanzas from the poem as evidence that "there is no middle position between revolution and reaction", adding, of Auden's poem, "There is no ambiguity about this".³

In the decade before the Hitler-Stalin pact, there were two key phases to Comintern policy. The first was that of the so-called "Third

¹ W. H. Auden, *Poems* (London: Faber, 1930; 2nd edn., 1933), 61-6. The phrase "final war" echoes the "lutte finale" envisaged in Eugene Pottier's original French version of the *Internationale*, anthem of the Second (Socialist), Third (Communist) and Fourth (Trotskyist) Internationals.

² Julian Symons. Contribution to "'A Communist to Others': A Symposium", Kate Bucknell and Nicholas Jenkins (eds.), *Auden Studies, Vol. 1* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 178-81; at 178. I have explored the ideology of this poem more fully in my own contribution to the same symposium, "Auden's Others" (186-191).

³ John Galassi (ed.), *Understand the Weapon Understand the Wound: Selected Writings of John Cornford* (Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1976), 59-61.

Period" strategy, which ran from 1928 until Hitler's accession to power in 1933 required a major ideological revision. This rethink gave rise, some time in 1934-35, to the policy officially announced at the Comintern's Seventh Congress in 1935 as that of the "United Front Against Fascism", more commonly known as the "Popular Front". The "Third Period" strategy had been adopted by the Communist International at its Sixth Congress in 1928. Its outstanding literary representation is probably André Malraux's novel of the Shanghai Uprising, *La Condition Humaine*, published in 1933. This "ultra-left" policy envisaged capitalism to be entering its third and terminal period. In preparation for the final struggle, national Communist parties were called on to denounce all other working-class and socialist organisations as "social fascists" and "false lefts", reject all collaboration with them, and refuse to participate in any "United Front" strategies. A cult of armed insurrection was favoured, irrespective of local circumstances, logistical capacity, or the likelihood of success. "Class against class" was the slogan for this conclusive phase of the struggle.

In its earliest version, "A Communist to Others" looks like a straightforward piece of "Third Period" recruitment literature. The "Others" it addresses are, to begin with, those non-Communist workers who have to be persuaded that it is in their "objective" interests to join with the Communists. But it also addresses another "Other", one Auden is much happier to confront, gloatingly informing the bourgeoisie that the future is "not in love with you at all", but with us, the Communists. It goes on to address an even more insidious enemy, what the poem calls "That army intellectual / Of every kind of liberal / Smarmy with friendship but of all / There are none false". Such petty-bourgeois false lefts will "fade away like morning dew" once the revolution begins in earnest, exposed as what the original title of his 1934 essay on the old school called "The Liberal Fascist".

There is little doubt about Auden's hard-line leftism at the time he was writing such verse. Harold Nicolson, who had been a minister in Ramsay Macdonald's cabinet, and had left the Labour Party with Oswald Mosley and John Strachey to found the initially "left-wing" New Party, recorded in his diary for 4 August 1933 a very similar indictment, in another poem of Auden's:

Wystan Auden read us some of his new poem in the evening.
... It is not so much a defence of communism as an attack
upon all the ideas of comfort and complacency which will

make communism difficult to achieve in this country. It interests me particularly as showing, at last, that I belong to an older generation. I follow Auden in his derision of patriotism, class distinctions, comfort, and all the ineptitudes of the middle-classes. But when he also derides the other soft little harmless things which make my life comfortable, I feel a chill autumn wind. I feel that were I a communist the type of person whom I should most wish to attack would not be the millionaire or the imperialist, but the soft, reasonable, tolerant, secure, self-satisfied intellectuals like Vita and myself. A man like Auden with his fierce repudiation of half-way houses and his gentle integrity makes one feel terribly discontented with one's own smug successfulness. I go to bed feeling terrible Edwardian and back-number, and yet, thank God, delighted that people like Wystan Auden should actually exist.⁴

By the time "A Communist to Others" came to be collected in *Look, Stranger!* in 1936, Auden had revised it considerably, dropping the combatively sectarian title, deleting several stanzas, and substituting, for the "Comrades" of the opening address, the less contentious "Brothers". These revisions are usually interpreted as evidence that he was already backing away from Communist commitment (though he had yet to go to Spain). There is an alternative explanation. The revisions certainly soften the aggressively militant tone of the original, but with a specific political purpose in mind. "Comrades" spoke only to the converted, whereas the ecumenical "Brothers" opens out to the wider Labour and trade union movement, where it was the customary mode of fraternal address, with Christian rather than explicitly Communist associations. What we see in the changes is the emergence in poetry of the political line associated with the Popular Front strategy inaugurated by the Comintern at its Seventh Congress in 1935.

There is little sign of a retreat from Communist commitment anywhere in the volume. Rather, in a book which merges homo-eroticism with spilt Christianity, "communism" masquerades under the

⁴ Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters 1930-39, vol. 1* (London: Collins, 1966), 153. It is possible to reconstruct, from Nicolson's somewhat garbled recollection, that the poem Auden recited is "In the year of my youth...", which remained unpublished in his lifetime. Lucy McDiarmid printed an annotated text in *Review of English Studies*, August 1978.

buzz word of universal “love” (the “Charity” of Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians). The book is all atremble with the expectation of apocalypse, and of renewal the other side of catastrophe. Its “Prologue” evokes some “possible dream” that, in Leninist terms, will “lay on our talk and kindness / Its military silence, its surgeon’s idea of pain”, emerging “out of the Future into actual [and capitalised] History”. Its second poem, “Out on the lawn”, rebukes “Our metaphysical distress” and liberal “kindness to ten persons” in the name of “The gathering multitudes outside / Whose glances hunger weakens”, and welcomes the “crumpling flood” of revolution that will overwhelm this bourgeois complacency. The third poem invokes an anonymous Lenin’s description (according to his wife Krupskaya) of the Communist militant’s preparedness “To hunger, work illegally, / And be anonymous”. In “The chimneys are smoking”, the “political orator” (originally “Communist orator”) lands at the pier to proselytise. “Here on the cropped grass” concludes in Marxist terms that “men are changed by what they do”, while “August for the people” speaks of “this hour of crisis and dismay” which will “Make action urgent and its nature clear”, as “all sway forward on the dangerous flood / Of history”. In all these instances, it is action, not “talk and kindness”, which is required of the politically committed individual. The volume’s “Epilogue” invokes Lenin again anonymously as “the neat man / To their east who ordered Gorki [the city, that is] to be electrified” as the figure of the future’s “really better / World”, echoing Lenin’s formula that “Communism equals soviets plus electricity.” Auden is not retreating from Communism here. He is simply converting the tone of his polemic into a more inviting, even seductive idea of Communism, as did that symptomatic volume of the Popular Front to which he, John Cornford and many other left-leaning intellectuals had contributed in 1935, *Christianity and the Social Revolution*, published by the fellow-travelling Victor Gollancz and edited by the Communist John Lewis.

The most revealing instance of the way *Look, Stranger!* toes the Party line can be found in what is now an almost completely opaque allusion in “Out on the lawn”. In later years the poem was severely edited, shortened and rewritten by Auden to become, as “A Summer Night”, an instance of his first inklings of a return to Christian communion, a cover story insistently explicated in his 1964 Introduction to

Anne Fremantle's book *The Protestant Mystics*.⁵ In its initial form, however, it is clearly a *political* revelation that the poem affirms. Exactly halfway through the original version, it speaks guiltily of "we / Whom hunger cannot move", enduring self-indulgently only "The tyrannies of love", who "do not care to know / Where Poland draws her Eastern bow, / What violence is done". Most readers have lazily conflated this allusion with Hitler's invasion of Poland six years later, which provided the impulse for the famous, subsequently suppressed, "September 1, 1939". In this scenario, this is "brave little Poland", subjected to Nazi bullying. But in June 1933, when "Out on the lawn" was written, Hitler had only recently come to power—an electoral success followed a day later, on March 6, by Polish occupation of the largely German "free city" of Danzig (Gdansk).⁶ Poland was itself seen by most people on the Left at the time as a semi-fascist regime, ruled by General Józef Piłsudski, from 1926 until his death in 1935 de facto dictator of the state resurrected from the ruin of empires by the Treaty of Versailles. Ode IV of *The Orators* lumps him in unequivocally with Mussolini and Hitler in a presumably ironic list of demagogues who "have charm / But they make such a noise". Read properly, "Out on the lawn" makes it clear that it is Poland that is the aggressor, Poland which does the violence. This is a real tyranny, in contrast to those "tyrannies of love" and the merely "metaphysical distress" suffered by the well-meaning English liberal. That drawing of an "Eastern bow"—one, that is, pointing towards the Soviet Ukraine—is the key. The conundrum is illuminated by a passing reference in John Cornford's essay "The Struggle for Power in Western Europe", published in *Cambridge Left* in Spring 1934:

Fascism exploits the Nationalist feelings of the petty bourgeoisie to divert their hostility towards the existing regime by whipping up a chauvinist frenzy against some foreign scapegoat—in Germany, the Jews; in Poland the Ukrainian minority.⁷

⁵ W. H. Auden, "The Protestant Mystics", reprinted in *Forewords and Afterwords* (London: Faber, 1974), 49-78; at 69-70.

⁶ John Fuller notes that "the reference to Poland may ultimately involve the dispute over the Polish Corridor", *W. H. Auden: A Commentary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 149.

⁷ Galassi, 64.

The ultra-nationalist Polish state instigated, during 1932-34, a series of brutal assaults on the predominantly Ukrainian civilian population of Galicia, in eastern Poland, allegedly in reprisal for anti-Polish terrorist activities by the secessionist "Ukrainian National Army". Whatever the rights and wrongs of this conflict, Soviet *Realpolitik* in this period cynically and self-interestedly encouraged such secessionist movements among Poland's Ukrainian minority, and campaigned on their behalf. Auden's poem evokes what his left-wing readers would have immediately recognised as a cause célèbre of Communist propaganda. That Stalin at the time was himself responsible for massive repression and famine in the Ukraine is an irony more apparent in hindsight than it was to fellow travellers of Auden's and Cornford's day.

Poem 21 in *Look, Stranger!*, in its initial publication in the *Listener*, and subsequently, called "A Bride in the '30s", written in November 1934, is perhaps the most interesting illustration of this volume's ideological transition from Third Period to Popular Front mindsets. The recollection of a trip to central Europe, including Nazi Germany, in the summer of 1934, the poem deploys a classic image from the decade:

Ten thousand of the desperate marching by
Five feet, six feet, seven feet high:
Hitler and Mussolini in their wooing poses
Churchill acknowledging the voters' greeting
Roosevelt at the microphone, Van der Lubbe laughing
And our first meeting.

It goes on to construct a textbook Audenesque convergence of personal and political:

The voice of love saying lightly, brightly
—"Be Lubbe, Be Hitler, but be my good
Daily, nightly."

When the poem was written, Comintern policy was volatile and uncertain, in transition between Third Period and Popular Front strategies. By the time *Look, Stranger!* appeared in 1936, the Popular Front rationale had been formally in operation for nearly two years. This explains, I'd suggest, the ambiguity of a list which includes Hitler, Mussolini, Churchill and Roosevelt. With hindsight, we think of

the latter two names as on the side of liberal democracy, and therefore as necessary antagonists of the first two. In the Third Period rhetoric, however, they had been reviled as prospective fascists. The writing of Auden's poem is exactly contemporary with, for example, Fenner Brockway's book, *Will Roosevelt Succeed? A Study of Fascist Tendencies in America* (1934). The poem leaves astutely unclear precisely what political complexion it gives to the Anglo-American politicians: are they with us, or against us? Stalin's name, though, is significantly absent from this list of dictators and demagogues, as is, perhaps more interestingly, that of the Bulgarian Communist Georgi Dimitrov, jointly charged at the Leipzig show trial with the Dutch anarchist Marinus van der Lubbe with burning down the Reichstag. Van der Lubbe was executed by the Nazis, while an orchestrated international outcry ensured Dimitrov's acquittal.

At the time, the name of van der Lubbe was inextricably linked with that of Dimitrov, so that one would inevitably have called up the other to any contemporary reader. As Claud Cockburn observed three decades later, in 1958:

Nothing prods and stimulates one's time-sense more healthily than the realization that some figure, some name which was a household word and played a major role in your own thinking and living for years, means precisely nothing to almost anyone more than about fifteen years younger than oneself. It is that way, I suppose, with Dimitrov.

In the blackness of 1933, with Hitler triumphant in Germany, the heroic figure of Dimitrov at the Reichstag Fire trial was a signal rocket, seeming to tell the world that the blackness had not after all triumphed wholly and for ever. He was the first man to show the dictators that, however big they were, a man with an idea could still take the stuffing out of them. Dimitrov, in fact, symbolized not only the struggle against Fascism, but the struggle of the thoughtful and the civilized against the philistines. Millions of people who were not Communists, millions, even, of anti-Communists, were inspired and rallied by him.⁸

Perhaps Auden's omission was strategic, since the allusion to the tragicomic figure of van der Lubbe, seen at the time as a buffoon or

⁸ Claud Cockburn, *Crossing the Line* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1958), 145.

madman,⁹ almost inevitably carried with it a subliminal association with the iconic Communist hero of that trial. This would be consistent with the poem's stress on the secrecy and duplicity by which "love" "through our private stuff must work / His public spirit", to "perform / The programme that we think of merit", as "Crooked to move as a moneybug or a cancer". "Programme", after all, is here a charged word, in an era of Soviet Five Year Programmes.¹⁰ But the word could also, given that verb "perform", be a theatrical usage, apposite to the ethos of the poem, in which the earnest and the histrionically self-dramatising jostle each other.

It was Dimitrov who in 1935, as General Secretary of the Communist International, proposed at its Seventh Congress, in a speech entitled "The Unity of the Working Class against Fascism", the programme of anti-fascist unity subsequently known as the "Popular Front." This policy went further than collaboration with the leadership of the previously reviled "social fascist" parties. It now involved abandonment of the "Class against Class" strategy, and direct collaboration across classes with what was henceforth to be called the "progressive" bourgeoisie. The foremost literary-critical expression of this programme is probably George Lukács's reaching out, in his 1936 study *The Historical Novel*, to what was now seen as the objectively "progressive" interpretation of history in the novels of the (subjectively) ultra-conservative Sir Walter Scott. Such a cross-class alliance, as many on the Left both within and outside the Communist International made clear, required that a brake be imposed, in the interests of

⁹ Van der Lubbe's manic laughter left a strong impression on audiences who saw it, broadcast widely, in cinema newsreels. Stephen Spender's poem "Van der Lubbe" depicts him whispering "Not to Goering, but [to] dear movietone" that "I laugh because my laughter / Is like justice, tested by a howitzer". See Spender, *Poems* (London: Faber, 1933), 39.

¹⁰ Cf. J. V. Stalin: "According to the five-year plan, by the end of the five-year period we were to have a gross grain output from the collective farms amounting to 190,500,000 centners. Actually, already this year we shall have a gross grain output from the collective farms amounting to 256,000,000 centners. This means that already in two years we shall have overfulfilled the five-year programme of collective-farm grain output by over 30 per cent. *The five-year plan in two years! (Applause).*" J. V. Stalin, *Political Report of the Central Committee to the Sixteenth Congress of the CPSU(B)*, June 27, 1930; *Pravda*, No. 177, June 29 1930; rpt in J.V. Stalin, *Works*, vol. 12 (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1955), 242-385; at 299.

“anti-fascist” unity, on the radicalisation of working-class expectations. The Communist-backed Popular Front governments elected in France and Spain in 1936 did indeed seek strenuously to suppress the proletarian insurrections, factory occupations and land expropriations which accompanied their victories. In Spain, the class accommodations required by Popular Front strategy opened up a major division between the Moscow-backed Communists and the non-Stalinist Leftists of POUM, Anarchists and other socialist groupings, bloodily resolved by the Communists’ Barcelona pogrom in May 1937, which George Orwell records in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938).

Auden’s landmark poem *Spain* appeared in a Faber pamphlet the same month, with a note on the flyleaf that “All the author’s royalties from the sale of this poem go to *Medical Aid for Spain*” – to, that is, a Communist Party front organisation. *Look, Stranger!* inscribes everywhere the ambivalences of that moment in 1936 when it appeared that a “United Front against Fascism” was a real possibility, inducing hard-line Communists such as John Cornford to suppress their misgivings, but awakening instant gratification in liberal fellow-travelers such as Stephen Spender. Whereas *Look, Stranger!* maintains an equivocal poise between programmes, *Spain’s* vision of “Our hours of friendship” transformed “into a people’s army” encapsulates a key slogan of the Popular Front platform. Auden’s historically circumscribed revision of the poem, in the wake of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, as “Spain 1937” for *Another Time* in 1940, and its post-war expulsion from his canon, indicate the ultimate destiny of all that decade’s excited talking about final war. But that is another story.

STAN SMITH

Stan Smith is Research Professor in Literary Studies at Nottingham Trent University and editor of The Cambridge Companion to W. H. Auden and of Globalisation and its Discontents: Writing the Global Culture (2006). The present essay is an extract from a plenary paper, “From ‘Class against Class’ to the Hitler-Stalin Pact: Some Reflections on the Unwavering Line”, at the conference Right Left Right: Revolving Commitment France and Britain, 1929-1950, at the University of Birmingham, 20-21 April 2006. The full text will appear in a special issue, guest edited by Jennifer Birkett and Stan Smith, of E-REA (e-Revue des Études Anglophones), 4:2, to be published from the University of Provence, Aix-Marseille, Autumn 2006.

A Comment on "Gresham's Poems" by John Smart

Editor's note: John Smart's essay to Newsletter 26, "Gresham's Poems: John Hayward and W. H. Auden," included much new information about Auden, Hayward, and Robert Medley, and tentatively suggested that three unsigned poems in the Gresham's School magazine might have been Auden's work. The following reply was written by the editor of Auden's Juvenilia.

I am fascinated by John Smart's discoveries, particularly "To a Tramp Met in the Holidays in Monmouthshire" with its echoes of the last stanza of Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper" which Auden used perhaps more obviously in "California." But I still wonder whether Medley himself isn't the most likely author of "Evening and Night on Primrose Hill," and I would like in any case to know what poem of Medley's was printed in *The Gresham* if not this one. Maybe John Smart has come across it, or soon will? (Also, might it be possible in any school records to confirm whether the December issue of *The Gresham* tended to appear in time for the end of autumn term?)

Medley's account in *Drawn from the Life* seems essentially convincing, and I have generally relied on it, but there are mistakes to make us wary: for instance, he says these poems were printed in *The Grasshopper* rather than *The Gresham*. Auden's own poem, "Sunset from Primrose Hill" was described as a poem of about fourteen lines; this is a special length and implies the poem may have been a sonnet. "Evening and Night on Primrose Hill" has only eight lines. In 1989, when I corresponded with James Richards, one of the editors of the amateur literary magazine in which Auden's poem appeared, he was not able to lend any weight to the possibility that the Primrose Hill poem in *The Gresham* was the poem or a shortened version of the poem that he himself had printed—but it was more than sixty-five years before.

There are obvious similarities between the "Medley" poem and the early Auden poem "California," for instance the interest in the opening and closing rhyme word, "hill," the rhyme word "still," and the near echo of "the twinkling lights are lit upon the hill" in Auden's opening, "The twinkling lamps stream up the hill." Such similarities might be accounted for by the close friendship between Medley and Auden; we know they discussed their work. Why wouldn't they try similar strategies and techniques? And might they not both have been reading Wordsworth? Auden was then in love with Medley, and the pair may have visited Primrose Hill together; certainly Medley recalls

walking alone there and over Hampstead Heath carrying Auden's poems in his pockets. They may have written poems on the same theme, Auden perhaps at first in emulation of his idol. But note that, already, Auden's line about the lights on the hill, with its describing verb, is much better than the one in the "Medley" poem, and that Auden also improves upon the clumsy closing repetition (where the rhyme for "hill" is "Hill"). Auden also introduces a new rhyme word, "mill."

Reading around in *The Gresham* or in any schoolboy publication of the period, one finds a remarkable homogeneity in the pastiche. Let's call it Edwardian Schoolboy Poetry Style. The boys were all working from the same collections and anthologies, with the same guidelines from their schoolmasters and possibly parents, in a far more coherent cultural setting than now exists. Unsurprisingly they produced the same sorts of results. This tells us why "Enchanted" also reads a little like very early Auden. Certainly, I cannot prove it isn't by Auden, nor would I try; the burden is on "Enchanted" to prove it *is* by Auden. Over and over again when I was editing the *Juvenilia*, I stumbled upon little pieces I "recognized" as Auden, only to find on further research that they were by some clever and precocious, perhaps soulful or even eccentric, contemporary. Even later work, in Oxford undergraduate publications, appears to be echoed and mimicked by contemporaries, some who may have been influenced by Auden, others who were influenced by the writers who influenced Auden, or a little of both.

No autograph or any other text of the unsigned poem "Evening and Night on Primrose Hill" or "Enchanted" has ever come to light. Auden's poem "A Moment" exists only in a published text in *The Gresham* and is also unsigned, but Auden used its final line in two much later poems, laying clear and characteristic claim to the very early piece. That is why I included "A Moment" in the *Juvenilia*.

I look forward to spending more time with all of these poems, and I hope there may be more discoveries to come from John Smart or others.

KATHERINE BUCKNELL

Katherine Bucknell is the editor of W. H. Auden's Juvenilia: Poems 1922-1928 and of Christopher Isherwood's Diaries. Her third novel, What You Will, is scheduled to appear in 2007.

***Our Lady's Tumbler* and "The Ballad of Barnaby"**

The Danowski Poetry Collection at Emory University (described elsewhere in this number) provides the solution to a minor mystery in Auden's work: when he wrote "The Ballad of Barnaby," which version of the familiar medieval legend of the tumbler of Notre-Dame did he have in mind?

The answer is a small, elegantly-printed paper-covered pamphlet in the Danowski Collection that was in Auden's hands at the time he wrote his poem. The pamphlet is titled *Our Lady's Tumbler: A Twelfth Century Legend Translated by Philip H. Wicksteed*, published by Thomas B. Mosher, Portland, Maine, 1906. Thomas Bird Mosher played a central role in the revival of fine printing in America in the late nineteenth-century. This was one of hundreds of pamphlets and booklets that he published, some, like this one, at affordable prices, others in rare editions on fine paper. The translation was originally published in London by J. M. Dent in 1894, and was repeatedly pirated by Mosher.

A few samples of Wicksteed's version may be compared with Auden's version in his poem. Wicksteed has:

How to trip and spring he understood, but naught beside, for
he had conned no other lesson—nor pater noster, nor chant,
nor credo, nor ave, nor aught that might make for his salva-
tion (pp. 4-5)

Auden has:

Now Barnaby had never learned to read,
Nor *Paternoster* knew nor *Creed*;
Watching them all at work and prayer,
Barnaby's heart began to despair.

Wicksteed has:

Then he tumbled and leapt, and made, in festal guise, the
vault of Metz around his head. . . . Then he did the French
vault and then the vault of Champagne, and then he did the
Spanish vault and the vaults they do in Brittany, and then the
vault of Lorraine, and strained himself to do the best of all his
power. Then he did the Roman vault. . . . (pp. 12-13)

Auden has:

The French Vault, the Vault of Champagne,
The Vault of Metz and the Vault of Lorraine,
He did them all till he sank to the ground,
His body asweat and his head in a swoond.

What proves that this copy of the book was the one that Auden used? The evidence is circumstantial but convincing. Charles Turner, a composer and teacher of music at the Wykeham Rise School, a girls' school in Washington, Connecticut, asked Auden to write a text for music "based on the medieval legend of the Juggler of Notre Dame" (as Turner reported in a note to the 1970 edition of the score composed by his pupils). The school first opened around 1902; it closed in 1943 because of wartime shortages; reopened in 1963; and finally closed in 1989. The pamphlet now in the Danowski collection bears the ownership stamp "Wykeham Rise Library | Washington, Connecticut". Having been acquired by the school library apparently not long after publication, it seems to have been removed and sent to Auden by Charles Turner in 1968, in a theft that cannot be condoned but may perhaps be forgiven.

EDWARD MENDELSON

Edward Mendelson's book, The Things That Matter: What Seven Classic Novels Have to Say about the Stages of Life, was published by Pantheon in August 2006.

Meeting Auden: First Encounters and Initial Impressions (Part III)

Van Wyck Brooks, literary critic: "Studying drawings"

I remembered my first sight of the poet Auden in the Whitney Museum in New York. He had come to an exhibition of William Rimmer's drawings, and I recollect the absorbed curiosity with which he examined each and all. I wondered how many intellectual young Americans would have taken the trouble to examine the work of this little-known artist. (early 1950s)

An Autobiography, by Van Wyck Brooks (E. P. Dutton, 1965)

Jason Epstein, book publisher: “Early arriver”

It was at one of these [Doubleday] parties that I first met Wystan Auden and his friend Chester Kallman and became aware of Auden’s unsettling habit of arriving an hour or so before the appointed time so that he could be home in bed by nine. His American friends, to whom Auden often lectures on the importance of manners, were patient with his eccentricities, but at Oxford, where he was in residence many years later, his premature arrivals provided his colleagues an excuse not to invite him a second time. He served out his term there in cheerless solitude. . . .

The party was to begin at six. At four I went out to buy the supplies. When I returned a half hour later, Wystan and Chester were waiting for their drinks while [wife] Barbara, who had turned up in the meantime, tried to amuse them. Since no one else arrived until seven, we were well into our second bottle of vodka before the party got underway and Wystan went home to bed. (New York, early 1950s)

Book Business: Publishing Past, Present and Future, by Jason Epstein
(W.W. Norton, 2001)

Robin Skelton, poet, editor and academic: “Atmosphere of defeat, decay”

Carpet-slipped and sloppy, he gazed at me from bloodshot eyes, and his ridged, red-jowled face reminded me of a bloodhound’s. His hair was the liveliest thing about him. It was assertive. It stuck up in spikes. He paid no attention to me, for he was in the middle of pursuing a new obsession. This turned out to be the importance of making his students read [William] Empson and write sonnets. I longed to disagree with him, but held my tongue. I was not, on this occasion, even an audience. I was a piece of furniture that happened to be around while he was thinking aloud.

I did not like him at all. This was not because he ignored me. I was used to that and saw no reason why he should pay this non-entity attention. It was something else. In a curious way, for so eminent a man, he exuded an atmosphere of defeat, of decay. The Auden who wrote the great poems of the thirties had died, and been replaced by someone entirely different. . . . [Oxford, 1958]

The Memoirs of a Literary Blockhead, by Robin Skelton (Macmillan, 1988)

A. Alvarez, poet, critic and novelist: “Witty aphorisms”

I only met Auden a few times, but the meetings stuck in my mind and taught me things I needed to know about the ways of the literary world. What I learned was not particularly cheering, but it was valuable, so I owe him a personal debt.

I first met him at Princeton, at the end of January 1958. I was in my late twenties, but young for my age and not a nice figure – edgy, confused, ambitious, unhappy. Auden, with his Wallace Beery face and twanging Oxford-American accent, was confident and famous and doing his best to appear interested, though he was obviously bored rotten by the chattering adulation which erupted wherever he went into literary academia. . . .

We got on rather well in a partyish, chatty way. He mentioned that he had read articles of mine – 18 months earlier, I had begun my stint at the *Observer* [as poetry critic] – and, of course, this was flattering. More importantly, we had England and Oxford in common. And Auden remained implacably English, despite all his years in America, despite the weird, flattened vowels which kept jolting his accent unexpectedly, like so many potholes. He had the shabby, shop-soiled look of the English intellectual who, no matter how smartly he tries to dress, invariably finished up looking like an unmade bed and doesn't mind a bit. He also had that quick, sideways-on way of talking, all allusive jokes and sudden jumps in the argument, which flourishes on the belief that anything, no matter how serious, can be settled by a witty aphorism. And his aphorisms were very witty indeed.

Where Did It All Go Right?: A Memoir, by A. Alvarez
(Morrow/HarperCollins, 1999)

Jeffrey Hart, academic and conservative speechwriter: “Scattered lecture”

One afternoon in the late Fifties, W. H. Auden arrived at Dartmouth College to read his poems and deliver a public lecture on Romanticism. In the afternoon, Auden read his poems and held a literary “conversation” with his audience in the sumptuous library of Sanborn House, which houses the English Department. Auden was tall, and by that time he had that extraordinary bloodhound face, deeply lined, and his manner was gentle and highly civilized. As he

spoke, Oxford was pervasive. He might well have been at High Table in Magdalen College. He was impressively learned, not only about literature but about music, theology, history, yet he seemed to take it all very lightly, almost a joke. That was the Oxford manner. He was deprecating about his leftist phase during the Spanish War, speaking about it as if it had happened to someone else, someone who was very young, and knew nothing, a long time ago. Auden was now much under the influence of Reinhold Niebuhr and his sense of sin and difficult historical options.

That evening, Auden had a disaster, but he triumphed over it with his Oxford aplomb. First there was a cocktail party given by the faculty, at which he drank too many martinis. Then there was a long dinner, at which he drank too many martinis. Then they escorted him to the auditorium, which was full.

Ascending the half-dozen stairs to the platform, Auden tripped over the top stair, and his typed-out lecture fell in scattered pages across the stage. Auden scooped them up with some difficulty, but he was too drunk to reassemble them in the right order, so he read them in just any order, without explanation, without batting an eye. The audience thought the lecture had a lot of good things in it. They also thought it was weak on organization. [Hanover, N.H.]

When the Going Was Good: American Life in the Fifties, by Jeffrey Hart
(Crown, 1982)

Frances Partridge, diarist and Bloomsbury member: “Delightful”

I met Auden for the first time at Janetta’s [Jackson’s] on Friday. A delightful man, half shapeless schoolboy, half genial tortoise. He thinks Kennedy was perfectly right [to lay down the gauntlet in the Cuban Missile Crisis] and when I said, “Then shouldn’t he have gone to the U.N.” he said, “Oh no, there was no time” – the invariable argument for making war without notice. [London, 1962]

Hanging On: Diaries 1960-1963, by Frances Partridge (Collins, 1990)

Compton Mackenzie, novelist: “Creative spirit”

As I was waiting in the Regent Street entrance for somebody who was calling for me in a taxi, a man with a much lined face for his age suddenly came over to me, offering a hand.

“At last!” he exclaimed.

This was W. H. Auden, the poet, whom I had never met. We had a brief talk and I much hope I shall meet him again some day for a much longer talk. That brief encounter was enough to reveal that he was a creative spirit, and that he had earned those lines on his countenance by devotion to his poetic ideals. [London, 1962]

My Life and Times: Octave Ten 1953-63, by Compton Mackenzie
(Chatto & Windus, 1971)

Compiled by DANA COOK

Dana Cook is a Toronto editor and collector of literary encounters. His compilations have appeared in a wide range of newspapers, magazines and journals. This is the third installment of a four-part series.

The Danowski Poetry Collection at Emory University

The Raymond Danowski collection of twentieth-century poetry, the largest of its kind to have been compiled by a private collector, is now part of the special collections department of the Emory University Library as a gift from its compiler. The collection includes books, periodicals, ephemera, manuscripts, press cuttings, and much other material by and related to almost every twentieth-century poet who wrote in English, with a special emphasis on Auden. This is a very preliminary report on the collection's holdings, based on a brief visit to Emory in the spring of 2006.

The collection includes all but a very few of Auden's books and pamphlets. It has copy 16 of Auden's *Poems* (1928), once owned by John Layard (see *Newsletter* 26 for a census of copies of Auden's first book). It also has all the pamphlet editions of Auden's poems printed by Frederic Prokosch, including all the authentic ones that Prokosch prepared in the 1930s from manuscripts or printed texts of Auden's poems, and all the ones that Prokosch printed and fraudulently misdated after Auden's death. The collection also has one of four known copies of the *Epithalamion*, privately printed by Auden for the wedding of Guiseppi Antonio Borgese and Elisabeth Mann in 1939.

By far the most interesting part of the collection is its extraordinary holdings of miscellaneous material rarely gathered in libraries or anywhere else. A mimeographed leaflet titled "The Poetic Process | Notes and Comments" is the only known copy of this fourteen-page,

single-spaced item, which seems to have been distributed by Ursula Niebuhr to her Religion 26 class at Barnard College in 1955 or 1956; the text is made up of excerpts from Auden's three lectures published in 1955 under the title "The Dyer's Hand" and was probably compiled by Ursula Niebuhr with Auden's permission. A printed programme for a meeting "Spain & Culture" at the Royal Albert Hall, 24 June 1937, includes, under the heading "Supported by", a list of some fifty writers and artists, including Auden. A mimeographed publicity copy of Auden's acceptance speech for the National Book Award in 1956 includes numerous penciled corrections and changes, not in his hand but apparently authentic.

The collection includes a copy of the paperback edition of the *Victorian and Edwardian Poets* volume from the *Poets of the English Language* series, with the calendar of events heavily annotated and expanded by Auden, evidently in preparation for the similar calendar that he included in his anthology *Nineteenth-Century British Minor Poets*, published in 1966.

In *Newsletter 22*, in "A Note on Auden's 'Nursery Library'" (as he described it in various essays) the title *Dangers to Health* was tentatively identified as the 1878 first edition of a treatise by T. Pridgin Teale. The Danowski collection has the tattered card cover of another edition, which is probably the one that Auden owned as a child: *Dangers to Health: A Pictorial Guide to Domestic Sanitary Defects*, by T. Pridgin Teale, M.A., Surgeon to the General Infirmary at Leeds; third edition; London: J. & A. Churchill, 1881.

Among many items of lesser literary interest may be noted the January 1937 yearbook of the Abraham Lincoln High School in Brooklyn, New York. Listed among the January graduates is Chester Kallman, who lived at 3100 Brighton 2nd Street, and was associated with Class Night, Class Day, the Peace Club, and the "L" Reporters' Club.

Notes and Queries

“Krum-horns, doppions, sordumes”

In “Vespers”, written in 1954, Auden imagines himself closing his eyes and returning to his fantasy Eden, “welcomed back by the krum-horns, doppions, sordumes of jolly miners”. In *Later Auden* I footnoted these instruments as some of the ones that Auden would have heard at the concerts of the New York Pro Musica, the early music group that he had begun to work with a few months earlier. While the group did indeed play those instruments and many others, Auden probably also remembered a passage in a book that he had reviewed shortly after it was published in 1952, Paul Hindemith’s *A Composer’s World*. (The review appeared in the *New York Times Book Review* on 24 February 1952.) In the chapter titled “Some Thoughts on Instruments”, Hindemith wrote: “Dulcians and bassoons cover the whole range of the tone system; so do the softer shawms and bombards, the schyari and bassanelli, the sordunes and doppioni. Krummhorns (cromorni) with the capsuled mouthpieces and restricted range come in at least five different sizes . . .” (p. 181). Auden’s spellings differ from Hindemith’s and may perhaps be closer to those used by the New York Pro Musica.

EDWARD MENDELSON

Roman Wall Blues score rediscovered

Benjamin Britten’s score for “Roman Wall Blues,” composed in 1937 for the radio broadcast *Hadrian’s Wall*, has recently been rediscovered after having been lost since the original broadcast. David Ward’s story in *The Guardian*, 27 February 2006, includes this account:

The hunt for Britten’s music was launched 15 years ago by film-maker John Mapplebeck. “I appealed for information through regional newspapers but there was no response,” he said.

He gave up the search but years later mentioned his quest to retired banker Philip Pendrel-Smith, 100 this year, whom he ferries to evensong in Bamburgh, Northumberland, every Sunday. Mr Mapplebeck could not believe his luck when Mr

Pendrel-Smith casually mentioned that he had been at the broadcast and had a copy of Britten's Roman Wall Blues.

"I had been an amateur actor and this was my first professional job," said Mr Pendrel-Smith. "They had brought in four men from the Dunelm Singers to sing the song but then decided they wanted someone who could sound dismal and unhappy . . . So they sent over the road to the Oxford Galleries (a famous Newcastle dance hall) and brought in the band's singer."

The vocal line was copied out for him and he sang the number in the broadcast. "He left his music lying about and I picked it up. I used to play the Northumbrian pipes and kept the music in my pipes case for many years."

Mr Mapplebeck has sent the original to the Britten-Pears library. "It's a treasure," said the librarian, Chris Grogan, yesterday. "The music is not in Britten's hand but we have been able to authenticate it on stylistic grounds. It's a nice tune - breezy and swingy."

"We are not sure what instrumentalists Britten had for the recording," added Dr Grogan. "It may be that he busked the accompaniment himself at the piano."

The music will probably be performed at the 2007 Aldeburgh Festival.

W. H. Auden at Swarthmore: An On-Line Exhibit

"W. H. Auden at Swarthmore" is an illuminating and amusing on-line exhibit of Auden's life and work at Swarthmore College from 1942 to 1945. The exhibit includes reproductions of manuscripts, lectures, notes, and library call-slips; clippings from the campus newspaper; a transcript of a 1972 discussion during a campus visit; and much else. The exhibit may be found at the following internet address: <http://www.swarthmore.edu/library/auden>.

A full run of the *Newsletter* at the London Library

Through the generosity of Mr Robert Gomme the London Library has a complete run of the *Newsletter* in its collections. As we go to press, the Library's online catalogue lists *Newsletters* 1 through 26 as at the bindery, but available on request by Library members.

Recent and Forthcoming Books and Events

A second, expanded edition of W. H. Auden's *Selected Poems*, edited by Edward Mendelson, will be published by Vintage Books early in 2007. The new edition adds twenty poems to the one hundred poems in the edition published in 1979, has a rewritten introduction, and adds brief explanatory notes on obscure names and allusions.

Another new edition scheduled for Auden's centenary year, 2007, is a reset, hardcover edition of Auden's *Collected Poems*, to be published by the Modern Library. It includes a new introductory note by the editor, Edward Mendelson, and a few minor textual corrections.

February House, by Sherrill Tippins, a lively account of the house in Brooklyn Heights that was occupied by Auden and friends in the early 1940s, has been reprinted in paperback by Houghton Mifflin in New York and Pocket Books in London. The book was reviewed in the previous number of the *Newsletter*.

The Right Attitude to Rain, the third in Alexander McCall Smith's series of Isabel Dalhousie Novels, has been published by Little Brown in London and Pantheon in New York. As in the first two books in the series, *The Sunday Philosophy Club* and *Friends, Lovers, Chocolate*, Isabel Dalhousie, editor of the *Review of Applied Ethics*, often finds herself thinking about (and sometimes arguing with) poems and essays by Auden. These unostentatiously profound and quietly splendid novels provide many literary, intellectual, and ethical pleasures.

W. H. Auden, by Tony Sharpe, a title in the Routledge Guides to Literature Series, has been announced for publication late in 2006. A review may appear in a forthcoming number of the *Newsletter*.

Larry Woiwode's appreciation of Auden's work, *My Dinner with Auden*, has been announced by Basic Books for publication in 2006. This book has also been announced in previous years, so the 2006 publication date may be only a tentative one.

Auden, ou, L'Œil de la Baleine, by Guy Goffette, published by Gallimard in 2005, is an idiosyncratic, lyrical account of Auden's work and life a young French poet. The whale in the subtitle is what the author mistook Auden to be when he first saw the famous photograph by

Richard Avedon of Auden walking down St. Marks Place in the snow.

A concert of musical settings of Auden's poems was performed by the soprano Eleanor Meynell accompanied by the pianist Christopher Glynn at St Bride's Church, Fleet Street, London, on 15 September 2006. The concert included Britten's settings of nine poems, including the anonymous "When you're feeling like expressing your affection", probably written by Auden for a G.P.O. film that was never made; Elizabeth Maconchy's setting of the first part of "In Memory of W. B. Yeats", Simon Bainbridge's setting of "Orpheus" and Elisabeth Lutyen's setting of "As I walked out one evening." Eleanor Meynell will perform a similar concert in Manchester on 22 February 2007 in celebration of the Auden centenary.

The W. H. Auden Centenary

The centenary of Auden's birth occurs on 21 February 2007. Like Auden himself in "Under Which Lyre", his admirers tend to think of themselves as children of Hermes rather than of Apollo, and are not especially adept at organizing special events. A few events, however, have already been planned, and others will probably be organized at a later date.

In New York, the 92nd Street YM-YWHA will present a tribute to Auden on 7 February 2007; the participants will include Shirley Hazzard, J. D. McClatchy, Edward Mendelson, Charles Rosen, and Oliver Sacks. Another, more musical event, is tentatively planned for later in the year.

The University of York has begun planning a centenary event for 24 February 2007; speakers will include Adam Phillips and Rachel Wetzsteon.

At Christ Church, Oxford, an event is planned for the weekend of 23 and 24 June 2007.

Other centenary events will be noted on the Society's web site and in the next number of the *Newsletter*.

Memberships and Subscriptions

Annual memberships include a subscription to the *Newsletter*:

Individual members	£ 9	\$15
Students	£ 5	\$8
Institutions	£ 18	\$30

New members of the Society and members wishing to renew should send sterling cheques or checks in US dollars payable to “The W. H. Auden Society” to Katherine Bucknell, 78 Clarendon Road, London W11 2HW.
Receipts available on request.

Payment may also be made by credit card through the Society’s web site at: <http://audensociety.org/membership.html>

The W. H. Auden Society is registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales as Charity No. 1104496.

Submissions to the *Newsletter* may be sent in care of Katherine Bucknell, 78 Clarendon Road, London W11 2HW,
or by e-mail to: newsletter@audensociety.org

(Note: The e-mail address listed above was inactive for a long period, and all messages that may have been sent to that address were lost; the address now receives mail, and we would be grateful to any contributor who would resend anything that may have been sent earlier to that address.)

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*Please see the Appeal to Members that appears
on the Contents page of this number.*