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**The Poetic Philosophies of W. H. Auden**

by

**Jennifer M. Doyle**

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## The Poetic Philosophies of W.H. Auden

In his essay "The Making of the Auden Canon", Joseph Warren Beach describes Auden by stating:

...he has the added distinction of being perhaps the most representative of poets in his time writing in the English language. He has been very much aware of the contemporary currents of thought in political theory, science and psychology, the fine arts and literature, philosophy and religion, (Bahlke 32-33).

Beech sums up in these few lines all that is found in the poems and essays of W. H. Auden. Auden's poetic "canon", because of his extensive life experiences, is established in such a way that it reflects a multitude of what can be referred to as "poetic philosophies". These philosophies, as seen in his poems, often express more than one obvious meaning. Aside from the poems themselves, however, nowhere does Auden express his theories about poetry better than in some of his essays. A rather appropriate title, The Dyer's Hand contains three of Auden's essays that reflect his idea that poetry can and does "dye" the world with its words. *Making, Knowing and Judging*, *The Virgin and the Dynamo*, and *The Poet in the City* are three of Auden's major essays that put the reader in direct contact with his "poetic philosophies". In these essays, Auden discusses poetry as three different entities. Poetry is discussed as: a) a skill/ talent developing within the poet as he/ she grows emotionally & intellectually; b) a science; c) an art,

exclusive from any scientific, political or social influence. It is from these essays/theories that Auden readers get the foundation for what Beech refers to as the "canon" and this idea that poetry reflects and has a great impact on all areas of life.

Despite the three different approaches to explaining poetry, Auden does identify a common nucleus that must be present if poetry of any kind is to exist. In his essay *Making, Knowing and Judging*, Auden introduces what he refers to as "the encounter". The encounter is something that occurs between the poet and his/her inspiration for constructing a poem. The encounter moves the poet to put into words what they have experienced during the encounter. At first, the poet is merely moved, then Auden writes- "...he is at the mercy of the immediate moment because he has no concrete reason for not yielding to its demands...", (DH, 41). This suggests that once inspired, the poet experiences something almost unfathomable to the common, non-poet thus separating himself from those who will never experience the encounter. He cannot explain the vulnerability to the power of the experience. All three of the essays, in some way, acknowledge that the encounter is what must happen before a poem can be written.

As mentioned, *Making Knowing and Judging*, *The Virgin and the Dynamo*, and *The Poet in the City* express what are three distinctly different ideas about poetry, it's definition and function while also complementing Auden's idea that poetry is and should be secluded and separate from all of other forms of art. In *Making Knowing and Judging* and *The Virgin and the Dynamo*, Auden discusses poetry as an acquired, educated talent and science, suggesting that it is a result of an extensive process of learning and creating. In *The Poet and the City*, Auden shifts his attitude about poetry and presents it as an art struggling to stay afloat in an ever-growing world of smothering technology. Despite

being presented as both an art and a science, poetry is presented as an entity all its own. Poetry, according to Auden, has been singled-out and exists as something that does not and cannot function with anything not directly related to it. Poetry can exist on its own, without the intervention of any exterior force other than anything stemming from the initial encounter.

Stephen Spender, a friend and colleague of Auden's commented "... this early poetry, which expresses a complete detachment and attains a kind of frigid, clipped beauty is not so much 'art for art's sake as 'art for science's sake' ".(28). This is clearly a major part of Auden's earlier view of poetry as expressed in both *Making, Knowing and Judging* and *The Virgin and the Dynamo* where he expresses poetry as demanding a pre- writing, writing and post- writing process. Going along with Spender, Monroe K. Spears reveals that Auden's early, more scientific view of poetry was largely based on his home life. He tells us that until Auden was 16 years old,

...his interests were exclusively scientific. His father was a distinguished physician of broad scientific interests, and his mother had been a nurse; the atmosphere of the home was scientific rather than literary, (6).

In 1939, Auden is quoted as saying "It is impossible to understand modern English literature unless one realizes that most English writers are rebels against the way they were educated..." (Hines, 34). While not directly talking of himself at all, Auden clears up any mysteries about his various views on poetry. Unknowingly, of course, Auden seems to offer answers about his own changing views while, again, including an entire population of people as his subject matter. Much like the focus of his earlier life, Auden's earlier views on poetry are rather scientific and are definite results of the

influence from home. But through his poems, one can see how he rebels against the way he was obviously educated.

When asked to comment on the poetry of Auden, Dylan Thomas declared:

I sometimes think of Mr. Auden's poetry as a hygiene, a knowledge and practice, based on a brilliantly prejudiced analysis of contemporary disorders, relating to the preservation and promotion of health, a sanitary science and a flusher of melancholies...His is a wide and deep poet, and that his first narrow angles, of pedantry and careful obscurity, are worn almost all away..., (Haffender, 270).

Thomas's statement, although not delivered until Auden's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, defines what Auden himself established, which are of course the three categories under which poetry will fall. As an "analysis", a "science" and a "flusher of melancholies", Thomas's words lend themselves to Auden's theory of poetry as a science, an acquired skill and an art. Thomas was, of course, not the only intellectual/ writer to acknowledge the fact that among other things, Auden's poetry deals with a great number of subjects stemming from obviously numerous encounters. David Perkins also believed that Auden's poetry is and will always be effective because he "took the modern world for granted as though it were entirely natural for poetry to speak of golf balls, gasworks, stockbrokers, bureaucratized work, and the like", (148). What the statements of both Thomas and Perkins do is reflect on Auden's poetic philosophies as a whole and resurrect their origin. Their origin, of course, lies in the poetic traditions of Matthew Arnold and William Wordsworth. The most undeniable element of Auden's poetry is that it touches on every possible element of human existence. Despite the early scientific influence from his parents, Auden is known to have read the poems of Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost. His own research

combined with his extensive life experiences took form in his poems. Following in the words of Wordsworth who declared that "Poetry is the finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath of man, ' that he looks before and after'", Auden, as a poet, did look "before and after", (Peacock, 105). Auden's subject matters stem from war to religion, life and death and all, in some way, reflect the idea of the past and present and future. Because Auden is able to capture such an array of subjects, he easily establishes the aforementioned categories of Science, skill and art. The three categories are rooted specifically in Matthew Arnold. Arnold stated:

The best poetry is what we want; the best poetry will be found to have a power of forming, sustaining, and delighting us, as nothing else can. A clearer, deeper sense of the best in poetry, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, is the most precious benefit which we can gather from a poetical collection such as the present...The course of development of a nation's language, thought and poetry, is profoundly interesting; and be regarding a poet's work as a stage in this development we may easily bring ourselves to make it of more importance as poetry than in itself it really is...(237).

Auden's poetry does, as a skill form ideas, as a science sustain these ideas and as an art, delight, for the most part. As seen in many of Auden's poems, it is clear that he too believed in what can be seen as a general belief of both Arnold and Wordsworth in that poetry is and will always be need to sustain life and preserve communication among people and generations.

In 1956 Auden delivered his essay, *Making, Knowing and Judging*, as a lecture at Oxford University. Auden was asked to explain the responsibilities of a professor of poetry and explain how poetry can be professed. In an attempt to answer both of these questions together, Auden discusses poetry as the result of a literary cycle, so to speak, kept by only a certain group of people:

The impulse to create a work of art is felt when, in certain persons, the passive awe provoked by sacred beings or events is transformed into a desire to express that awe in a rite of worship or homage, and to be fit homage, this rite must be beautiful, (57).

The "passive awe" is the necessary encounter and these "certain persons" are professors/ masters of poetry and apprentice poets. These are the people who experience poetry as they grow both intellectually and spiritually. Auden begins this essay by discussing the role of the professor and that it is imperative to his career to give lectures on poetry and writing. The professor is someone to whom the apprentice poets look. Auden discusses the early development of the apprentice poets' writing and comments that all and any attempts made by the apprentice should be seen as creative and imaginative, as opposed to bad or good. Auden credits the early attempts of the apprentices by stating "Never again will a poet feel so inspired, so certain of genius, as he feels these first days as his pencil flies across the page", (DH 36). Of course these words lend themselves to the actual "first days" of a poet's career, but they also reflect on the first days after the initial "encounter". The apprentices/ poets have just experienced the encounter and cannot help themselves but to write anything and everything about it in their attempt to recapture the moment in their poem. However, the apprentices' first few approaches will prove to be inadequate, so to speak, and he must seek guidance. This, then, begins the aforementioned cycle. In order to improve his writing, an apprentice must choose a



master from whom he can learn and benefit his writing. The master must be a person with whom the apprentice has something in common, other than poetry that is. However, Auden says that an apprentice should know his limits and never attempt to write above and beyond his capacity at too early a stage. Auden gives the impression that the mentor, although wiser and more experienced in life and in writing, now has less enjoyment than the apprentice does. Because the apprentice is younger and more absorbed in himself and having good times, he is able to have more fun with and write more carefree poetry and is prone to experience more encounters. This is all part of the cycle. All younger would-be poets are less inclined to have the seriousness of their masters. While the masters have already lived a full, entertaining life, the students are just now entering into their fruitful years: "The apprentices have seen a great light while their tutors sit in darkness and the shadow of death" (DH 39). Here, Auden declares that a poet comes from the end of one cycle and begins one of his own that too, will result in an end and the need for a new poet.

Auden also discusses how important it is for the apprentices to learn from each other. They form a community and stick together as they mature as writers. They must learn to critique and praise each other's works. After years of studying and writing, the apprentices finally become poets. As poets, they have not only developed the skills to write well and produce good poems, but "... a poet often begins to take an interest in theories of poetry and even to develop one of his own", (DH 52). Auden goes on to discuss how important it becomes for the poet to want to justify his writing of poetry. At this point, the poet is aware of the expectations that lie in front of him. The poet will continue to be socially read and critiqued, but Auden reminds the reader that "Thanks to

the social nature of the language, a poet can relate any one sacred being or event to any other... no reader can tell what was the original encounter which provided the impulse for the poem" (59). Thus, the poet often leaves ambiguities surrounding his poems and their initial inspiration.

Auden precedes his next essay, *The Virgin and The Dynamo*, with a quote from Virginia Woolf. Woolfe's words read:

There is a square. There is an oblong. The players take the square and place it on the oblong... We have made oblongs and stood them up on squares. This is our triumph. This is our consolation. (DH 61).

The exact calculated process as described by Woolfe sets the stage for the scientific philosophies Auden holds for poetry and presents in *The Virgin and the Dynamo*. And certainly, Woolfe's "We", lends itself to poets. Auden explores how poets, in poetry, place their squares on their oblongs and that is their triumph. He strays a little here from the former internal poetic process from *Making, Knowing and Judging* and presents a more external experience of figures and calculations that come with measuring the use of certain words and meter. Auden begins by discussing the two real worlds- the natural world of the dynamo and the historical world of the virgin. Auden breaks all things into two categories, the historical and the natural world. Auden stresses the point that although there are two (perhaps more), divisions within each world, everything/ everyone involved is dependant on each other: "Without art, we could have no notion of Liberty; without science, no notion of equality; without either, therefore, no notion of Justice" (63). Here, Auden echoes Matthew Arnold's view that certain entities are incomplete without poetry. Arnold declared that "...without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will

be replaced by poetry", (235). Auden distinguishes poetry as something that, although can and must stand on its own, is also a means through which other entities such as equality and justice can be explained. Auden's theory is almost the same as Arnold's. Both believe that there is something incomplete without art/ poetry. Auden's words, of course coming later than Arnold's, reflect exactly what Arnold predicted. Auden declares the same fact of poetry having an eternal position in that world and that is necessary to sustain such things as science and religion as mentioned by Arnold.

Auden goes on to discuss the function of pluralities in the world. Crowds, societies and communities are different stages at which people exist with each other, each one connective to the overall unity of the world and people and things functioning in it. Auden narrows his discussion by focusing on man's existence, "Man exists as a unity- in-tension of three modes of consciousness- that of consciousness of the self as self-contained, a consciousness of beyondness and the ego's consciousness of itself- to realize its potentialities that Auden applies to poetry:

Thanks to the first mode of consciousness, every good poem is unique. Thanks to the second, a poet can embody his private experiences in a public poem which can be comprehended by others in terms of their private experiences; thanks to the third, both poet and reader desire that this be done. (DH 66).

Thanks to all three worlds, then, poetry can be unique, real and appreciated. The poet writes and is inspired based on his experiences and existence within the functional world:

The subject matter of a poem is comprised of a crowd of recollected occasions of feeling among which the most important are recollections of encounters with sacred beings or events. This crowd the poet attempts to transform into a community by embodying it in a verbal society. Such a society, like any society in nature, has its own laws... (DH 67).

The verbal society is what will raise the most discrepancies in the co-existence in the poet's world of writing. Because the poet may not always be of the same society of community of which he writes, he may run into disagreements. However, Auden does seem to offer a solution for this by saying "... unless the poet sacrifices his feelings completely to the poem so that they are no longer his, but the poem's, he fails" (70). However, such poems as "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" contradict this idea because it does anything but sacrifice the poet's own feelings. Because it is clearly a poem written in honor of a person Auden had great respect for, he does everything to express feelings, not sacrifice them. Of Yeats, Auden declares "Earth, receive an honored guest, William Yeats is laid to rest", and "still persuade us to rejoice...teach the free man how to praise", (38-39, 53& 71). Obviously, the poet is moved by Yeats' writing and openly praises him with what are clearly feelings. Auden does not "fail" because he has not sacrificed feelings. However, Auden goes on to correct himself by saying "Of a recollected feeling it cannot be said that it is appropriate or inappropriate because the historical situation in which it arose no longer exist", (DH 71). Therefore, suggesting the idea that feelings cannot ever be fully captured because once they are gone, they are gone. However, regardless of the current social position of the poet, he cannot write unless he has experienced the "encounters with sacred beings or events".

Auden states that all poetry, then, is an attempt to present an analogy for the symbiotic existence of freedom and law, system and order. The poet acknowledges the differences of each world while accepting that it is these differences that can make them unique and compatible. By connecting poetry to such an extent with science, he suggests that poetry

has just as many occurrences and complexities as law and symbiosis. He sends a clear message that poetry is not simply written but is created.

The third essay, *The Poet and the City*, expresses what can be said to be Auden's more recent attitude toward poetry and its position in such a "non-scientific" world. While in the previous essays, Auden presents poetry as a science as seen in relation to the make up of the world in *The Virgin and the Dynamo*, and also then a social entity that exists between a certain group of people as seen in *Making, Knowing and Judging*, Auden presents poetry here as strictly art, separate from science, technology and politics. In this essay, Auden reveals his hope that poetry not get lost in the swift advancement of modern technology. The poet in the city is greatly challenged and not taken seriously. Unlike the office and factory worker, a poet's writing is his life and how he makes his living. Auden states that there may be a resentment and fascination behind the lightness with which art and artists are seen by society:

... in our society, the process of fabrication has been so rationalized in the interests of such, economy and quantity that the part played by the individual factory employee has become too small for it to be meaningful to him as work... it is only natural, then, that the artists... should fascinate those, who because they have no marked talent, are afraid, with good reason, that all they have to look forward to is a lifetime of meaningless labor (73).

Here, Auden introduces the idea that the lives of the poets/ artists are more liberated in that they do not merely work in factories and perform meaningless "labor". Poets/ artists, because they create must put meaning and feeling into what they do. Thus, they fascinate those who may very easily perform their mechanical labor with their eyes and souls

closed and are eventually numbed to any feelings not related to their mechanical duties. According to Auden, these people have lost all sense of what it would take to experience the encounter that poets/ artists feel. Auden also claims that art is seen as leisure and not taken seriously because: "To man the laborer, leisure is not sacred, but a respite from laboring, a time for relaxation and the pleasures of consumption" (74). Auden suggests that a resentment exist within the worker who has to "work" while the artist seems to play as a career. The laborer sacrifices emotion to perform mechanically while the artist is permitted to be true to his own passions and enjoy his work. What can be seen as a rebuttal for such resentment, appears in an interview with Howard Griffin. Auden states "Since he is a narcissist, the artist loves to play a part. Conceivably he may find himself in the role of a villain and be fascinated by the spectacle of himself in this guise" (2). Hence, admitting to being guilty of enjoying his less than "mechanical" job, Auden wholeheartedly accepts the role of the "resented poet" and willingly throws himself into such a category. Auden also offers a defense for his preferred field by discussing the education of a poet. He goes on to mention that the field of poetry, in academics, is given a mere fraction of the attention given to business and economics. The poet, for the most part, is self taught. There is no "poetry school" as there is a med- school and law school. Aside from the Master poet, discussed in *Making, Knowing and Judging*, there is no great poetic model that can act as a guide to the poet: "... such places can only contribute to his poetic education by accident, not by design" (76).

Auden goes on to discuss four main reasons why art, poetry more specifically, is falling between the cracks. The strongest of these reasons is the loss in belief in the significance and reality of sensory phenomenon. Auden declares that technology has

ruined the sacredness of the simple pleasure in life: "Modern science has destroyed our faith in the naïve observation of our senses", however, "... all an artist can be true to are his subjective sensations and feelings" (78). Here, Auden again alludes to the idea of the pre-writing encounter that must be experienced if poetry can take shape. Because of the ever changing technology, the "encounter" is rarely given the opportunity to occur. It is becoming more and more difficult for an encounter to move a person. The function of poetry, then, is crucial in that it is because of the encounter that poetry is written, and the encounter must be experienced therefore, people must be open to the idea of sensory phenomenon. Auden's statements present a society that is numb to such experiences. Instead of negating the effect such experiences have on people as is seen to be the modern state of things, Auden declares that poets and potential poets must be open to such experiences as opposed to being so mechanical. It is this openness that separates the poet from the laborer with the meaningless job. Auden concludes this essay by stating that art and literature have lost their preliminary subject, the man of action and doer of public deeds. Auden expresses disappointment with the then present position of art and poetry. He discusses poetry in relation to the socially more important things like science and politics and states that although the poet must be aware and knowledgeable of such areas, there can be no real connection because such areas of interest are "... concerned with things, not persons, and are, therefore, speechless" (81). Auden goes on to close this essay with the idea that society has become so pre-occupied with financial and technological survival, that it has lost all need for art. Where the majority of society is so busy getting ahead, it is the poets and artists who take the time to really live.

Prior to examining some of the poetry itself, it is important to first discuss the "nucleus", as mentioned earlier, that Auden refers to as the encounter that must always proceed the poetic process. The idea of "the encounter" is greatly stressed by and included in Auden's poetry. He declares "... but the encounter, be it novel or renewed by recollection from the past, must be suffered by a poet before he can write a genuine poem", (DH, 60). This idea of "the encounter" can also be traced back to William Wordsworth and Matthew Arnold. As mentioned earlier in *The Poet and the City*, Auden stresses the idea that the sensory phenomenon must not be overlooked lest the encounter cannot occur. Here, Auden echoes Wordsworth who declared:

The objects of the poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man, it is true, are his favorite guides, he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings, (Peacock, 105).

The sensation and the movement of the wings are what fuel the poet and the creation of thought and eventually poetry. Auden's "encounter", then, is equivalent to Wordsworth's "sensation". And, according to Auden, it is only the "certain persons" who are ever moved by this encounter/ sensation. Arnold also had a view of the "pre-poetry" experience. Arnold declared "But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea *is* the fact", (235). Arnold's "idea", of course is the same as Wordsworth's "sensation" and Auden's "encounter". All believed that to the poet, the only real element of life is rooted in the "pre-poem" experiences. Without these, the poet's life as he know it cannot exist. Without the experiences, the poet would never be inspired to write and therefore his world as a poet would not exist.



Auden, again, expressed the idea of Wordsworth's that the objects of the poet's thoughts are everywhere. This complements his theory that poetry does not have to be of a serious nature to be effective. The poem "On the Circuit" reflects his thought: "It taught me at the start that poetry does not have to be great or even serious to be good..." (DH, 36). The following stanzas from "On the Circuit" are an example of how the encounter can and does occur at any time and proceed to induce poetry:

A sulky fifty-six, he finds  
A change of meal-time utter hell,  
Grown far too crotchety to like  
A luxury hotel.  
The Bible is a goodly book  
I can always pursue with zest,  
But really cannot say the same  
For Hilton's *Be My Guest*,  
Nor bear the equanimity  
The radio in students' cars,  
Muzak at breakfast, or dear God!-  
Girl organists in bars (l. 40-51)

As a reader can see, these are mere random thoughts that are manipulated into good poetry. "On the Circuit", while not particularly about religion, politics or the like still manages to reflect the idea that "the encounter" be it deep or shallow, can move a poet to create. In this poem, Auden was simply moved in some way during this experience. The events of the poem do not reflect any obvious significant event in the poet's life, yet they

must have meant something to him for him to have written a poem about them. The actual location of the poet does not necessarily have to be in nature or serenity to allow the encounter to happen, it can occur anywhere. The process begins whenever and wherever so long as there is an encounter.

While defining poetry as an art, a science and as an acquired talent, Auden also defines poetry as a universal voice that reveals universal truths. This voice will prevail forever and will offer universal information to generations of the future. David Perkins, author of A History of Modern Poetry, credits this functional voice of Auden's poetry with Auden's use of the conversational. It is because of the conversational elements that most Auden readers feel that they are "...not in the church of poetry but at the kitchen table, enjoying the conversation of this amply indeed, unpredictable, engaging speaker", (162). Despite its often sophisticated themes, Auden's poetry can be placed on a less-than-formal level. Perkins discusses the fact that Auden's language is such that it speaks to a wide array of readers while delivering whatever universal message Auden intended. Similar to the words of Beech who commented on Auden's extensive life experiences that "He has seen a good deal of the world and has witnessed history in the making", Perkins alludes to this in that he confirms Auden's ability to discuss everything and anything in his poems, (32). Perkins comments:

By lessening the distance between poetry and ordinary speech, it widens the range of possible subject matters. It permits a characterization of the speaker through his style of expression, and thus gives play to Auden's mimetic talent..., (162).

Auden's infusion of conversational elements, then, allows him to keep his subject matters open while not intimidating readers. Auden's overall language and style are such

that his poems could very well be mistaken for everyday conversation, thus placing readers at Perkins' "kitchen table".

Perkins' "engaging speaker" lends itself to Auden's own words about the overall function of poetry as a voice. Because, as Perkins states, the speaker in Auden's poems speaks to the readers so well, it can be said that a voice is established. Auden's poetry reflects his own theory that he expresses in his memorial poem to W.B. Yeats. Referring to the poetry of Yeats, Auden declares that:

... it survives.

In the valley of its making where executives

Would never want to tamper, flows on south

From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,

Raw towns that we believe and die in: it survives,

A way of happening, a mouth (Part II, 5-10).

Auden here again reflects the ideas of Wordsworth who stated "Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge- it is as immortal as the heart of man", (Peacock, 105). Auden states that poetry is a mouth. The poem to Yeats and of course poetry in general is written to last because, according to both Auden and Wordsworth, poetry will and must always be around to speak to generations of the present time and the future. It is because of this that the "mouth" speaks to and of all.

To Auden, poetry survives in more than one way. Despite some of his more simple poems like "On the Circuit", where he describes thoughts he has while flying in a plane, between readings, Auden is able to express the three specific attitudes toward poetry. Auden's theories of poetry as a science, an acquired skill and an art all come together,

then when categorizing it as a mouth with a voice. These theories combined with the conversational elements of his poetry name it as something without which the history and future of our world would not and could not function. In this sense, then Auden again echoes Arnold's idea of modern theories and beliefs seeming incomplete without poetry to offer an explanation. It can be said, too, that Auden considered many things difficult to understand lest it be explained through literature- poetry. Poetry carries the weight given by Auden because to him, poetry offers answers to universal questions of science, religion and philosophy, to name a few. Again, Arnold's words apply.

.... In poetry... our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay... More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us... (235).

This idea lends itself to the fact that Auden's subject matters are those to which humanity will always turn for answers. The subject matters of the majority of Auden's poems lend themselves to this same belief of Arnold's, that poems must interpret, console and sustain.

From his earlier poems to those written before his 1973 death, Auden's poetic messages, whether religious, political or social, always turned out to reflect attitudes of a great many intellectuals of the time. Monroe K. Spears credits this with the fact that Auden was able to "... express, in symbols and language apparently private and eccentric, attitudes and emotions that turned out to be representative of a great many..." which then take readers back the Perkins' idea of Auden's conversational language, (81).

As discussed, Auden declared that before any poem can take shape, the encounter must occur. Auden was adamant in his belief that the encounter was the single most important element of the poetic process. Because a great many of Auden's encounters,

whether obvious or not as expressed in his poems, spoke to an array of readers. Auden felt compelled to recognize the overall power of these encounters and poems in general and offer some insight about the general function of poetry. In an interview about the poetry of T.S. Eliot, Auden stated:

Art...is not Magic... but a mirror in which they (people) may become conscious of what their own feelings really are...it shows us that our present state is neither as virtuous nor as secure as we thought, and by the lucid pattern into which it unifies these details, its assertion that order is *possible*, it faces us with the command to make it *actual*... no one... is intentionally a magician...no artist can prevent his work being used as magic, for that is what all of us, highbrow and lowbrow alike, secretly want Art to be", (Spears 188).

Here, Auden defends the traditional purpose of poetry and denies that it can have any other function that might have been implied by critics of the time. (Auden made this comment in 1943 when war issues and propaganda were surfacing). Although not directly stated, Auden's declaration lends itself to his earlier decree that poetry can and does take on many forms i.e. art, science and an acquired skill. Although making reference to the 1943 war mindset, Auden's idea that "... it faces us with the command to make it actual", seems to refer to the encounter once again. "...make it actual"... is exactly what happens when the poet is inspired by the encounter. Auden comments that the current state of things was not as "... secure as we thought". This lends itself to the encounter because encounters happen and are then gone so quickly. The poet, once moved by the encounter has an obligation to write in an attempt to recapture the moment in his poem. He composes a poem to try and make the encounter "actual". Auden

recognizes that this may seem like magic to those who do not write and often, because of the power of the poem, can often have unexplainable effects on readers. Despite the initial encounter and the circumstances under which it was experienced, Auden also declares that a most important aspect of poetry is its ability to not only capture the encounter, but the truth of the encounter: "One duty of a poem, among others, is to bear witness to the truth", (Spears 189). For Auden a poem must, if nothing else, capture the truth of the encounter and convey it to readers. This is so because the poem, as a result of the encounter, is what holds the truth as the poet captures the truth through his choice of words. For Auden, the truth of his various experiences placed his poetry in one of his three discussed categories. The encounters experienced by Auden create truths that classify his poems as either art, science or an acquired skill.

Auden's essay "The Poet & the City" establishes the idea of poetry functioning as art, pure and simple. Auden's poem "Their Lonely Betters" captures what can be seen as the idea of poetry as art while also reflecting the pre-poem encounter. To generalize, Auden stated that: "Poetry does not allow us to escape from life, but it does offer us a brief respite from our immediate problems, refreshment for tired spirits and relaxation for tense nerves...", (F&A 124). This thought directly lends itself to the idea of poetry being an art. All art, through whatever expression the artist chooses, generally attempts to offer people a brief respite from life. Like the poetic "encounter", something has happened to stir inspiration in other artists as well and they have the same obligation to recapture that moment. Whether it is in the form of music, a painting or literature, there will be some person, somewhere who is moved by and temporarily relieved from the realities of life because of what they see/hear in a piece of art. "Their Lonely Betters" does just this in

that through such traditional techniques as personification and figurative language, Auden takes an obviously simple encounter, suspends it in a poem and gives it rather serious meaning:

As I listened from a beach- chair in the shade  
To all the noises that my garden made,  
It seemed to me only proper that words  
Should be withheld from vegetables and birds.  
A Robin with no Christian name ran through  
The Robin- Anthem which was all it knew,  
And rustling flowers for some third party waited  
To say which pairs, if any, should get mated (1-8).

The speaker's relaxation here has obviously been interrupted by the goings on in his garden. The encounter, then, is simply this interruption or break in silence of the speaker's restful afternoon. From this simple encounter, the speaker is moved to talk about the obvious, yet resented life that exists among birds and plants. The speaker seems annoyed at these noises as he declares "... that words should be withheld from vegetables and birds", thus suggesting that these normally peaceful sounds are doing nothing but disturbing him. Through personification, Auden has the Robin and the flowers communicating through singing and rustling alluding to human speech. Despite his annoyance, the speaker takes the time to actually listen to what they are "saying" and comments that they are awaiting to talk of such things as "getting mated", (8).

Not one of them was capable of lying,  
There was not one which knew that it was dying

Or could have with a rhythm or a rhyme

Assumed responsibility for time.

Let them leave language to their lonely betters

Who count some days and long for certain letters;

We, too, make noises when we laugh or weep:

Words are for those with promises to keep (9-16).

Here, the speaker's attitude shifts a bit from one whose rest has been disturbed to one who is annoyed yet reflective. Although disturbed, the speaker lets himself get so lost in the sounds coming from the garden, that he begins to reflect on life. Although he suggests that the singing and rustling are mere prattle and offer no real insight into anything important to life, it causes him to think of people or "lonely betters". He comments that the Robin and the flowers are incapable of lying and that not one of them knew that they were dying. This suggests two major things with which people often preoccupy themselves- dishonesty and death. It is quite ironic that the speaker feel this way as he seems to contradict his earlier decree that "words... be withheld from vegetables and birds", (3-4). It is because of these "noises" that the speaker is "escaping" the reality of his nap and allowing himself to get "lost" in this world going on in his garden. Although annoyed, he seems fascinated in with the idea that the flowers and the birds are oblivious to things like lying and death: "There was not one which knew it was dying", (10). He goes on to comment on the "lonely betters" and declares that words should be left to people because "Words are for those with promises to keep", (16). The speaker is quite displeased with the "noises" and declares that "We, too, make noises when we laugh or weep", suggesting that the "noises" of people are more significant than



those heard in his garden, (15). This simple experience has escalated into a time of philosophical reflection. Because of this, Auden's idea of poetry as art is quite evident. Like art, however simple or complicated it might be, usually requires a person to ponder. This is exactly what happens to the speaker of the poem. As art, poetry can either be observed and appreciated or examined and discussed.

This poem, while obviously influenced by a rather simple encounter, lends itself to the idea of poetry as art because it is both simple yet evokes a deeper meaning and alludes to such things as death and lying. As Auden, the "artist" himself declared, art must offer a temporary respite from reality and that is what this poem does. Although the speaker is not relieved in the normal sense of the word, he does leave his state of reality to become engrossed by the sounds of nature. Also, this poem does praise the sounds of nature in that it gives them a voice and in some way a personality. Like art, this poem focuses on the simple, yet beautiful things while also suggesting a deeper meaning.

As discussed earlier, Auden establishes what are three distinct categories under which poetry may fall. Specifically, in his essay "The Virgin and the Dynamo", he establishes the idea of poetry as a form of science. From the two worlds, that of the Virgin and that of the Dynamo, Auden places poetry in the world of the Virgin as it is seen as a form of communication with words the same as what can be found in the world of the Virgin: "This historical world of the virgin, the world of faces, analogical relations and singular events, describable only in terms of speech", (DH 61). Poetry has the power to convey through words and language such "singular events" that are found within the world of the Virgin. Poetry does not fall into the world of the Dynamo because of the recurrent events that are found there. "The Natural world of the Dynamo, the world of... identical masses

and recurrent events, describable, not in words, but in terms of numbers, or rather, in algebraic terms", (DH 61). These recurrent events are number related and can only be expressed through the use of numbers, not words and language. Because poetry is a result of the pre- poem encounter, it captures the "singular event" as experienced by the poet at a specific time. It does not and cannot function as an algebraic formula and unlike an algebraic equation, a poem will more than likely not have one definite meaning/ suggestion of meaning. A poem can and will be read by many people and will always present a different meaning/ theme to each reader relative to his perception of it. An algebraic formula will be solved and understood in complete black and white without speculation.

Because, if nothing else, a poet aims to capture some element of truth in his poem it is imperative then, like science, that something be revealed along with the expression of the encounter. Similar to scientific experiments, poems often reveal hidden or not so hidden information that the poet may or may not have planned for at the start of his creation. Auden declares that "Both science and art are primarily spiritual activities, whatever practical applications may be, derived from their results", thus incorporating the idea of the encounter in that there is something spiritual that must occur to make a clear point of both poetry and anything scientific (DH 66). Auden states that poetry is a natural organism and is rooted in two elements- the encounter and the audience/ reader for which the poem is intended. Both elements play a part in determining the effect of the completed poem. Rhythm and rhyme add to the scientific element of a poem in that they enhance the element of language that is required of all poems as parts of the world of the Virgin.

"In Praise of Limestone", one of Auden's most famous poems, fits ideally into this category as it was, of course, inspired by an encounter but also demonstrates how language can capture a singular event and convey a message about more than one singular event as is necessary in the world of the Virgin. The poem also functions scientifically as it presents a vision of both the physical world of the limestone and the abstract world seen in the images the speaker/ poet sees within the limestone. The poem is a complete literary debate about what is real and what is fantasy as a result of the human imagination. "In Praise of Limestone" also revisits the scientific phenomenon of the evolution of man from infancy to adulthood. Auden, through elements of imagism and figurative language, paints the picture of "man's relationship with Mother Nature", (Callan 226).

The poem begins by introducing the reader to the inspiration that induced the encounter- the landscape of limestone. In the late fifties, Auden resided in parts of Italy and was overcome by its grandeur- both in the arts and in the scenery there. A certain landscape in Ischia inspired Auden so that it became the basis for "In Praise of Limestone". Auden became quite comfortable as a resident and felt compelled to write. The first lines of the poem supply the setting for both the rest of the poem and the encounter by which it was inspired:

If it form the one landscape that we, the inconstant ones,  
Are consistently homesick for, this is chiefly  
Because it dissolves in water. Mark these rounded slopes  
With their surface fragrance of thyme and, beneath,  
A secret system of caves and conduits... (1-5)

Not only does Auden present the physical element here, the actual "landscape", he also introduces the abstract by introducing "we" meaning the poets/ artists. As a poet, he is seeing the physical landscape of limestone, but the one that he is "homesick for" is the one that he sees within the physical when he begins to imagine there is life buried in the "secret systems of caves and conduits". The scientist will see the physical, tangible landscape while the poet will see more than that. Suggesting that "it dissolves in water" alludes to what the speaker sees in the limestone itself and sees more than a mere wall or landscape of this substance.

The speaker goes on a bit and then introduces the idea of the relationship between man and Mother Nature. Personifying Mother Nature, the speaker credits her with having created this landscape of limestone for her son/ humanity:

What could be more like Mother or a fitter background  
For her son, the flirtatious male who lounges  
Against a rock in the sunlight, never doubting  
That for all his faults he is loved...(11-14).

The allusion here is of course that of a humanity growing more and more disinterested in the beauty of nature and more interested in its function in the lives of the ever-advancing humans/ scientists. The suggestion that the son "lounges against the rock" reflects what can be seen as an ungrateful child. This image also alludes to the idea that humans who are not so poetically inclined as the speaker is, will see the wall and simply lean against it seeing the support it offers as its dominant purpose. The speaker, however, sees more than this.

The speaker goes on to describe all that he sees in the limestone. In line 21, "the band of rivals" is introduced and seen climbing up and down, carrying out their business.

Richard Johnson sums up what he considers to be the dominant message of "In Praise of Limestone" by stating: "...it probes, and accepts, the disproportion's and surprises between the busy world and the fantasy world..." (Bahlke 130). The "busy world" is of course that of humans but it is the speaker of the poem that takes time from the busy-ness to acknowledge the fantasy world of the limestone and see similarities between it and the busy world in which the speaker lives. The speaker expresses what can be considered almost envy as he describes how the rivals function:

They have never had to veil their faces in awe  
Of a crater whose blazing fury could not be fixed;  
Adjusted to the local needs of valleys  
Where everything can be touched or reached by walking,  
Their eyes have never looked into infinite space  
Through the lattice work of a nomad's comb; born lucky  
Their legs have never encountered the fungi  
And insects of the jungle...(30-37)

What is described here is a world of not mechanical order where things are *made* to work, but rather a world of natural order where inhabitants function together, therefore creating a world that functions the same. The speaker is seemingly envious of these rivals because they have not had to worry about craters or natural disasters that the inhabitants of the speaker's "busy world" have had to. He is suggesting, too, that unlike his own world constantly scrutinized by various parties, the rivals have lived peacefully and have

not had to look "through the lattice work of a nomad's comb". Not only does the speaker admire the order that he sees, but also the stability. By referring to a "nomad", he alludes to the idea that unlike a nomad, the rivals in the limestone have always been in their place there, in the wall. They are and have been living undisturbed and are quite content. John Fuller comments that:

Auden establishes with elegiac sweetness and modesty the proposition that human virtue depends, in part, upon a simple assertion of the common values of life and their appetites, that limestone inconstancy may in another sense... be limestone innocence, (213).

What is alluded to by Fuller's comment and the middle section of the poem is the idea of the biological development of humans from innocent, content children to older, curious adults. As the "rivals", the less mature inhabitants can be seen as living together and functioning without corruption, but as time goes on, one is tempted and aims to corrupt the others with what he has seen on the outside world, apart from the life they have always known. Scientifically, as humans grow, they become more and interested in self-discovery and in the happenings of the world around them. The speaker declares that

The best and worst never stayed here long but sought  
Immoderate soils where the beauty was not so external,  
The light less public and the meaning of life something more than a mad  
camp. (45-48).

Auden suggests here that although natural order is appealing, it cannot be the only order and it is imperative that its source be discovered. The speaker, although suggesting that the rivals' lifestyle is quite Utopian, alludes to the constant scientific research conducted to discover how and why things function as opposed to simply letting them exist.

The latter part of the poem suggests that research often leads to grim findings. The speaker goes on to describe what is discovered by those who venture out:

A backward and dilapidated province, connected  
To the big busy world by a tunnel, with a certain  
Seedy appeal, is that all it is now? (65-68)

The rivals have left their seemingly perfect residency and have found something quite different than they probably expected to. The speaker goes on to suggest the evolution of man from rivals to a poet and a scientist:

The poet, admired for his earnest habit of calling the sun the sun,  
His mind Puzzle, is made uneasy by these marble statues which  
So obviously doubt his antimythological myth; and these gamins,  
Pursuing the scientist down the tiled colonnade  
With such lively offers, rebuke his concern for Nature's  
Remotest aspects. (71-78)

What is established here is, of course, a conflict between the "poets" and the "scientists". They are both in search of discoveries, yet do not look for the same thing.

The last few lines of the poem redirect the focus to the original- that of the speaker and his observance of the landscape of limestone. He categorizes himself as clearly a poet/ artist rather than a scientist as he states:

...what I hear is the murmur  
Of underground streams, what I see is a limestone landscape (94-95).

He, like the scientist, will see the physical landscape in front of him, but cannot deny that his imagination will get the best of him causing him to hear the "underground streams".

"In Praise of Limestone" can function scientifically because it too, like scientific research, raises questions of such universal things as human behavior and man's place in society as seen with the rivals and also the progression of humans over time as seen when the rivals "mature" and venture out to seek more than they find in their home. As a functional part of the world of the Virgin, this poem conveys through language the single event of the speaker looking at a landscape of limestone. However, Auden, as the poet, has taken this simple limestone structure and created something that science may never be able to explain.

The last of Auden's categories under which a poem can be found is that of poetry being an acquired talent/ skill that must develop over time as the poet himself goes through stages of life. In "Making, Knowing and Judging", where Auden first introduces this idea of poetry as a developing, acquired skill, he states that at the early stage of his career the apprentice poet "...makes little distinction between a book, a country walk and a kiss", (DH 43). However, later on in his life, he will become more conscious of various elements of life and be able to write about them in a more mature, developed way. His keenness for inspiration will still require the encounter, but will not be blurred by the inability to separate one idea from the next. Auden's poem "We Too had Known Golden Hours" addresses the issue of how the poet's work will change over time and evolve from his earlier works as he witnesses changes in the society around him.

In "We Too..." the speaker, who for this poem is clearly Auden, addresses issues of innocence and maturation. The poem itself was intended to reflect the changing attitude of the world and the modern negating of such things as poetry and art. Auden was adamant in his belief that poetry not get "lost" in technology and expresses in this poem



exactly what he sees as beginning to happen to poetry in the 1950's. However, the poem also lends itself nicely to his idea of there being an apprentice poet who will eventually grow into a master so long as he practices and is aware of the world around him.

We, too, had known golden hours  
When body and soul were in tune,  
Had danced with our true loves  
By the light of the moon,  
And sat with the wise and the good  
As tongues grew witty and gay  
Over some noble dish  
Out of Escoffier,  
Had felt the intrusive glory  
Which tears reserve apart. (1-10)

What comes to mind with these first lines is the apprentice poet and his early attempts at creating poetry. The "golden hours" can refer to the early days of the apprentice's career when he is fascinated by everything he feels and sees. These early days, too, are when the apprentice is really becoming comfortable with and aware of the pre-poem encounter. The apprentices all "felt the intrusive glory", the inspiration for the words that they spilled on paper. This "tears reserve apart" and inspires them to express anything and everything they can in words. As was discussed earlier, Auden declared that the early attempts of the apprentice should not be held against him no matter how bad they might have been. At the beginning, the apprentices will write about anything that strikes them and, in a sense, act as carefree as the "we" in the poem do. To "dance with true loves"

and "sit with the wise and good" reflect the days of the apprentice when he would spend his time philosophizing with his fellow apprentices and falling in and out of love with various girls. Their "tongues grew witty and gay" because the apprentices were learning from each other. In the early days, the "body and soul were one" because the apprentice was still learning and not yet critiquing his own work. These lines reflect the birth, so to speak, of the apprentice into his new life. The "we" also places Auden in this situation of having seen things change and mature, so to speak as a poet.

However, as time moves on, the apprentice grows from this "innocent" state of wanting to capture everything in his poems and realizes that in order to write well, one must restrict themselves from writing too much. The apprentice now enters the next step- that being having others critique your work and accepting the possible negative comments they may make. Part of the poetic maturation process is to accept the fact that not everyone who reads the work of the apprentice will find it enjoyable. The apprentice is now moving from the "golden hours" to a more crucial element in their career.

But, pawed- at and gossiped over  
By the promiscuous crowd,  
Concocted by editors  
Into spells to befuddle the crowd,  
All words like Peace and Love,  
All sane affirmative speech,  
Has been soiled, profaned, debased  
To a horrid mechanical screech (13-20).

What the apprentice experiences here is the first taste of someone telling him that he can't write what he feels anymore because it's unacceptable. The apprentice feels that he and his poems have been "pawed- at" and "gossiped- over" by certain critics. Ironically, the speaker refers to these critics as "the promiscuous crowd" when early on, the apprentice and his fellows themselves could have been promiscuous for their behavior and naive philosophies. The apprentice, here, is facing the reality of maturing as a poet. His words have been "concocted by editors" and feels that they have been manipulated to "befuddle the crowd". He declares that such simple words like "peace" and "love" are no longer acceptable because they are too simple for a poet who is looking to become a master. He feels violated in that his poems were not just taken for their face value but were scrutinized and possibly questioned. "The horrid mechanical screech", is, of course, a reference to what Auden felt was happening to poetry and literature but when applied to the apprentice, it can also be a reference to the way he feels after seeing/ hearing what the critics have said about his poetry. The adjective "mechanical" serves an important role in that the apprentice considers the suggested changes offered by these critics to take the natural element away from his poems and thus lessening their value to some extent and giving them a mechanical element. Although this is a necessary step for the apprentices approaching the position of master, it is quite difficult.

The latter part of the poem seems to leave the apprentice in limbo in that Auden offers no solution to what can be considered a problem that the apprentice will have to either face or hide from. To become a master poet, as discussed earlier, the apprentice must accept any criticism as beneficial to the betterment of his own work and not take it personally. Auden ends the poem with a feeling of uncertainty:

No civil style had survived  
That pandemonium  
But the wry, the sotto-voce,  
Ironic and monochrome:  
And where should we find shelter  
For joy or mere content  
When little was left standing  
But the suburb of dissent? (22-28).

The apprentice feels lost. After many attempts, his early works have been deemed not good enough. He finds himself wondering what to do with himself and his "rejected" poems. He asks the question "where should we find shelter for joy or mere content?", suggesting that he knows not where to turn for further inspiration and worries that his diction too will be unacceptable when he states "no civil style survived". The apprentice finds himself lost. However, those who were truly meant to be poets are able to come to terms with this early disappointment and move on to become master poets. In his poem "Words", Auden writes:

One cannot change the subject halfway through,  
Nor alter tenses to appease the ear;  
Arcadian tales are hard-luck stories too. (5-8).

Although a different poem, these lines sum up what the apprentice poet eventually learns to accept if he truly wants to be a master poet. He must accept that fact that his early attempts and even some of his later attempts of poetry will not be appreciated by every single reader. He must accept the fact that his craft takes time to perfect and that

"Arcadian tales are hard-luck stories", suggesting that things will not always go as he predicted them to. Auden has clearly established the idea that a poet never creates a complete masterpiece the first time around.

Despite Auden's clearly stated and logical categories for poetry, readers often find discrepancies between what he declared and what he actually wrote in his poems. Because of his extensive subject matters, Auden's messages are often times ambiguous and leave readers questioning whether or not Auden the poet abided by the decrees of Auden the lecturer/ schoolmaster. Because of Auden's knowledge of politics, religion and philosophy, as mentioned earlier by Beach and Spears, Auden's intended poetic messages sometimes contradict such beliefs as:

Poets are... singularly ill-equipped to understand politics or economics. Their natural interest is in singular individuals and personal relations while politics and economics are concerned with large numbers of people hence the human average...(DH 84).

What Auden expresses here is the idea that poets are capable of writing of and for only a small population of people who are ignorant of such things about which Auden himself actually wrote. The "singular individuals" look back to the world of the Virgin in which the poet only concerns himself with certain events and persons about and with which to communicate. Instead of concerning himself with such things as calculations and current political events, "All poets adore explosions, thunderstorms, tornadoes, conflagrations, ruins, scenes of spectacular carnage", (DH 84). Auden's theory, then, of a symbiotic worlds as seen in "The Virgin and the Dynamo" tends to fall apart when measured up to such ideas as poets adoring tornadoes, conflagrations and spectacular carnage. These events are all things that would affect a larger number of people than what is expressed in "singular individuals and personal relations". Auden seems to suggest that a poet is only

capable of communicating with a handful of people. If this is the case, it contradicts his view of poetry as a "universal mouth" that will be around forever.

As mentioned, Auden's poetry often displays evidence that argues against his theory that poets are "ill-equipped". Written in 1939, the poem "The Unknown Citizen" reveals just the opposite, in fact. Through this poem, Auden clearly demonstrates that he, as a poet, is quite aware of political and social standards and is successful in his communication about them.

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be  
One against whom there was no official complaint...  
...Except for the War and the day he retired  
He worked in a factory and never got fired...  
...The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day  
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way...  
...Our researchers into Public Opinion are content  
That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;  
...Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:  
Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard."  
(1-2, 6-7, 14-15, 22-23, 30-31)

Here, Auden reflects on the "norm" of what would have been socially and politically acceptable in the mid- late 1930's. The epigraph of the poem reads "To JS/o7/M/ 378 This Marble Monument is Erected by the State" and suggests, almost satirically, how betrayed people felt in the 1930's. (particularly Americans). Auden spent a great deal of time in the United States and witnessed first hand the disillusionment that affected many Americans in the 1930's as a result of World War I and the Depression. The betrayal

resulted mainly from citizens wondering what happened to their land of opportunity. They felt betrayed in that the issues resulting from the war and the financial crisis played a significant role in deterring, if not terminating, their success as citizens. Auden the poet, then, contradicts Auden the lecturer who states that poets are "ill-equipped". "The Unknown Citizen" clearly reflects knowledge of social, political and ethical matters. Thus speaking for and about more than just one individual. The "unknown citizen", himself, represents a large number of people in the late 1930's with whom Auden was clearly familiar. Auden is expressing an understanding of not only the idea of many worlds, but the fact that all inhabitants can all understand and empathize with each other- including poets, thus contradicting the early idea that poets have a "...natural interest in singular individuals and personal relations..." (84). Auden once commented: "School life taught me that I was an anti-political", (Davenport-Hines, 61). This statement, made in 1939, clearly does not reflect the ideas of an older Auden whose poetry negates his adamant opinion on politics. It was such social concerns as politics, in particular, that fueled Auden as a writer.

Another theory that is challenged by some of Auden's own poetry is his "poetry as an eternal mouth" theory discussed earlier. The well-known poem "As I Walked Out One Evening" really challenges Auden's adamant view of poetry as a mouth that survives. The idea that poetry can and will go on forever, defeating time and remaining to speak for and to generations is questioned here. In stanzas 6-8, Auden states:

But all the clocks in the city

Began to whirr and chime;

'O let Time not deceive you,

You cannot conquer Time.  
'In the burrows of the Nightmare  
Where Justice naked is,  
Time watches from the shadow  
And coughs when you would kiss.  
'In headaches and in worry,  
Vaguely life leaks away,  
And Time will have his fancy  
To-morrow or To-day (CP, 134)

Firstly, Auden capitalizes the "t" in "time" suggesting that time is a great force, greater than the lovers of whom he speaks in his poem. Time is seen as evil, and tempting. Auden states in line 2 "Oh let Time not deceive you", suggesting that time teases and sets traps for people such as the lovers. As humans, then, the lovers cannot remain as they are nor can they hope to beat this natural system. The question, then, arises of how poetry, a human invention, can ever hope to capture time? If poetry, according to Auden "survives and is a way of happening, a mouth", how can it beat time? According to "As I Walked Out One Evening", "Time will have it's fancy, to-morrow or to-day", so it doesn't seem, then that poetry will last forever, as a mouth. These stanzas also contribute to the idea that there are limits to human capabilities and creations. Auden, here, offers no room for "forever" as he states "Vaguely, life leaks away". Obviously, he is referring to human life so if this is the case and time will end everything one day, poetry will go as well, not necessarily speaking of poetry as a material collection of words and books, but poetry as an entity to be read and understood. If time has its



way, and according to Auden, it will, then humankind will eventually no longer exist and there will be no sense of poetry as the eternal mouth.

A.W. Longman sums up in one sentence the authenticity that makes Auden's work eternally unique: "...he combined a vigorous wit and a searching but often playful intellect with a passionate moral sense, in a lifelong engagement with the issues of human imperfections, sin and redemptions, and the quest for both social and spiritual justice", (1). The true genius of Auden is not just his ideas of the three categories of poetry or even the idea of the encounter. The genius lies in the fact that his take on the world and times in which he lived comes through full force in his writing. It is clear that he intended to write for and "talk" to all mankind through his poems and does so. Although some of his poems may suggest otherwise, Auden clearly defied his own theory that poets are "ill-equipped". The essays and poems of Auden all reflect the man who maintained and left a legacy of verse and philosophy.

To quote from Auden one last time, he writes in his poem "Words":

A sentence uttered makes a world appear  
Where all things happen as it says they do;  
We doubt the speaker, not the tongue we hear:  
Words have no word for words that are not true (1-4)

One of the most fascinating elements of Auden's poetry is this world that he makes appear. "Where all things happen as it says they do", lends itself impeccably to Auden's own poetry. He wrote the truth. He let the encounter of the moment move him and conveyed the truth of the moment through his words. There are few, if any, of his poems that do not reflect some element of truth about the world in which he was living at a

specific time in his life. Aside from the poems discussed here, a great majority of his others have been read and dissected only to find that there is one common nucleus that links them all together- the longevity that they have. After reading about and researching many elements of Auden himself and his writing, one aspect that no Auden scholar/ critic ignored is that there is no generation of readers that will ever be able to deny the relevance of at least one of Auden's poems, (or lectures for that matter), to some social, political or religious event that may be underway at one time or another. Auden's overall position as a poet was so complimented by his knowledge of nearly every aspect of the world that he seems to have been able to write from different elements of himself. Auden the poet had a great deal of support from Auden the philosopher, Auden the everyday citizen and so on. Auden, through his poems, is able to communicate various opinions without confusing readers as to what his general opinion on the specific subject matter may have been. As an example, as seen before, the poem "We Too had Known Golden Hours" can certainly be seen as an extended metaphor reflecting the struggles of an up and coming poet but is also clearly addressing the social issue of literature being bombarded by technology. Although there are at least two themes to this poem, the reader is not confused about subject matter or the speaker/ Auden's viewpoint.

The most fascinating element, for me, of the poetry of W. H. Auden and his lectures is how he established an undeniable place for poetry in the world. His ability to capture every element of individuals and society makes reading him completely engrossing. The relevance of his poems is what gives them their longevity. Also, because he was a poet, Auden does not bore the reader with what some might refer to as historical prattle.

Auden wrote in such a way that readers become captivated by his language but do not get lost in the obvious truth/ factual element of his poems.

The fact that Auden wrote various essays and gave lectures also proves that he was adamant in his belief that poetry be an eternal mouth. As seen in the poems here and in his other poems, Auden felt compelled to not only make such a declarations, but to also live up to it.

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