

Afterwards

by Thomas Hardy

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,
"He was a man who used to notice such things"?

If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid's soundless blink,
The dewfall-hawk comes crossing the shades to alight
Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, a gazer may think,
"To him this must have been a familiar sight."

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
One may say, "He strove that such innocent creatures should come to no harm,
But he could do little for them; and now he is gone."

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the door,
Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,
"He was one who had an eye for such mysteries"?

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,
And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,
"He hears it not now, but used to notice such things?"

O what is that sound which so thrills the ear
Down in the valley drumming, drumming?
Only the scarlet soldiers, dear,
The soldiers coming.

O what is that light I see flashing so clear
Over the distance brightly, brightly?
Only the sun on their weapons, dear,
As they step lightly.

O what are they doing with all that gear,
What are they doing this morning, morning?
Only their usual manoeuvres, dear,
Or perhaps a warning.

O why have they left the road down there,
Why are they suddenly wheeling, wheeling?
Perhaps a change in their orders, dear,
Why are you kneeling?

O haven't they stopped for the doctor's care,
Haven't they reined their horses, horses?
Why, they are none of them wounded, dear,
None of these forces.

O is it the parson they want, with white hair,
Is it the parson, is it, is it?
No, they are passing his gateway, dear,
Without a visit.

O it must be the farmer that lives so near.
It must be the farmer so cunning, so cunning?
They have passed the farmyard already, dear,
And now they are running.

O where are you going? Stay with me here!
Were the vows you swore deceiving, deceiving?
No, I promised to love you, dear,
But I must be leaving.

O it's broken the lock and splintered the door,
O it's the gate where they're turning, turning;
Their boots are heavy on the floor
And their eyes are burning.

This lunar beauty
Has no history
Is complete and early,
If beauty later
Bear any feature
It had a lover
And is another.

This like a dream
Keeps other time
And daytime is
The loss of this,
For time is inches
And the heart's changes
Where ghost has haunted
Lost and wanted.

But this was never
A ghost's endeavor
Nor finished this,
Was ghost at ease,
And till it pass
Love shall not near
The sweetness here
Nor sorrow take
His endless look.

from A Summer Night

Now north and south and east and west
Those I love lie down to rest;
 The moon looks on them all,
The healers and the brilliant talkers
The eccentrics and the silent walkers,
 The dumpy and the tall.

She climbs the European sky,
Churches and power stations lie
 Alike among the earth's fixtures:
Into the galleries she peers
And blankly stares as a butcher stares
 Upon the marvelous pictures.

To gravity attentive, she
Can notice nothing here, though we
 Whom hunger does not move,
From gardens where we feel secure
Look up and with a sigh endure
 The tyrannies of love.

And, gentle, do not care to know,
Where Poland draws her eastern bow,
 What violence is done,
Nor ask what doubtful act allows
Our freedom in this English house,
 Our picnics in the sun.

from 'Twelve Songs

Dear, though the night is gone,
Its dream still haunts to-day,
That brought us to a room
Cavernous, lofty as
A railway terminus,
And crowded in that gloom
Were beds, and we in one
In a far corner lay.

Our whisper woke no clocks,
We kissed and I was glad
At everything you did,
Indifferent to those
Who sat with hostile eyes
In pairs on every bed,
Arms round each other's neck,
Inert and vaguely sad.

O but what worm of guilt
Or what malignant doubt
Am I the victim of,
That you then, unabashed,
Did what I never wished,
Confessed another love;
And I, submissive, felt
Unwanted and went out?

from In Time of War

XIV

Yes, we are going to suffer, now; the sky
Throbs like a feverish forehead; pain is real;
The groping searchlights suddenly reveal
The little natures that will make us cry,

Who never quite believed they could exist,
Not where we were. They take us by surprise
Like ugly long-forgotten memories,
And like a conscience all the guns resist.

Behind each sociable home-loving eye
The private massacres are taking place;
All Women, Jews, the Rich, the Human Race.

The mountains cannot judge us when we lie:
We dwell upon the earth; the earth obeys
The intelligent and evil till they die.

Musée des Beaux Arts

About suffering they were never wrong,
The Old Masters; how well, they understood
Its human position; how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

Song of the Master and Boatswain

At Dirty Dick's and Sloppy Joe's
We drank our liquor straight,
Some went upstairs with Margery,
And some, alas, with Kate;
And two by two like cat and mouse
The homeless played at keeping house.

There Wealthy Meg, the Sailor's Friend,
And Marion, cow-eyed,
Opened their arms to me but I
Refused to step inside;
I was not looking for a cage
In which to mope my old age.

The nightingales are sobbing in
The orchards of our mothers,
And hearts that we broke long ago
Have long been breaking others;
Tears are round, the sea is deep:
Roll them overboard and sleep.

The Song

So large a morning so itself to lean
Over so many and such little hills
All at rest in roundness and rigs of green
Can cope with a rebellious wing that wills
To better its obedient double quite
As daring as in the lap of any lake
The wind from which ascension puts to flight
Tribes of a beauty which no care can break.

Climbing to song it hopes to make amends
For whiteness drabbed for glory said away
And be immortal after but because
Light upon a valley where its love was
So lacks all picture of reproach it ends
Denying what it started out to say.

August 1968

The Ogre does what ogres can,
Deeds quite impossible for Man.
But one prize is beyond his reach,
The Ogre cannot master speech.
About a subjugated plain,
Among its desperate and slain,
The Ogre stalks with hands on hips,
While drivel gushes from his lips.

Against their wills feel the will to live renewed by the song
Of a loose bird, maculate cities are spared
Through the prayers of illiterate saints, and an ancient
Feud re-opens with the debacle of a river.

? *Spring 1950*

In Praise of Limestone

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; hear the springs
That spurt out everywhere with a chuckle,
Each filling a private pool for its fish and carving
Its own little ravine whose cliffs entertain
The butterfly and the lizard; examine this region
Of short distances and definite places:
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; whose works are but
Extensions of his power to charm? From weathered outcrop
To hill-top temple, from appearing waters to
Conspicuous fountains, from a wild to a formal vineyard,
Are ingenious but short steps that a child's wish
To receive more attention than his brothers, whether
By pleasing or teasing, can easily take.

Watch, then, the band of rivals as they climb up and down
Their steep stone gennels in twos and threes, at times
Arm in arm, but never, thank God, in step; or engaged
On the shady side of a square at midday in
Voluble discourse, knowing each other too well to think
There are any important secrets, unable
To conceive a god whose temper-tantrums are moral
And not to be pacified by a clever line
Or a good lay: for, accustomed to a stone that responds,
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, the monstrous forms and lives
With which we have nothing, we like to hope, in common.
So, when one of them goes to the bad, the way his mind works
Remains comprehensible: to become a pimp
Or deal in fake jewellery or ruin a fine tenor voice
For effects that bring down the house, could happen to all
But the best and the worst of us . . . That is why, I suppose,

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. 'Come!' cried the granite wastes,
'How evasive is your humor, how accidental

Your kindest kiss, how permanent is death.' (Saints-to-be
Slipped away sighing.) 'Come!' purred the clays and gravels,
'On our plains there is room for armies to drill; rivers
Wait to be tamed and slaves to construct you a tomb
In the grand manner: soft as the earth is mankind and both
Need to be altered.' (Intendant Caesars rose and
Left, slamming the door.) But the really reckless were fetched
By an older colder voice, the oceanic whisper:
'I am the solitude that asks and promises nothing;
That is how I shall set you free. There is no love;
There are only the various envies, all of them sad.'

They were right, my dear, all those voices were right
And still are; this land is not the sweet home that it looks,
Nor its peace the historical calm of a site
Where something was settled once and for all: 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? Not quite:
It has a worldly duty which in spite of itself
It does not neglect, but calls into question
All the Great Powers assume; it disturbs our rights. 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: I, too, am reproached, for what
And how much you know. Not to lose time, not to get caught,
Not to be left behind, not, please! to resemble
The beasts who repeat themselves, or a thing like water
Or stone whose conduct can be predicted, these
Are our Common Prayer, whose greatest comfort is music
Which can be made anywhere, is invisible,
And does not smell. In so far as we have to look forward
To death as a fact, no doubt we are right: But if
Sins can be forgiven, if bodies rise from the dead,
These modifications of matter into
Innocent athletes and gesticulating fountains,
Made solely for pleasure, make a further point:
The blessed will not care what angle they are regarded from,
Having nothing to hide. Dear, I know nothing of
Either, but when I try to imagine a faultless love
Or the life to come, what I hear is the murmur
Of underground streams, what I see is a limestone landscape.

May 1948

Appendix I

Titles of Poems Excluded from this Edition

This appendix lists pieces excluded by Auden from his *Collected Shorter Poems 1927-1957* (other than the four restored poems noted in the editor's preface), although published in his earlier volumes. Not listed are poems published only in periodicals, or in privately printed pamphlets such as the 1928 *Poems* printed by Stephen Spender; nor are those poems listed that were printed only as parts of longer works such as *The Orators* or the notes to 'New Year Letter' in *The Double Man*. Full information may be found in *W. H. Auden: A Bibliography*, second edition, by B. C. Bloomfield and Edward Mendelson (University Press of Virginia, 1972).

Poems are listed under the volumes in which they first appeared. If Auden also published a poem in one of his later collections, the date of the later volume is noted together with any new or altered titles. Poems that first appeared untitled are listed by first lines. The parenthetical dates in this appendix refer to reprintings in the following volumes:

- 1933 *Poems*, second edition (Faber, reprinted in the 1934 Random House *Poems*)
- 1945 *The Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden* (Random House)
- 1950 *Collected Shorter Poems 1930-1944* (Faber)

1945 and 1950 are similar collections; poems appearing in both, with the same title, are noted 1945/50.

Most of the poems in this list will be included in a forthcoming selection of Auden's early work, printed according to the original texts.

POEMS (1930)

Which of you waking early and watching daybreak . . .
To have found a place for nowhere . . .
The crowing of the cock . . .
Bones wrenched, weak whimper, lids wrinkled . . .
Sentries against inner and outer . . . (1933, 1945/50 Shut Your Eyes
and Open Your Mouth)
Get there if you can and see the land . . . (1933)
Nor was that final, for about that time . . .
Suppose they met, the inevitable procedure . . .
No trenchant parting this . . .
Under boughs between our tentative endearments . . . (1933, 1945/50 When
the Devil Drives)
Sir, no man's enemy . . . (1933, 1945/50 Petition)

POEMS (1933)

It's no use raising a shout . . .

ON THIS ISLAND (1936)¹

Since the external disorder . . .
Prologue (1945/50 Perhaps)
Brothers, who when the sirens roar . . .
The chimneys are smoking . . . (1950 Two Worlds)
Here on the cropped grass . . . (1950 The Malverns)
The sun shines down . . .
To lie flat on the back . . . (1945/50 What's the Matter?)
Night covers up the rigid land . . .
To settle in this village of the heart . . . (1945/50 It's So Dull Here)
August for the people and their favourite islands . . . (1950 Birthday Poem)
Epilogue (1945 As We Like It, 1950 Our City)

LETTERS FROM ICELAND (1937)
(with Louis MacNeice)

Letter to R. H. S. Crossman, Esq.
Letter to William Goldstream, Esq.
Auden and MacNeice: Their Last Will and Testament

JOURNEY TO A WAR (1939)
(with Christopher Isherwood)

The Traveller (1945/50)
In Time of War: A Sonnet Sequence with a Verse Commentary
(1945/50; *Collected Shorter Poems 1927-1957*, and the present edition, omit
sonnets IX, X, XIV, XV, XX, XXVI, and the verse Commentary, and
severely revise the remainder as 'Sonnets from China')

ANOTHER TIME (1940)

Every eye must weep alone . . .
The Creatures (1945/50)
Pascal (1945/50)
Matthew Arnold (1945/50)
Spain 1937 (1945/50)
September 1, 1939 (1945/50)
Epithalamion (1945/50)

¹ The title of the British edition, *Look, Stranger!*, was chosen by the publishers while Auden was in Iceland, and was used over his strong objections.

THE DOUBLE MAN (1941)²

Prologue (1945 Spring 1940)

THE COLLECTED POETRY OF W. H. AUDEN
(Random House, 1945)

In War Time (1950)
The Cultural Presupposition³ (1950 Culture)
Christmas 1940 (1950)
January 1, 1931⁴ (1950)
Letter to a Wound⁴
Gold in the North . . . (1950)
Not, Father, further do prolong . . .⁴ (1950)
Now through night's caressing grip . . .³ (1950)
Depravity: A Sermon³

COLLECTED SHORTER POEMS 1930-1944 (Faber, 1950)

Prothalamion³

THE SHIELD OF ACHILLES (1955)

Barcarolle (from *The Rake's Progress*)

NOTE: The present collection also excludes the translations printed in
of Auden's later volumes—the 'Four Translations' of Polish
Russian poems in *About the House*, and the 'Eight Songs from *A
Courage*' in *City Without Walls*. An antimasque written in collabor
with Chester Kalliman, 'The Entertainment of the Senses', appear
Thank You, Fog; this will be reprinted in a forthcoming collecti
Auden's dramatic writings.

² The title of the British edition, *New Year Letter*, was chosen by the publisher:
³ Reprinted from the play *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (with Christopher Isher
1935).
⁴ Reprinted from *The Orators* (1932).

Appendix II

Variant Titles

The method of this appendix should for the most part be self-explanatory. If Auden previously used a title when publishing a poem, but collected it for this edition without a title, its first line is given in the right-hand column. Volumes in which the earlier title appeared are indicated by dates of publication:

- 1939 *Journey to a War*
- 1940 *Another Time*
- 1941 *The Double Man* (British edition, *New Year Letter*)¹
- 1945 *The Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden* (Random House)
- 1950 *Collected Shorter Poems 1930-1944* (Faber)
- 1961 *Nones*
- 1955 *The Shield of Achilles*
- 1958 *W. H. Auden: A Selection by the Author* (Penguin; published by the Modern Library as *Selected Poetry of W. H. Auden*)
- 1966 *Collected Shorter Poems 1927-1957*

1945 and 1950 are similar collections; titles appearing in both are indicated 1945/50.

Alternative Title

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|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able At Times to Cry (1958) Adventure (1941, 1945) The Adventurers (1941, 1945) Aera sub Lege (1945) Air Port (1951) All Over Again (1945) Alonso to Ferdinand (1958) Always in Trouble (1945) Are You There? (1945) As Well as can be Expected (1945) Autumn 1940 (1945) The Average (1941, 1945) Barbed Wire (1958) The Bard (1958) Better Not (1945/50) But I Can't (1945) Caliban to the Audience (1958) Chorus (1958) The City (1941, 1945) The Climbers (1945/50) Crisis (1940) The Crossroads (1941, 1945) The Dead Echo (1958) Do Be Careful (1945) Doomsday Song (1958) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As He Is The Quest XVII The Quest XVIII The Hidden Law In Transit From Paid on Both Sides From The Sea and the Mirror From Paid on Both Sides Alone Taller To-day The Dark Years The Quest XI From Memorial to the City Sonnets from China VII No Change of Place If I Could Tell You From The Sea and the Mirror The Wanderer The Quest V Two Climbs They The Quest III Death's Echo Between Adventure Domesday Song |
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¹ In the sonnet sequence 'The Quest', separate titles for each of the sonnets appear only in the American edition (see editor's preface).

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Door (1941, 1945) A Dream (1958) Embassy (1958) Epilogue (1941) The First Temptation (1941, 1945) Footnotes to Dr. Sheldon 1 (1951) Footnotes to Dr. Sheldon 2 (1951) For the Last Time (1945) Funeral Blues (1940) Ganymede (1958) The Garden (1941, 1945) The Hard Question (1950) The Hero (1941, 1945) I Shall Be Enchanted (1945) In Father's Footsteps (1945) In Legend (1958) In Time of War (1939, 1945/50)² Invocation to Ariel (1958) It's Too Much (1945) Johnny (1940) The Journey (1958) The Labyrinth (1945) Like a Dream (1950) Like Us (1945/50) The Love Letter (1945/50) The Lucky (1941, 1945) Madrigal (1940, 1958) Make Up Your Mind (1945) Miranda's Song (1958) Music Ho (1951) A New Age (1958) Nobody Understands Me (1945/50) Nocturne II (1955) Not All the Candidates Pass (1945/50) O Tell Me the Truth about Love (1940) 'O who can ever praise enough...'
(1945/50) One Evening (1958) The Pilgrim (1945) Please Make Yourself at Home (1945) The Preparations (1941, 1945) The Presumptuous (1941, 1945) The Proof (1955) Pur (1945) The Quarry (1958) Refugee Blues (1940) Remember (1945) A Sanguine Thought (1955) Seascape (1958) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Quest I 'Dear, though the night is
Sonnets from China XV The Dark Years The Quest VI 'Behold the manly mesomc
'Give me a doctor...'
The Council 'Stop all the clocks...'
Sonnets from China IX The Quest XX The Question (<i>in Part II</i>) The Quest XVI Legend Our Hunting Fathers Legend Sonnets from China From The Sea and the Mirror From Paid on Both Sides 'O the valley in the summe
From Paid on Both Sides The Maze This Lunar Beauty 'These had stopped seeking
The Letter The Quest XV 'O lurcher-loving collier...
Easy Knowledge From The Sea and the Mirror 'The Emperor's favorite
cubine...'
Sonnets from China X A Misunderstanding 'Make this night loveable...
The Watchers 'Some say that love's ε
boy...'
The Price As I Walked Out One Eveni
The Quest IV Like a Vocation The Quest II The Quest X 'When rites and melodies be
This Lunar Beauty O What is That Sound
'Say this city...'
From Paid on Both Sides 'O where would those c
boys...'
On This Island |
|---|--|

² In Time of War XXV becomes in the present edition A Major Port.

XIII The Useful
 XIV The Way
 XV The Lucky
 XVI The Hero
 XVII Adventure
 XVIII The Adventurers
 XIX The Waters
 XX The Garden

The Second Temptation (1941, 1945) The Quest VII
 Serenade (1951) 'On and on and on . . .'
 Something is Bound to Happen The Wanderer
 (1945)
 Song for St. Cecilia's Day (1945/50) Anthem for St. Cecilia's Day
 Song of the Master and Boatswain From The Sea and the Mirror
 (1958)
 Song of the Old Soldier (1958) From For the Time Being
 Stephano's Song (1958) From The Sea and the Mirror
 Such Nice People (1945/50) On Sunday Walks
 'The summer quickens all . . .' (1945) From Paid on Both Sides
 Surgical Ward (1958) Sonnets from China XIV
 The Third Temptation (1945) The Quest VIII
 This One (1945/50, 1958) This Loved One
 The Three Companions (1958) 'O where are you going . . .'
 Three Dreams (1958, 1966) From The Age of Anxiety
 To E. M. Forster (1939, 1950) Sonnets from China XXI
 To You Simply (1945/50) 'For what as easy . . .'
 The Tower (1941, 1945) The Quest IX
 The Traveler (1941) The Quest IV
 Trinculo's Song (1958) From The Sea and the Mirror
 True Enough (1945) 'His ageing nature is the same . . .'
 Two's Company (1945) Never Stronger
 The Useful (1941, 1945) The Quest XIII
 Vocation (1941, 1945) The Quest XII
 The Voyage (1939, 1945/50) Whither?
 The Walking Tour (1945) From Paid on Both Sides
 The Waters (1941, 1945) The Quest XIX
 The Way (1941, 1945) The Quest XIV
 We All Make Mistakes (1945) A Free One
 We're Late (1945) No Time
 What Do You Think? (1945) The Question
 'When the Sex War ended . . .' (1966) From For the Time Being
 Which Side am I Supposed to be On? Ode
 (1945/50)
 The Willow-Wren and the Stare 'A starling and a willow-wren . . .'
 (1955)
 Year after Year (1945) From Paid on Both Sides

NOTE: In the American edition of *The Double Man* and in 1945, the sonnets in 'The Quest' have the following titles (see editor's preface):

I The Door
 II The Preparations
 III The Crossroads
 IV The Pilgrim (1941 The Traveler)
 V The City
 VI The First Temptation
 VII The Second Temptation
 VIII The Third Temptation
 IX The Tower
 X The Presumptuous
 XI The Average
 XII Vocation