“Dreaming of Elsewhere”:

Landscape in W.H. Auden

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Introduction

In 1950, Wystan Hugh Auden wrote "In Transit," on the occasion of his plane making a stopover at Shannon Airport in "Mad Ireland" ("W.B. Yeats" 34) on the way to continental Europe[1]. This poem, in which words like "somewhere," "elsewhere," and "nowhere" abound, shows the airport as a non-place representative of modernity. Marc Augé has theorised the concept of the non-place, writing that

> If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a place which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. ... non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places and which ... do not integrate ... earlier places [and] are listed, classified, promoted to the status of 'places of memory', and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position. (77-78)

They are, thus, places where "our occupation / Leaves no trace on this place or each other who do not / Meet" (Auden "In Transit" 34-36). In their existing without any relation to the people that appear and disappear there, non-places are like the abstract spaces Henri Lefebvre describes. Lefebvre writes:

> Capitalism and neocapitalism have produced abstract space, which includes the 'world of commodities', its 'logic' and its worldwide strategies, as well as the power of money and that of the political state. This space is founded on the vast network of

[1] As Jenkins notes, Auden's characterisation of Ireland in "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" was "based on no first-hand knowledge" (n.pag.) as he never really visited the country. The epithet is not entirely negative towards Ireland. Peter Robinson argues that "Auden's remarks about Ireland's weather and madness [should not] be taken as uttered in dramatic contrast to England's climate and mental health; quite the contrary, as in 'one died / During a storm, the fells impassable' or 'immeasurable neurotic dread', 'the explosion of mania' and 'a classic fatigue' (241). He suggests that, in these passages, "Auden is not distinguishing, but implicitly comparing Ireland and England" (241). He also indicates that Yeats himself may have been a source for this characterisation, as he described Ireland as "my fool-driven land" (qtd in Robinson 247) in "All Things Can Tempt Me" (247). In an essay on Yeats, Auden writes "To the outsider, most Irishmen, both in the flesh and in their writings, seem to exhibit certain common characteristics – an extraordinary gift for vivid and musical speech, a greater concern for the charm, humor, beauty of what they say than for its truth, and a temperament to which hating comes easier than loving" ("Private Life" 224), although he shows himself to be more convinced of the Irish attitude towards truth than that towards loving or hating ("Private Life" 224).

> banks, business centres and major productive entities, as also on motorways, airports and information lattices. Within this space the town – once the forcing-house of accumulation, fountainhead of wealth and centre of historical space – has disintegrated. (53)

In response, David Pascoe suggests:

> A prime example of such condensed spatiality is the airport: a small city with hotels, shopping malls, bars, restaurants, discotheques and gyms, all grouped around the centre of the complex, a climate-controlled vacuum. The special quality of a landscape, bound to a particular place, becomes a reproducible atmosphere; the unique experience becomes a staged one. Such virtual space can be created anywhere there is a demand for it. (*Airspaces* 98)

Auden's "In Transit" is not only about transit, it also signifies a transition in Auden's œuvre. As Jenkins suggests, Auden opened the last part of his *Collected Shorter Poems 1927-1957* with this poem "To signal the opening of the next poetic chapter" ("Auden" 53). The poem opens as its speaker is "Let out where two fears intersect" (1) in "a point" (1) between landing and takeoff, departure and arrival. It is "a wet land, facing rough oceans," (3), and as such not completely safe from potentially harmful influences, yet it has never been arrived at by the Latinate culture of the continent, here represented by the semi-anagrammatic "Caesars or a cartesian doubt" (4), unlike even Auden's native, otherwise so un-continental England. Every character featured in the poem is out of place: the "class[es] of souls" (40) that are told "to foregather at the gate" (40) are only grouped together on the more or less arbitrary basis of their shared destinations, and the airport guide is an oxymoronic "professional friend" (7), nothing at all like a real one. Auden himself feels that "here we are nowhere, unrelated to day or to Mother / Earth" (33-34), the disconnection being reinforced by the enjambment (Hart

165), a device used throughout the poem to reflect the continuous movement of the airport business.

Separation leads the speaker to contemplate other places, from which he is at that moment removed but which, as opposed to the airport, do carry real significance to him: "Somewhere are places where we have really been, dear spaces / Of our deeds and faces, scenes we remember / As unchanging because there we changed" (17-19). The young boy he sees is similarly lost in thought, but in thought of the possibilities of the future rather than the past; he is "Dreaming of elsewhere and our godlike freedom" (16).

This is a sentiment Auden also knew very well; both his life and his work show a plenitude of borders crossed, both in the literal sense of moving from one country to another, but also in a broader sense of genre and sexuality, and in the borders that play an important role in Western culture, for example in the traditions of Freudian and Christian thought, both of which Auden was interested in during different periods in his life. Borders also become apparent in the classification of Auden's work, which is at different times and stages and by different people divided into, for example, English and American, early and late, Romantic and classicist. Jenkins writes: "It is easy to see that the cultural and philosophical co-ordinates of Auden's poetry range widely across space and time. But it is also very much of its own time, particularly in its restless, vagrant, sometimes harried, note of unsettlement" ("Travelling" n.pag.) and "Auden's status as a writer almost always 'in transit' derives from a particular historical moment, and endows his work with a certain very modern cultural representativeness" ("Travelling" n.pag.).

Landscapes and borders, and our perspectives on them, changed dramatically in the early 20th century. The advent of the aeroplane meant that the world could be seen from a new perspective. Nine years after Auden wrote "In Transit," Eugene Henderson, the main character from Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King*, would exclaim: "We are the first

generation to see the clouds from both sides. What a privilege! First people dreamed upward. Now they dream upward and downward. This is bound to change something, somewhere. For me the entire experience has been similar to a dream" (357). Although the general public, including Henderson, had to wait for a few decades, the changing perspective on landscape already became apparent during the First World War, when planes were first used for purposes of reconnaissance. The border of the enemy's territory could now be crossed in mid-air. Paul K. Saint-Amour writes:

> World War I was ... the most optical war yet, a war in which observation involved no longer the reconnaissance and reports of lone scouts on foot, but a complex technological matrix: semiautomated aerial cameras obtained photographic coverage of the entire front, and the photomosaic maps compiled from this coverage were reproduced through industrialized techniques and widely disseminated; observers in airplanes and balloons reported by Morse lamp and later by wireless telegraph to command posts, using the coordinates not only the enemy's trench and gun placements but the production and movements of weapons, goods, and armies far behind the front. (354)

Landscapes, too, were blurred because of the sheer velocity of movement through the air. Auden's interest in this type of movement becomes apparent in the bird's eye perspective that he uses in several early poems, such as "Consider." The fact that landscapes, like borders, could be annihilated from the expanse of space above ground that was opened up by the Wright brothers in 1903 would become clear to Auden after the Second World War, when he worked as a Bombing Research Analyst for the US Strategic Bombing Survey and travelled through Germany, visiting cities that had been reduced to ruins by bombs that had come falling from the skies.

If flight meant a different perspective on the land, that different perspective needed to be seen by eyes that are aware of the changes that modernity inflicts on landscape. Under certain lighting conditions, landscape markers could appear as their opposites in photographs interpreted with the aid of a stereoscope; a device with which two nearly identical pictures can be made to appear in three dimensions which was used in the First World War to interpret landscape:

> Early interpretive manuals insist that in order to preserve the light vectors of the photographic image, aerial stereopairs must be positioned with the shadows falling away from the observer's light source, and thus toward the observer. The observer who failed to reproduce the photograph's light vectors under the stereoscope would find relief inverted in a *pseudoscopic* effect: holes would appear as mounds, and trenches as walls. (Saint-Amour 363, original emphasis unless otherwise stated)

Photographs in this context could not stand on their own but were very much context-specific. Saint-Amour notes an apocryphal story of a Brazilian pilot mistakes shell craters for gun emplacements because in the Southern Hemisphere, where he received his training, shadows fall exactly opposite from the way they do in Europe (363).

There was another border crossing involved in this reimagining of landscape through an artificial lens, that between the military and the homely, the public and the private. Stereoscopes had been a popular household item since the 19th century, and

> In its reconnaissance application, the stereoscope's power lay not just in making the enemy's intentions seem legible in the landscape, but in reawakening the observers' personal associations with the medium and channelling them toward the ends of military intelligence. These observers had encountered its technological forerunner, the parlor stereoscope, in another world – in peacetime, in childhood, in domestic spaces where stereograms embodied and catalyzed longing for the past, for possession

> of a toy-sized world, for escape to exotic locales. By appropriating the same optical technology for reconnaissance, aerial stereoscopy wrote over its observers' first associations; after the war, they would never again regard the stereoscope simply as a portal to personal nostalgia or reverie. But while they squinted through its eyepieces at 3-D images of tiny docklands, factories, airfields, and launch platforms, the device mobilized their affective ties to its former uses, imbuing aerial views of military and industrial sites with the glamour of magic, fantasy, wonder, and play. (367)

In "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," Michel Foucault writes: "The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed" (n.pag.). He presents in this paper the notion of heterotopia, "a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live" (Foucault n.pag.). Heterotopias are real places that can be entered but that are nonetheless set apart from normative society. They are the places where those things occur that are, in whatever way, unacceptable. Foucault describes them as places

> which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. (n.pag.)

He stresses that heterotopias "have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. [One of] their role[s] is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory" (n.pag.).

Heterotopia connects with non-place as both are real places set apart from the normative world that question it by imposing a different set of rules on place. In non-place, Augé writes, one is

> Alone, but one of many, the user of a non-place is in contractual relations with it (or, with the powers that govern it). He is reminded, when necessary, that the contract exists. One element in this is the way the non-place is to be used: the ticket he has bought, the card he will have to show at the tollbooth, even the trolley he trundles round the supermarket, are all more or less clear signs of it. (101)

In non-place, the subject must conform to a new set of rules that separate him from the world outside, and also from other subjects inhabiting the non-place. Like heterotopia, "The non-place is the opposite of utopia, it exists, and it does not contain any organic society" (Augé 111-112).

The sentence with which Foucault introduces his concept of heterotopia, "There are ... real places" (n.pag.) echoes Auden's line in "In Transit" which says that "Somewhere are places where we have really been" (17) but the places they discuss are very different. Foucault refers to very specific physical places that are set apart from normative society but can be easily identified; he names quite a few specific examples, such as boarding schools (n.pag.), psychiatric hospitals (n.pag.) and brothels (n.pag.). Auden refers to a place that may have a referent in the real world, but is located in another place and time and therefore physically inaccessible to the speaker. Because it is not defined with any kind of precision, only being described with the most vague "Somewhere" (17), it is also mentally inaccessible to the reader. However, when Auden closes an interpretive door for the reader, rendering him unable to define where the place that Auden has in mind is located, he opens a window: by speaking in such general terms and by using the first person plural "we" (17), he emphasises

that we all, every one of us, know such places, and recalls us to our own "dear spaces / Of our deeds and faces" (17-18). Justin Quinn writes about Auden's use of the pronoun *we*:

> Implicit here is Auden's sense that he was the spokesperson for his generation, that he could find the best expression for what his peers presumed and that, as he progresses, no single individual can fall outside his generalizing statements. Integral to this mode of address is the presumption that the people of the world live in one 'age', the salient features of which are shared by all. We might differ in contingent features such as language, Christmas traditions and so forth, but the fundamental structures are the same" (57).

Foucault, in this paper, investigates different physical spaces that serve to challenge normative culture. Auden, throughout his œuvre, explored both physical and mental places, geographically specific as well as universally applicable, that are not set apart from society in the way Foucault's heterotopias are, but do serve a similar purpose. Foucault speaks of the possibility that

> perhaps our life is still governed by a certain number of oppositions that remain inviolable, that our institutions and practices have not yet dared to break down. These are oppositions that we regard as simple givens: for example between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work. All these are still nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred. (n.pag.)

The distinction between private and public space which Foucault mentions here becomes apparent in Auden's poem "The Common Life," which celebrates the living room of his house in Kirchstetten and is dedicated to Chester Kallman, Auden's long-term lover to whom he considered himself to be all but legally married. In this last poem of the poem sequence "Thanksgiving for a Habitat," he writes how visitors to the house may infer facts about the

dispositions and daily lives of its inhabitants from its furnishings. The living room “confronts / each visitor with a style, / a secular faith” (3-5). The attentive visitor may, indeed, guess much from what he sees:

> ... What,
>
> quizzing [our room], would Sherlock Holmes infer? Plainly,
> ours is a sitting culture
> in a generation which prefers comfort
> (or is forced to prefer it)
>
> to command, would rather incline its buttocks
> on a well-upholstered chair
> than the burly back of a slave: a quick glance
> at book titles would tell him
>
> that we belong to the clerisy and spend much
> on our food. (20-30)

Even this very private place, however, still holds secrets from the silent observer.

> ... But could he read
> what our prayers and jokes are about; what creatures
> frighten us most, or what names
>
> head our roll call of persons we would least like
> to go to bed with? (30-34)

Furthermore, the house also imposes a hierarchy on those who enter it: only the ones who belong there, namely Auden and his addressee, Kallman, Auden's familiarity with whom is strengthened when he corrects his "you" (1) to the archaic but informal "Thou" (2)[2], "may enter / without knocking, leave without a bow" (2-3). Indeed, although visitors may enter the house at certain times and make their guesses about the lives of its inhabitants, the main purpose of the house is to shut people and their intrusive gazes out:

> ... I'm glad the builder gave
> our common-room small windows
> through which no observed outsider can observe us:
> every home should be a fortress,
>
> equipped with all the very latest engines
> for keeping Nature at bay,
> versed in all ancient magic, the arts of quelling
> the Dark Lord and his hungry
>
> animivorous chimaeras. (57-65)

Auden's mention of soul-eating mythological monsters shows that the intrusion of the outsider, crossing the border of the threshold, is not merely uncomfortable to the inhabitants

[2] When Kallman first went to Auden's apartment to visit Isherwood after having seen Auden, Isherwood and Louis MacNeice read from their work in New York, Auden whispered to Isherwood as he opened the door: "It's the wrong blond" (qtd in Davenport-Hines 188). A month later, however, he wrote about him to his brother: "Mr Right has come into my life" (qtd in Davenport-Hines 188). Kallman, who was 14 years Auden's junior, was very fond of opera and educated Auden on this topic. They were to write several opera libretti together. Although Auden, too, was unfaithful, the fact that Kallman slept with other men caused Auden great distress. Richard Davenport-Hines points out that, in "Thanksgiving for a Habitat," the only room in the house that is not celebrated is Kallman's bedroom (299). When Kallman decided to spend his winters with a new lover in Greece rather than in New York with Auden, to Davenport-Hines, this "seemed like a dire mutilation of their lives" (311), which both went downhill afterwards. Kallman said: "Every day for the past year ... I have stood outside his door in the early morning, afraid to go in" (342) and on the morning of 30 September 1973, he found Auden dead.

but disastrous for the existence of the domestic space. Nevertheless, even in this poem, a border, however small, is being crossed between the private and the public in a positive way. Near the beginning of the poem, Auden asserts that "There's no *We* at an instant, / only *Thou* and *I*, two regions / of protestant being which nowhere overlap" (13-15). This conviction even has implications for his preferred size of the living room:

> a room is too small, therefore,
>
> if its occupants cannot forget at will
> that they are not alone, too big
> if it gives them any excuse in a quarrel
> for raising their voices" (16-20)

Auden wonders how it can be that people not only want to be close at particular moments – this could be attributed to mere convenience – but to construct a life together. However, he does not contest this fact; he is subject to this wish just as much as anyone else.

> ... What draws
> singular lives together in the first place,
> loneliness, lust, ambition,
>
> or mere convenience, is obvious, why they drop
> or murder one another
> clear enough: how they create, though, a common world
> between them, like Bombelli's

impossible yet useful numbers[3], no one

has yet explained. (34-42)

It is beyond question that this is exactly what they do, and Auden is no exception: everyone forgives the odious habits of their partner, and Auden asserts: "(were you to die, / I should miss yours)" (46-47). Indeed, the poem closes with the assertion that "though truth and love / can never really differ, when they seem to, the subaltern should be truth" (74-76). It is in the small crossing from one human being to another that the most valuable thing in the world, more valuable even than truth itself, can be found.

In other poems, Auden blurs the distinction between private and public spheres even more clearly. In "Talking to Mice," written some eight years after "The Common Life," he presents a picture of perfect domestic happiness, where house mice cohabitate with people "in a peace as idyllic as only a Beatrix / Potter could paint" (28-29). If the mice had, as they should have, learnt the language of their hosts, the speaker indicates he "would have trained [them] / how to obtemper [their greeds]" (17-18) with phrases which Auden himself might well have heard from his mother as a child:

... bechiding whenever we turned our

noses up at a dish – *Now remember the starving Armenians!* – [4]

[3] Rafael Bombelli was one of the key mathematicians to develop the concept of complex numbers, which are expressed as combinations of real and imaginary numbers and used to solve equations that would have no solution when using real numbers. Since "Minus times minus is plus / The reasons for this we need not discuss" (Auden qtd in Nahin 14), equations requiring $\sqrt{(-1)}$ cannot be solved. Bombelli suggested the use of the imaginary number i with the characteristic $i^2 = -1$ as a placeholder for a real number to solve such equations regardless. Although we do not know what i is, cannot place it on the number line and the number is thus "impossible" (Auden "Common" 41), it is a useful assumption. Our reasons for being engaged in relationships with other people may be equally elusive or imaginary, but the fact remains that they contribute to us as people. We may not know why, but we know that we are happier for them.

[4] This phrase, which makes reference to the Armenian genocide of 1915, indicates that Auden is remembering a time exactly 100 years ago now, when he was about eight years old. This episode during the First World War meant the killing of an estimated 800.000 to 1.5 million Armenians, a predominantly Christian minority in the Ottoman Empire, who were perceived as a threat to the state. Many were executed or sent on death marches to the Syrian desert. The genocide has so far been recognised as such by only 28 countries worldwide. In a similar context, the years between 1914 and 1923 saw the persecution of Assyrians and Pontian and Anatolian Greeks in

and when we gobbled – *Enough! Leave something for nice Mr Manners!* –
cited you suitable maxims. *Good Little Mice never gnaw through*
wood-work or nibble at packages. Good Little Mice never scatter
droppings that have to be swept up. Good Little Mice get a tid-bit,
Bad Little Mice die young. (19-25)

However snug this picture is, it does not last, for where there are two mice, soon there will be more and indeed, "quite suddenly, there were a swarm of you, messing / everything up until no cache was aloof to your insults" (30-31). The "cache" (31), "A hiding place, esp. of goods, treasure, etc." ("Cache" n.pag.) is clearly out of bounds: the mice may cross the threshold of the house, but that does not mean that there is no border; there most definitely is one, and it lies at the door of the cupboard. This is where the language employed towards the mice changes. The language of the nursery makes place for that of the "ancient political axiom: *When Words fail to persuade, then Physical Force gives the orders*" (32-33). Indeed, the household, from a private, domestic place, turns into a miniature for the public state when the speaker declares:

... We had felt no talent to murder,
it was against our pluck. Why, why then? For *raisons d'État*. As
householders we had behaved exactly as every State does,
when there is something It wants, and a minor one gets in the way. (42-45)

Alejandro Lugo writes that culture is traditionally thought of "almost exclusively [as something that is] shared, patterned, and homogeneous" (54). Renato Rosaldo, however, writes that even within communities we think of as having a shared culture, boundaries abound and this complicates our notion of culture but also makes it more interesting:

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the Ottoman Empire, while Muslims were being persecuted in the Balkans, where the Ottoman Empire lost territory during several wars that raged there during these years.

> The fiction of the uniformly shared culture increasingly seems more tenuous than useful. Although most metropolitan typifications continue to suppress border zones, human cultures are neither necessarily coherent nor always homogeneous. More often than we usually care to think, our everyday lives are crisscrossed by border zones, pockets and eruptions of all kinds. Social borders frequently become salient around such lines as sexual orientation, gender, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, age, politics, dress, food, or taste. Along with "our" supposedly transparent cultural selves, such borderlands should be regarded not as analytically empty transitional zones but as sites of creative cultural production that require investigation. (qtd in Lugo 50-51)

Reading Auden in this context presents us with one big question. Border theory is, to a great extent, concerned with sexual, ethnic and other minorities. Although Auden was a homosexual in an era during most of which queer sexuality was not only frowned upon but illegal in Britain, in another sense, he was hardly a marginal character. From the beginning of his career as a poet, he was considered a leading author of the modern era and although his reputation diminished later on in his life, he remained an established poet.

Nevertheless, as I have somewhat tentatively shown here, Auden does question borders between concepts that are traditionally opposed and, as I will show in this thesis, many other borders of many different kinds. In this thesis, I will investigate the ways in which Auden describes different landscapes, inscribes meaning in them and questions the fixity or fluidity of landscape and the borders that are inscribed upon it. I will first describe Auden's description of the landscapes and borders of the Pennines in the North of England, Germany and the Nordic countries; Iceland in particular. In the second chapter, I will investigate how Auden's landscapes have been influenced by Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, and how Freud feeds into his engagement with the notion of exile. The third and final chapter will focus on the way in which religion with its many borders and negation of borders gives

Auden a place both to transcend landscape and borders, but also to arrive at the landscape that, in spite of his many efforts to flee from it, was ultimately perhaps the most dear to him, as it is to us: the landscape of home.

"Truth Is Elsewhere":

Crossing Borders in England, Germany and the Nordic Countries

Auden and his lifelong friend Christopher Isherwood arrived in the US in 1939, according to Nicholas Jenkins "apparently intending to stay for a year and write a travel book about the States, to be titled *Address Not Known*" ("Auden" 40). Auden soon declared "I adore New York" (qtd in Mendelson "Ode" n.pag.), although Isherwood did not share this sentiment. In his "Ode to the George Washington Hotel," on the hotel in which he and Isherwood stayed during their first months in New York, Auden pays his compliments to the hotel and asserts his authority on the subject of hotels with the lines:

> ... I've stayed in hotels in most places
> Where my passport permits me to go
> (Excluding the British Dominions
> And Turkey and U.S.S.R.),
> And this one, in my humble opinion's
> The nicest I've been in so far. (qtd in Mendelson "Ode" 54-59)[5]

During his lifetime, Auden visited twenty-eight countries, namely Austria, Belgium, Canada, Ceylon, China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Macao, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, the USA and Yugoslavia (Jenkins "Travelling" n.pag.). Upon landing in Germany in 1945, coming from the US, he declared: "I'm the first major poet to fly the Atlantic" (Jenkins "Travelling" n.pag.). Auden owned or rented residences for longer periods of time in five countries during his lifetime; not only in the UK, where he was born in York in

[5] Auden is particularly pleased with the fact that the visitor may be sure "that there's food in the kitchen / And that water comes out of the taps, / That the sheets are not covered with toffee, / And I think he may safely assume / That he won't find a fish in his coffee / Or a very large snake in his room" (qtd in Mendelson "Ode" 30-35).

1907, and in Austria, where he died in 1973, but also in Germany, the US – he failed to return after a year – and Italy, and he had been a citizen of two: the UK and the US. Jenkins writes:

> He made no – or practically no – journeys abroad from the place which was at the time his *de facto* home during 26 years out of the 67 or so years of his life. ... However, if we subtract his years of childhood from this total, we see that Auden made no – or practically no – journeys abroad in only eight out of his 49 adult years, and five of those eight years were a direct result of wartime restrictions. In other words, when Auden was an adult and could have travelled abroad, he did so roughly *94% of the possible years*, frequently for quite substantial stretches of time. For him, then, travelling was a norm. ("Travelling" n.pag.)

Jenkins also notes that Auden spoke of himself as "'the Wandering Jew,' as an 'alien,' a '*déraciné*,' [uprooted] a 'metic.'" ("Travelling" n.pag.) and predicted that he would "probably die in a hotel" ("Travelling" n.pag.), which indeed he did, in the Altenburgerhof in Vienna. He was buried in Kirchstetten, the Austrian village of his summer residence of 15 years.

To travel from one country to another, one must cross a border. Characters crossing borders feature profusely in Auden's early poetry, but the border between countries is not the only one that is important in his poetry. The physical border makes place for the border between the physical and the metaphysical world. This chapter will address these themes in relation to Auden's works regarding three countries Auden lived in or visited for some time, and that had a profound impact on his writings. All these places, the north of England, Germany and the Nordic countries may be located in Europe, but Auden sees them as essentially not part of the continent. He writes of Europe as the place "where if there are any Protestants, they are in the minority. The Protestant countries – Scandinavia, Holland, Prussia, etc. – do not quite belong to Europe. If we consider their inhabitants to be Europeans, then to Europe they are, as the Viennese say, *Tschuschen* [coarse, contemptible outlanders]" ("Are

the English" 430, Mendelson's comment). To Auden, however, they are a source of great inspiration that invite thought on borders, crossing borders, and being at home, which is what I will discuss in this chapter.

"Oh How I Wish That Situation Mine":

English Mining Landscapes

Auden for the first time travelled to Iceland in 1936, a destination he would return to in 1964. Upon their homecoming, he and his fellow traveller Louis MacNeice compiled the travel guide *Letters from Iceland* on a commission from Faber & Faber, which had funded their trip[6]. Included in this publication was Auden's "Letter to Lord Byron," "a cultural and autobiographical exercise in rhyme-royal [that] is lighter in tone than the Iceland poems in [the *Collected Shorter Poems*], but more important" (Fuller 115). Auden writes the letter, he says, because he is suffering from an ill temper: "I'd caught a heavy cold in Akureyri, / And lunch was late and life looked very dreary" (82) as, he argues, ill tempers, rather than "lover's broken heart[s]" (82) have in the past inspired "many a flawless lyric" (82)[7]. Auden starts by asking Byron to "Excuse, my lord, the liberty I take / In thus addressing you" (81), acknowledging that the poet, never mind the fact that he is long deceased, must be flooded with mostly irrelevant fan mail[8]. In the letter, Auden takes on many questions. He writes at the outset that he intends to

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[6] Auden would "describe himself whimsically as 'pure Nordic'" (Carpenter 8) and stated: "In my childhood dreams Iceland was holy ground" (Carpenter 8). His father believed his family to be of Icelandic descent and told his son Icelandic legends. When Auden took his former pupil Michael Yates out for lunch in the spring of 1936 and Yates mentioned that he was to visit Iceland that summer, Auden was greatly excited. Humphrey Carpenter writes: "Such was his excitement that he immediately proposed to Faber & Faber that they should give him a contract for a travel book about Iceland, and should advance him enough money to finance his trip. Faber's agreed. Auden then wrote to Michael Yates to say he would be leaving for Iceland in June" (195-196).

[7] Auden points out that the first poet to acknowledge this was A.E. Housman ("Letter" 82). In *The Name and Nature of Poetry*, Housman writes: "I have seldom written poetry unless I was rather out of health, and the experience, though pleasurable, was generally agitating and exhausting" (49).

[8] Auden dismisses Jane Austen, whom he writes he also considered as a possible addressee, because he fears she should be offended "if I wrote when I'd no right to" (83) and he would be forced to join the ranks of the

... talk on any subject that I choose,

From natural scenery to men and women,

Myself, the arts, the European news:

And since she's on a holiday, my Muse

Is out to please, find everything delightful

And only now and then be mildly spiteful. (84)

One of the more delightful subjects he addresses are industrial landscapes in England. This section will discuss how he portrays this landscape, but also how he describes a fundamental distance that prevents him from connecting with the land. I will also pay attention to the ways in which the voices of other authors, in particular T.S. Eliot but also Thomas Hardy, enter into Auden's work to allow him to find a way of engaging with a country that keeps its visitors, however much they love the country and desire to connect with it, always at a distance.

Throughout his life, Auden had a particular interest in machinery and the places that were home to it. In a letter to Geoffrey Grigson, he writes: "*My* great good place is the part of the Pennines bounded on the S by Swaledale, on the N by the Roman wall and on the W by the Eden Valley" (qtd in Myers n.pag.) and to Elizabeth Mayer, he described the Pennines as his "Mutterland" (qtd in Myers n.pag.). In the "Letter," Auden writes:

Long, long ago, when I was only four,

Going towards my grandmother, the line

Passed through a coal-field. From the corridor

I watched it pass with envy, thought "How fine!

Oh how I wish that situation mine." (88-89).

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improper Crawford and Musgrove families and Mr Yates from *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* in her opinion and so, "it is [Byron] who is to get this letter" (84). However, he writes that, when it comes to shocking, she is no stranger to the habit herself, in her unforgivingly showing to what extent that what we think depends primarily on love to a large extent depends on economics: "Beside her Joyce seems innocent as grass. / It makes me most uncomfortable to see / An English spinster of the middle-class / Describe the amorous effect of 'brass', / Reveal so frankly and with such sobriety / The economic basis of society" (84).

The last word puns on the double meaning of the word mine as both a personal pronoun and a place where valuable geological materials are brought to the surface. Alan Myers writes that Auden recreated a mine-like space in his domestic space as well: he slept "under vast piles of blankets to remind him of being underground. When staying with friends, Auden himself would occasionally pile the curtains or even a stair carpet or framed picture onto his bed" (Myers n.pag.). In the "Letter," he also refers to this lifestyle, not only in nightly, but also daytime habits:

> To-day I like a weight upon my bed;
> I always travel by the underground;
> For concentration I have always found
> A small room best, the curtains drawn, the light on;
> Then I can work from nine till tea-time, right on. (106)

For most of his youth, Auden wanted to be "a mining engineer or a geologist" ("The Art" n.pag.), and for Christmas in 1918, when he was 11 years old, his mother gave him E.H. Davies' *Machinery for Metalliferous Mines*[9] (Myers n.pag.). In his review of *A Treasure Chest of Tales: A Collection of Great Stories for Children*, his only criticism of the prose part of the collection is that "The only kind of fantasy that seems uncatered for is fantasy about machinery, railroad trains, airplanes, etc." ("Children's Anthology" 252). In "Letter to Lord Byron," Auden writes: "I like to see and know about machines: / And from my sixth until my sixteenth year / I thought myself a mining engineer" (106). While taking a walk with Auden

[9] In 1972, Auden gave a reading in the University Theatre in Newcastle. There, he met fellow author Sid Chaplin, with whom he was unfamiliar. When Chaplin mentioned he was a writer like Auden himself, the latter replied: "Oh, I see, a regional author" (qtd in Myers n.pag.), with which words "Chaplin was reduced to silence" (Myers n.pag.). Chaplin notes that, when he mentions his former work in the mines later in the evening, "Momentarily his eyes lit up. He talked of Rookhope, still lead mining when he knew it. When did he first go? At 12. His father a doctor interested in geology, his brother in Geological Survey. His two most treasured books, he told me, the *Geological Survey of Weardale* (1923) and Westgarth Foster's *Sections of the Strata from Newcastle upon Tyne to Alston*. Said I was the first person he'd met who had read the latter. My note: 'Obviously little or no feeling for folk – I doubt if he'd ever made friends with a Weardale or Alston lead miner.'" (qtd in Myers n.pag.)

when he was fifteen, his friend Robert Medley suggested that Auden should start writing poetry, a suggestion that Auden later said "did come like a revelation" (qtd in Davenport-Hines 41). He describes this episode in "Letter to Lord Byron" as follows:

> But indecision broke off with a clean cut end
> One afternoon in March at half past three
> When walking in a ploughed field with a friend;
> Kicking a little stone, he turned to me
> And said, "Tell me, do you write poetry?"
> I never had, and said so, but I knew
> That very moment what I wished to do. (109-110)

About the principles of art, Auden is clear. He writes about this in the "Letter" as well:

> To me Art's subject is the human clay,
> And landscape but a background to a torso;
> All Cézanne's apples I would give away
> For one small Goya or a Daumier.
> I'll never grant a more than minor beauty
> To pudge or pilewort, petty-chap or pooty. (101)

In an essay on Robert Frost, he writes: "Man is naturally anthropocentric and interested in his kind and in things or animals only in so far as they contribute to his life and sustain him; he does not interest himself in things to the exclusion of people till his relations with the latter have become difficult or have broken down" (138). His characterisation of Frost's "poems on natural objects" (138) as ones that "are always concerned with them not as foci for mystical meditation or starting points for fantasy, but as things with which and on which man acts in the course of the daily work of gaining a livelihood" (138) might go for his own poetry as

well, although he is not a “farmer” (139) as he characterises Frost, but rather a mining engineer from a bygone era.

For the focus of Auden’s descriptions of landscape he is, for a good part, indebted to T.S. Eliot, as he acknowledges in “Letter to Lord Byron:”

A raw provincial, my good taste was tardy,
And Edward Thomas I as yet preferred;
I was still listening to Thomas Hardy
Putting divinity about a bird;
But Eliot spoke the still unspoken word;
For gasworks and dried tubers I forsook
The clock at Grantchester, the English rook. (110)

In 1934 and 1935, Eliot wrote “Landscapes,” five short poems about different landscapes; three located in America and two in Britain. In these poems, he “turns to landscape as the *foremost* means of objectifying the emotional/spiritual content, so that a particular landscape becomes the central symbol in each of the individual poems” (Hargrove 113). The first poem, “New Hampshire,” is set in an orchard “Between the blossom- and the fruit-time” (2) and sees children playing in the trees. The poem is seemingly light-hearted and its ending “Cling, swing, / Spring, sing, / Swing up into the apple-tree” (10-12) with its short lines, short words and persistent use of the short [i] sound makes for a sprightly and carefree tone. However, as Nancy Duvall Hargrove writes, the poem is also replete with images that bear “connotations of the passage of time, death, and mourning” (115), so that “The poem is not a simple description but a symbolic expression of the poignant beauty and brevity of youth and innocence on man’s earth” (116). The poems, the remaining ones of which are called, “Virginia,” “Usk,” “Rannoch, by Glencoe” and “Cape Ann” are alternatingly either predominantly positive or negative in tone. Taken together, they show “the soul in states of

innocence and experience and [continue the] search for the meaning in human existence, relying entirely on landscapes as ... symbols" (Hargrove 128).

In Auden, too, landscape is featured heavily but, as he expressed in "Letter to Lord Byron" and as can arguably be said of Eliot's "Landscapes:" "landscape [is] but a background to a torso" (101): it is ultimately the human who is the main focus of his poetry. About the mining landscape Auden writes: "Tramlines and slagheaps, pieces of machinery, / That was, and still is, my ideal scenery" ("Letter" 89). In a travel guide he wrote for *Vogue* in 1954, he states that the landscape of his "Eden, his Innocent Place where no contradiction has yet arisen between the demands of Pleasure and the demands of Duty ... is a landscape like that of the Pennines, that chain of limestone hills which runs due North up the centre of England from Derbyshire to Northumberland" ("England" 431). For all its ideal characteristics, however, the region provides, as he writes in the later poem "Amor Loci,"

> ... a vision
> not (as perhaps at
> twelve I thought it) of Eden,
> still less of a New
> Jerusalem but, for one,
> convinced he will die,
> more comely, more credible
> than either day-dream. (33-40)

The Pennines may be Paradise, but they are very clearly a Paradise Lost. It should be remembered that the region that is so dear to Auden is "bounded ... on the W by the Eden Valley" (qtd in Myers n.pag.) so it is, in fact, East of Eden: not the place where Adam and Eve lived before the Fall of Man, but the place where their son Cain was sent after he killed his brother. Alan Myers writes, in his study of Auden's relation to the Pennines: "Auden

found derelict mines and gear symbolic of lost belief, the silent chimneys unable to furnish answers. It should be remembered that the lead-mining industry of the North Pennines, the largest in England, and once of world importance, had been virtually killed off by cheap imports even before Auden came to the area" (n.pag.). In an early, untitled poem, the sense of a paradise lost emerges very clearly:

> Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own
> Though the roads have almost vanished and the expresses never run:
>
> Smokeless chimneys, damaged bridges, rotting wharves and choked canals,
> Tramlines buckled, smashed trucks lying on their side across the rails;
>
> Power-stations locked, deserted, since they drew the boiler fires;
> Pylons fallen or subsiding, trailing dead high-tension wires;
>
> Head-gears gaunt on grass-grown pit-banks, seams abandoned years ago;
> Drop a stone and listen for its splash in flooded dark below. ("XXI" 1-8)

Although the cadence of the poem with its ongoing stream of trochees is mechanical and reminiscent of something like working machines or a running train, the content indicates that such sounds are no longer heard here: instead, the sound of the stone falling into the water is almost a final verdict of desertion.

Frank Partridge writes how, as a 15 years old boy, Auden was "tramping across a deserted moor in County Durham when he happened upon two tall chimneys and some abandoned mine workings. Intrigued by the discovery in such a remote place, he idly picked up some stones and dropped them down the shaft. Far below, they splashed into the water that had collected at the base" (n.pag.). However incidental it may seem, Auden's dropping a

stone down a deserted Rookwell mine-shaft proved to be a life-changing experience that recurred often in his poems. Myers writes that Auden "was to define [this] as the seminal moment in his life as a civilised, creative human being" (n.pag.). It is referred to in the long 1940 poem *New Year Letter*, but also in many earlier poems, such as "The Old Lead Mine" and "Rookhope (Weardale, Summer 1922)." A more well-known poem than these latter two, "The Watershed," Myers notes, was originally titled "Rookhope."

"The Watershed," rather than a tourist's guide to the region, depicts a deserted waste land:

> Who stands, the crux left of the watershed,
> On the wet road between the chafing grass
> Below him sees dismantled washing-floors,
> Snatches of tramline running to a wood,
> An industry already comatose,
> Yet sparsely living. A ramshackle engine
> At Cashwell raises water; for ten years
> It lay in flooded workings until this,
> Its latter office, grudgingly performed. (1-9)

In the last stanza, the speaker actively urges the "stranger" (19), the future reader of *Vogue* three decades hence, to "go home" (19):

> Stranger, turn back again, frustrate and vexed:
> This land, cut off, will not communicate,
> Be no accessory content to one
> Aimless for faces rather there than here.

John Fuller writes that it is not only the incidental traveller, but also Auden himself who should heed the warnings addressed to the stranger, for he, for all his love of and familiarity

with the place, is still very much an outsider: "'The Watershed' is a self-addressed warning that this kind of life may be observed but not really understood. It can in no sense become an integral part of the experience ('accessory content') of a young middle-class poet who merely happens to be 'rather there than here'" (34). The watershed, a natural barrier separating drainage basins, becomes a social and almost political border, dividing not only hydrologic systems, but also people.

Auden may not have been native to the place, he was, however, hardly someone who "happens to be 'rather there than here'" (Fuller 34). As I have written above, the region was very dear to him and he had great knowledge of the place. Cashwell is not a place found on any general map of the area: Myers states that it is a mine near Cross Fell, the highest point in the Pennines. At times, even he, familiar though he is with the area, is not sure what place exactly Auden refers to in his poems. He cannot identify Greenhearth, a place mentioned in "The Secret Agent," with certainty, suggesting it may refer to the Greenhurth mine in Upper Teesdale or the Greenside mine near Keswick. By referring to such remote places, Auden shows he has great intimacy with the place. Like Eliot, "he chooses as these major symbols highly personal landscapes ... [that] bear universal meanings in that they are linked to traditional, or archetypal, symbols" (Hargrove 113-114).

"The Secret Agent," like "The Watershed," is marked by a strong sense of exclusion. Coming into a "new district," the Agent finds "a fine site for a dam / And easy power, had they pushed the rail / Some stations nearer" (5-7), but his findings are futile: "They ignored his wires: / The bridges were unbuilt and trouble coming" (7-8). Fuller notes that the final line: "Parting easily two that were never joined" (14) is from an Old English poem entitled "Wulf and Eadwacer," in which a woman in captivity speaks to her lover who is on another island than she, and says "They can easily part that which was never joined together" (qtd in Fuller 34). The poem, then, is again one of disconnection:

> the situation is one of unconsummated love. The spy represents the individual's emotional urge to make contact with another human being ('this new district'); he is forced to act as a secret agent because the individual does not consciously recognize his love (the spy) and represses it. 'They, who ignore his wires, and eventually shoot him, represent the conscious will, the Censor, which represses the individual's emotional desires (Fuller 34).

The poem "Consider," which also makes reference to "the Pennine moor" (17), has a similar theme. It opens with a bird's eye view of the country, "As the hawk sees it or the helmeted airman" (2), a perspective that echoes Thomas Hardy, whom Auden admired (Fuller 47). The Victorian author also had a strong connection to landscape; he constructed the large, fictional region of Wessex in his works and used "geographies as modes of cognition" (Barrell 347) in novels and poems that are very much engaged with disconnection and incongruity[10], a theme that also becomes apparent in "Consider," in which the protagonist sees beginnings and endings, but only from far above, or "Through plate-glass windows" (7), or even further and more vaguely indicated as being "Relayed elsewhere" (12). The people on the ground and behind the windows are equally disconnected: they show no emotion, but are instead "Supplied with feelings by an efficient band" (11) as they are "constellated at reserved tables" (10). Like the stars that the verb is traditionally refers to, the people are void of

[10] Hardy used the name of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex for the region in the south-west of England where most of his fiction is set. Hardy felt his novels "seemed to require a territorial definition of some sort to lend unity to their scene. Finding that the area of a single county did not afford canvas large enough for this purpose, and that there were objections to an invented name, I disinterred the old one. ... However, the press and the public ... willingly joined me in the anachronism of imagining a Wessex population living under Queen Victoria" (qtd in Williams 103). He wrote of J.M.W. Turner's water colours: "each is a landscape *plus* a man's soul" (qtd in Hynes 109). Much like Auden, he felt landscape interesting only in relation to the human condition. He wrote: "I don't want to see landscapes, *i.e.*, scenic paintings of them, because I don't want to see the original realities – as optical effects, that is. I want to see the deeper reality underlying the scenic, the expression of what are sometimes called abstract imaginings" (qtd in Hynes 112). Samuel Hynes comments: "There are no literal landscapes in Hardy's poems, and Wessex rarely figures as the specific scene for an action. the poems are true pictures, but only in the sense that they offer images of a 'deeper reality'; of a world gray with despair, deprived of every faith except the grim expectations of evolution; a world in which man is helpless and uncomforted, and life is 'a thing to be put up with'; and in which Nature is played out as a Beauty, because for man natural beauty is a bitter irony at his expense" (112).

emotion, and perhaps, like stars in a constellation, they have no relation other than the fact that they are visible in the same part of the heavens, and that only from our point of view.

An earlier poem that was dropped from the reissue of Auden's first published collection, "Poems," has a similar theme but this time, it is approached in a less dramatic fashion. As in the poems discussed above, the speaker encounters a deserted, industrialised landscape:

So stepping yesterday
To climb a crooked valley,
I scrambled in a hurry
To twist the bend and see
Sheds crumbling stone by stone,
The awkward waterwheel
Of a deserted mine;
And sitting by the fall
Spoke with the poet there ("2" *English* 14-22)

Again, a strong connection cannot be made: they speak, but their conversation is insignificant and falls silent soon. They talk:

Of such and such and such
Till talk tripped over love,
And both dropped silent in
The contemplation of
A singular vision ("2" *English* 25-29)

This incident then leads to musings on mortality and the realisation that "everyman / Shall strain and be undone" ("2" *English* 48-49) and that

... death shall sponge away

The idiotic sun,

And lead this people to

A mildewed dormitory. (“2” *English* 54-57)

The poem ends, however, on a slightly more cheerful note. The appearance of a blackbird reminds the speaker that life may be fleeting but has not passed yet, a realisation that enables him to shake off his melancholy at least partly, and feel alive again. Curious in this passage is the word “copse” (“2” *English* 62) with its double meaning of both shackles, which can be read to weigh down the speaker’s mind, and a forest that exists for industrial purposes: living only to be cut down.

But as I see them go,

A blackbird’s sudden scurry

Lets broken treetwigs fall

To shake the torpid pool;

And breaking from the copse,

I climb the hill, my corpse

Already wept, and pass

Alive into the house. (“2” *English* 58-65)

***“Nicht mehr in Berlin”*:**

Auden in Germany

It was probably in 1930, after returning from a summer holiday in Berlin, where he had already spent the better part of a year in 1928 and 1929, that Auden wrote a poem that continued the theme of disconnection that was present in his poems about the Pennines (Constantine 1). This time, the disconnection was not only thematic, but also linguistic. It was written in German, a language Auden had no knowledge of before coming to Germany

(Waidson 347). Although he would come to understand it perfectly over the years, he never spoke or wrote it without mistakes (Constantine 2). Indeed, David Constantine writes about the poems he wrote in German in the 1930s, "There are at least half a dozen major grammatical errors – of gender, case, syntax, word order – in every poem ... Sometimes the absence or wrongness of grammatical connections makes it impossible to be sure of the sense" (1)[11]. In the poem, which has no title, Auden writes:

> Es regnet auf mir in den Schottische Lände
>
> Wo ich mit Dir noch nie gewesen bin
>
> Man redet hier von Kunst am Wochenende
>
> Bin jetzt zu Hause, nicht mehr in Berlin. ("2" *Map* 1-4)[12]

Here, "zu Hause" (4) is Britain and Berlin is a foreign place, but a longing back to Germany is clearly present: all Auden's poems in German "have separation and absence as their given context" (Constantine 1). Nevertheless, Constantine argues, Auden's

> city world is a bleak one. ... Absent from it, he remembers Berlin life without illusion. He wants to get back there for the sex, but he knows very well what these remembered relationships are like: mercenary. Associates in them remain essentially unconnected: one moves off to where the money is, to where the life is cushier, the other is left behind. There is very little complaint. The tone of voice is resigned. (2)

Auden first travelled to Germany when his father offered him a grant to spend a year abroad after he had finished his studies at the University of Oxford (Davenport-Hines 87). Richard Davenport-Hines writes that "He was putting himself apart from the timid routine of 'a

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[11] In 1962, Auden gave a talk on radio for Bayerischer Rundfunk, the Bavarian broadcasting company. He wrote his speech in English and it was translated by Peter Stadelmeyer and given the title: "Ein Engländer sieht Europa," which was then revised by Auden (Mendelson "Textual Notes" 935). In this talk, Auden says: "I am one of those – there are not many of us – who fell in love with the German language. I speak it very badly, partly because I have the poet's superstitious fear that the moment when I completely mastered a foreign language I would lose all feeling for my own. I probably also agree completely with Lichtenberg when he says: 'To learn to speak a language well, and to speak in company with the real accent of the natives, one must not only have memory and an ear but must also, to some degree, be a bit of a dandy'" ("Are the English" 430).

[12] Constantine translates the passage literally as follows: "It is raining on me in the Scottish lands / Where I with you have never yet been / They talk here of art at the weekend / Am now at home, no longer in Berlin" (6).

middle-class rabbit' ... with the intention of advancing his self-knowledge and testing his emotional endurance in ways that might improve him as a poet" (88-89). Not long before he died, Auden recalled "that, in Germany, he had 'no class status, and so could make friends with members of the working class in a way I could never have done at home'" (Firchow 48). He also wrote: "In Berlin ... I understood for the first time that something irrevocable had happened, that the foundations had been shaken, and that during my lifetime the world would never again be the same secure place it had been in my childhood" ("Are the English" 431); life in England, he suggests, had not changed much, but the effects of the First World War were all too visible in the capital of Germany. Auden would return to Germany every year from then until 1934, briefly in 1939 and again for a considerable amount of time in 1945 (Jenkins "Travelling" n.pag.), when he became a Bombing Research Analyst for the Strategic Bombing Survey and interviewed German civilians about US air raids. He would say of this episode: "We asked them if they minded being bombed. We went to a city which lay in ruins and asked if it had been hit. We got no answers that we didn't expect" (qtd in Davenport-Hines 231).

Auden's crossing the frontier into a new country proved to be very important for his formation as a poet and indeed, many characters from his writings of this period are ones that cross borders; as in the poetry of the Pennines, spies abound, people whose very existence depends upon the notion of frontiers and borders. Peter Edgerly Firchow writes:

> much of the poetry that Auden wrote in the period during and immediately following his stay in Germany, is profoundly influenced by his experiences there. This applies not merely to the psychological ... dimension of his poetry, but also to the powerful, new influx of imagery and themes having to do with spies, frontiers, 'enemies,' and obscure conflicts. There is a nervous tension in the Berlin and post-Berlin poetry that is absent from Auden's earlier work, a tension that reveals his increasing concern with

> the often discordant links between the private, individual psyche and the public, social world. (47-48)

In this section, I will discuss the borders that are being crossed in Auden's *Paid on Both Sides*, as well as in *The Orators* and some of his poetry from the Berlin era. I will then move on to a discussion of the landscape of *The Age of Anxiety*, which Auden started writing before he went to Germany again after the Second World War, but finished only after he returned. In this long poem, a physical landscape is first established, but then left behind, and borders are contested, but eventually re-established, resulting in a tension between dialogue and exclusion.

Auden started writing *Paid on Both Sides* in January 1928, when he also wrote "The Secret Agent," about the spy in the Pennines whose discovery by the enemy is linked with emotional disconnection. *Paid on Both Sides* is a short play which he subtitled "A Charade" and dedicated to Cecil Day-Lewis. It was, according to Firchow, Auden's "principal poetic achievement during his first stay in Berlin" (47). It is centred around the Nower and Shaw families, who are caught up in a feud the origins of which are unknown to the audience, and quite conceivably also to the families themselves. The two families belong to, respectively, the communities of Lintzgarth and Nattrass. These names are not very easily interpreted geographically, sounding neither particularly Anglophone nor particularly anything else. Peter McDonald describes the setting as "the stark, uncommunicative world of Auden's Northern landscapes, permanently 'cut off' from the layers of civilization which might obscure the contours of atavistic hatred and violence" (452). Indeed, Number Six, a character whose very name hints rather overtly at espionage, returning from what seems like a mission, says: "My area is Rookhope," the place in the Pennines where Auden dropped a stone in a deserted mining chimney which I mentioned before. There are, however, many instances that hint at other geographical locations. John Fuller writes: "the names of the characters indicate a

German-Jewish conflict (the Nowers are Kurt, Walter, Zeppel, etc. ; the Shaws, Aaron, Seth, etc). and again, in a further attempt at universalization, Anne's father is called Red Shaw, indicating that the family's biblical names are also appropriately those of American hillbillies" (14). One character toasts with a German "Prosit" (7), to which the reply, however, is an English "Cheerio" (7). Fuller traces sources as diverse as Icelandic sagas (14), Shakespeare (18), Old English texts such as *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *Beowulf* and *The Battle of Maldon* (18-19), traditional English mummers' plays (21), Yeats (28) and Sophocles (29). Firchow, however, sees Auden's chorus as "hark[ing] back not to Greek models but forward to Marxist ones" (59).

If a clear geography, and thereby geographical border, cannot be clearly designated on any map, that does not mean that it is not real, and that crossing it is not dangerous and even lethal. John Nower's father dies on his way to a man named Layard, ambushed by Red Shaw and his men (4). This Layard, who does not appear in the play but is only mentioned this once, refers to John Layard, whom Auden knew in Berlin[13]. Layard was a student of Homer Lane, who argued for "*forgiveness*, that is, Christian charity, but without any moral preconditions or moralistic rigmarole" (Firchow 45), so Nower's wanting to meet Layard

[13] John Layard was a disciple of Homer Lane, who had cured him of paralysis after a mental breakdown. He expounded his own variant of Lane's theory to Auden, arguing that "'God' really means our physical desires, the inner law of our own nature, and that the real 'Devil' is in fact the conscious control of these desires – something that we should avoid at all costs. ... The only sin, declared Layard, is disobedience to God (our desires) and obedience to the Devil (conscious control). ... If we allow our desires to take charge, we will achieve a growth in real spirituality and pureness of heart" (Carpenter 87). Stephen Spender wrote about the pure-in-heart man, who has accomplished this goal: "The pure-in-heart man became our new ideal ... He was essentially free and easy, generous with his money and belongings, without worries or inhibitions ... He was entirely without fear ... and without sexual guilt ... Above all, he was profoundly, fundamentally happy" (qtd in Carpenter 91). Although Layard had so great an influence on Auden that, when Layard came to show suicidal inclinations, Auden said: "if Layard's impulse was to suicide, then he must commit suicide" (Carpenter 99), he had some inhibitions. He wrote: "I have often thought I would go brothel crawling but I can't do it ... I become attached to someone, and enter on a relationship at once. Which means of course that I dont [*sic*] want to be free. Complete lechery as Christopher [Isherwood] remarked is the end of all pleasure" (qtd in Carpenter 98). Layard and Auden struck up what Carpenter deems "an odd relationship" (85), the oddest moment of which was probably when Layard came to Auden's apartment with a loaded gun and the request that Auden would "finish him off" (Auden qtd in Carpenter 101) after Layard had shot himself in the head but had failed to kill himself. Auden instead told him to lie down on the divan and called a taxi, after which Layard fully recovered and went on to live until almost 83 – he died a day before his birthday – becoming a successful anthropologist and Jungian psychologist.

indicates he wanted to talk to him "presumably about peaceful ways of resolving the feud" (Firchow 43). The spy, Seth Shaw's brother, who is found "hiding in an outhouse" is shot and when John Nower has seemingly settled the feud by marrying Anne Shaw, Seth, encouraged by his mother, kills John. This is where the play ends and it is indeed a very bleak ending. A moment before the killing, Anne had said that "The summer quickens all, / Scatters its promises / To you and me no less" (22). When John is dead, however, the audience sees an empty stage, "*The back curtains draw[n]*. ANNE *with the dead*" (26), as she awaits the looming revenge of the Nower family, and says:

> Now we have seen the story to its end.
>
> The hands that were to help will not be lifted,
>
> And bad followed by worse leaves to us tears,
>
> An empty bed, hope from less noble men.
>
> I had seen joy
>
> Received and given, upon both sides, for years.
>
> Now not. (26)

This bleak ending, seemingly devoid of all hope, however, is not to be the final word on the question of crossing borders. As Firchow notes, Auden realised that "spies are not "just spies." Though they undoubtedly originate primarily in the formula spy stories published in the once vastly popular Boys' Weeklies, usually featuring villainous German spies, they tend to have more in common with conflicts inside than outside the self. Introspection, as Auden's Airman noted, really *is* spying." (54)

The reference here is to *The Orators*, which features a lengthy "Journal of an Airman," in which the said airman contemplates life and its structure and implications. The work was published in 1932 and, according to Davenport-Hines, is "the great creative sequel" (88) to

Auden's life in Berlin. *The Orators* is an experimental work that is hard to characterise. Firchow writes:

> So obscure is it that critics have been at a loss even for what to call it. Is it a 'poem' or a fairy tale or a joke or a story or a collage? Or something else? John Sparrow, in desperation, is reduced to calling it a 'thing' and Monroe K. Spears is not much more helpful with his 'piece.' For Stuart Hampshire it is 'pop-art' of a hitherto unheard-of kind, for D.E.S. Maxwell a literary counterpart of German Expressionist cinema, and for John Fuller an assemblage of automatic writing. This confusion reflects a confusion of Auden's, very likely an intentional one. (257)

The epilogue to *The Orators* is a poem that clearly states that crossing borders is something that may be dangerous but must be done nonetheless. The first three stanzas all start with a question asked by a cowardly voice, whose name is almost homophonous to that of the braver addressee: "'O where are you going?' said reader to rider" (1). The coward speaker then explains why a venturing out is a bad idea: "'That valley is fatal where furnaces burn, / Yonder's the midden whose odours will madden, / That gap is the grave where the tall return.'" (2-4). In the final stanza, however, all addressees reply with a statement that indicates that whatever the danger may be, it is a necessary risk that has to be taken to make progress possible: "'Out of this house' – said rider to reader ... As he left them there, as he left them there" (13-16).

Fuller suggests that this section displays "the optimism of the Quest theme" (74) where "the Quest hero discard[s] the qualities that have hitherto hindered him ... and set[s] out with a fresh determination" (74) but Firchow has reservations towards this section, suggesting that it "confirms" (261) earlier "fantasies of destruction ... with its clear preference for action over contemplation" (261) and reading it in continuation of the "Fascist elements" (259) of the section "Journal of an Airman." Auden himself was later to write "My name on the title-

page ... seems a pseudonym for someone else, someone talented but near the border of sanity, who might well, in a year or two, become a Nazi" (qtd in Fuller 52). Firchow owns that "Journal of an Airman" "is on some level simply an adolescent hoax" (259) but argues that "this particular hoax has overtones that prevent one from laughing too heartily" (259). He writes: "The Airman's uncritical glorification of action, his denigration of reason, his thinking in terms of abstract enemies and friends rather than individuals ... all these are highly suspect to ears that have heard similar sentiments in other contexts" (259), Fascist contexts, for example.

Firchow, however, also provides another reading for the epilogue to *The Orators* which does not refute the Airman's realisation, at the end of his journal, that "My whole life has been mistaken" (93) and that his writings are "Thoughts suitable to a sanatorium" (94), thereby foreshadowing Auden's own verdict on the whole of *The Orators*, years later. He writes that it is the picture of Uncle Henry with the words "I have crossed it ... [that] eventually leads to the Airman's renunciation of violence and hatred" (269) and leads him to write: "To my uncle, perpetual gratitude and love for his crowning mercy. For myself, absolute humility" (269). His uncle has committed suicide, but Firchow does not see his suicide as an escape but as a statement that "(inner) death and rebirth lead to immortality and salvation" (270). It is, thus, an act of crossing borders that creates insight and leads to the resignation of earlier fascist inclinations. Firchow writes: "Instead of flying off to Valhalla or Malekula, Henry has *crossed* into heaven, to become the Airman's tutelary saint. 'Uncle, save them all,' the repentant Airman prays, 'make me worthy.'" (270). Action, then, does not have to be something destructive, but can be an act of love.

The notion that crossing borders may be dangerous but is also very necessary is also present in "1929," a poem that was partly written in Germany and partly after Auden's return

to Britain and that references two places in Germany: Hessen and Gutenberg. The poem opens with an image of spring, renewal and strength:

> It was Easter as I walked in the public gardens,
> Hearing the frogs exhaling from the pond,
> Watching traffic of magnificent cloud
> Moving without anxiety on open sky –
> Season when lovers and writers find
> An altering speech for altering things,
> An emphasis on new names, on the arm
> A fresh hand with fresh power. (1-8)

Then, however, this picture is disturbed by the appearance of an old man, who in all his loneliness is like a personification of death. Fuller notes that the universality of the image is enhanced by the absence of an article (41). This coming together of old and new leads to a few pages' worth of reflections on life and death, in which the speaker comes to realise that death "Is necessary condition of the season's putting forth" (14). Near the end of the poem, he declares that

> We know it, know that love
> Needs more than the admiring excitement of union,
> More than the abrupt self-confident farewell,
> The heel on the finishing blade of grass,
> The self-confidence of the falling root,
> Needs death, death of the grain, our death, (153-158)

Fuller furthermore suggests that the last lines of the poem, describing "Stiff underground; deep in clear lake / The lolling bridegroom, beautiful, there" (163-164), refer to Jesus Christ, "who is particularly *not* 'forgotten in the spring' (i.e. Easter), but is equally dead, 'necessary

condition of the season's putting forth.'" (43). Death is not only necessary but should also be seen as a beginning rather than an end.

In the poem "A Free One," Auden presents a picture of a man wrongfully credited with the courage and boldness to disregard and transgress borders. He is said to be "nonchalant" (1) as he "Steps ... into cars" (3) to leave, but this is a false interpretation: "'There is a free one,' many say, but err" (4). The speaker makes clear this man is no heroic explorer, no Cortés or Roald Amundsen: "He is not that returning conqueror, / Nor ever the poles' circumnavigator" (5-6). What he is, then, is a man with a pose, pretending to be more courageous than he actually is: "poised between shocking falls, on razor-edge / Has taught himself this balancing subterfuge / Of an accosting profile, an erect carriage" (7-9). Rather than heroic travels, the only movement he can make is a falling one.

Seamus Perry writes that falling in Auden's poetry has a double meaning, both "convey[ing] a sense of irresistible, determined trajectory, like Newton's apple drawn towards England" (84) and "something quite contrary – something that befalls, the happenstance, the accidental, the lucky or unlucky, like slipping on a banana-skin" (84). Perry traces this influence back to Thomas Hardy. He writes: "Hardy describes a world that is remarkable – is remarked, is noticed – not for its dutiful compliance to some monist explanation, but for the inconsequentiality of its vivid detail; and chance or accidence is a key part of any such pluralist vision because the contingency of your own perspective upon things is an integral part of the wisdom on offer" (86).

The same kind of accidental air surrounds the pseudo-free one. The poem contains a suggestion of war: "the varied action of the blood" (10) that could "cancel the inertia of the buried" (12). This stanza brings home a sense of habitualness similar to that conveyed by the phrase "of course" which Auden uses several times in other poems, and which serves to show "the phrase itself, momentarily, habitual, in a poem about something that happens habitually"

(Perry 86). In “A Free One,” this function is taken up by the word “would,” which occurs twice, in lines 11 and 12, and is echoed in the homophone “wood” at the end of line 11. It suggests that “The song, the varied action of the blood” (10), will “cancel the inertia of the buried” (12), the capitalist, decadent middle classes (Fuller 39). That is, however, if it will come about, for now, the poem still sees the man “Travelling by daylight on from house to house” (13), performing, as Fuller writes, “the formalized gestures of the imperialist class, based at several removes upon the heroes they no longer resemble, now merely inflexible and evasive” (39). That may be so, but it is also true that, however, slowly, as long as he is moving, he is progressing. The way he takes may be “the longest way” (14) but it leads “to an intrinsic peace” (14) nevertheless. His steps may be marked by “love’s weakness” (15) but that does not mean that the reassurance of “love’s fidelity” (15) is not there as well.

Auden returned to Germany again for a longer period of time again in 1945. In 1947, he published *The Age of Anxiety*, a long poem subtitled “A Baroque Eclogue” in which four characters, Malin, Rosetta, Quant and Emble sit in a bar and have a discussion on “The Seven Ages” (465) of man, or, as Quant, less matter-of-factly calls it,

> a Think-Fest [the] theme [of which] tonight is
>
> *HOMO ABYSSUS OCCIDENTALIS*
>
> *or*
>
> *A CURIOUS CASE OF COLD FEET*
>
> *or*
>
> *SEVEN SELFISH SUPPERLESS AGES* (464)

In this poem, Auden’s engagement with places and borders has come to differ vastly from the way in which he portrayed these before. The poem is allegorical: Quant, an aged Irish immigrant with an exhaustive knowledge of mythology who works as a shipping clerk, represents intuition, Malin, a Canadian Air Force Medical Intelligence officer stands for

thinking, Rosetta, a Jewish immigrant who cherishes nostalgic thoughts of Britain and works as a buyer for a department store stands for feeling and Emble, a young Navy recruit and the only American-born character in the poem, represents sensation (Fuller 189). Auden had begun writing this poem in 1944, and, according to Davenport-Hines, it was probably already half-finished by 1945 (238).

Different from most early poems, the setting in *The Age of Anxiety* can be geographically determined very easily: it is set in a bar in New York City, on Third Avenue in Manhattan, to be more precise. Auden characterises the poem as an eclogue, referring to a poetic genre typically very strongly grounded in nature. Auden's pastoral is set in the city, but shares the eclogue's preoccupation with showing the simplicity of life in harmony with its environment, something the characters are all looking for. As the evening progresses, Quant addresses Rosetta "in somewhat whimsical terms of pastoral chivalry" (Fuller 195), asking her to show the three men the way to a happy life. He calls her "peregrine nymph" (483) and himself and the others her "shepherds" (483). He asks her:

> ... O show us the route
> Into hope and health; give each the required
> Pass to appease the superior archons;
> Be our good guide. (483)

Rosetta may be peregrine as a member of the ever wandering Jewish tribe whose occupation as buyer for a department store refers to the long history of Jewish pedlars – indeed, many department store owners in the 19th century had started their careers as pedlars (Diner n.pag.); she is, however, certainly no nymph and she makes this clear straightaway. She cannot be a guide in the context of a journey with which everyone is equally familiar:

> What gift of direction
> Is entrusted to me to take charge

Of an expedition any may

Suggest or join? For the journey homeward

Arriving by roads already known

At sites and sounds one has sensed before,

The knowledge needed is not special,

The sole essential a sad unrest

Which no life can lack. (483-484)

Davenport-Hines writes: “When the poem was near completion Auden confessed his ‘constant regrets that I am too short-sighted, too much of a Thinking Type, to attempt ... poetry which requires a strong visual imagination’” (239). Whereas the poems I have discussed before are all very much preoccupied with the notion of borders, they never clearly define what border exactly is meant; a clear geographical focus is only rarely achieved. *The Age of Anxiety* begins in a bar in New York ; the characters also visit Rosetta’s flat and the poem ends with Rosetta and Emble in Rosetta’s bedroom, Quant walking eastward and eventually arriving home, and Malin sitting in a train, riding over the Manhattan Bridge.

However, for all this geographical clarity, there is still much vagueness regarding locality. The poem contains “a surrealistic dream-journey through seven stages of the unconscious” (155) which is set apart completely from any grounding in the real world, and even the bar is a place that seems somehow removed from it. It is a kind of nowhere, as the bar is “an unprejudiced space in which nothing particular ever happens” (449) reminiscent of a kind of purgatory, a neither here nor there. This sense is reinforced by the day on which the narrated events occur; the night of All Souls, traditionally the day on which members of the Catholic Church pray for the souls of those who are suffering in Purgatory. Purgatory here is a place where nobody and everybody belongs, a bar, and the time at which it manifests itself is

"war-time, when everybody is reduced to the anxious status of a shady character or a displaced person" (449).

After Rosetta has declared that she cannot guide Quant and the others on any journey towards a good life, the dream sequence follows. The narrator says that, all being slightly inebriated, Quant, Malin, Rosetta and Emble come to "appear to function as a single organism" (484) and that they begin to seek

> that state of prehistoric happiness which, by human beings, can only be imagined in terms of a landscape bearing a symbolic resemblance to the human body. The more completely these four forgot their surroundings and lost their sense of time, the more sensitively aware of each other they became, until they achieved in their dream that rare community which is otherwise only attained in states of extreme wakefulness. (484-485)

Indeed, as the next part starts, all recognisable New York landscape has disappeared: "At first all is dark and each walks alone" (485). All characters describe general landscapes that cannot be connected to any real place. Quant hears "A salt lake lapping" (485) and Rosetta sees "a sad plain / Without forests or footpaths, / Rimmed with rushes and moss" (485). Malin sees "Curlews on kettle moraines" (486) and Emble describes "broken bridges and burnt hamlets / Where the starving stand, staring past them / At remote inedible hills" (486). He comments: "The earth looks woeful and wet" (486). The poem has lost all topographical precision at this point. In an essay on John Betjeman, written around the time of the publication of *The Age of Anxiety*, he wrote that he would have loved to write poems

> about Schrafft's Blue Plate Special, Stouffer's teashop, the Brighton Beach Line, the General Theological Seminary on Ninth Avenue at Twenty-first Street, the Shakespeare garden in Central Park, the Portuguese Jewish cemetery on West Eleventh Street, Italian opera in Brooklyn, the Garibaldi house on Staten Island,

> Welfare Island, the Hotel Seville on Twenty-ninth Street, Sam's Umbrella Shop, the Museum of American Indian Art, etc., etc. ("Introduction" 306)

Alas, however, he does not possess "Mr Betjeman's talent" ("Introduction" 306) and he cannot manage geographical precision.

This, then, is where the adjective of the poem's subtitle comes in: *The Age of Anxiety* is not any eclogue but a baroque one, referring to a style that is not at all grounded in reality but floating above it, sometimes quite literally. Fuller writes: "The baroque element makes reference to that appeal to the senses characteristic of the religious art of the seventeenth century known as baroque, and seems an appropriate term for Auden's ingenious discovery of metaphor applicable to the elusive states of mind he is concerned with" (189).

The last part of the poem is set in Rosetta's apartment, where the four characters "all felt that it was time something exciting happened and decided to do their best to see that it did. Had they been perfectly honest with themselves, they would have had to admit that they were tired and wanted to go home alone to bed" (517) but for the sake of propriety they keep up appearances. When Rosetta switches on the radio, which has been speaking intermittently throughout the poem, for the first time, it announces music:

> *We present a series of savage selections*
> *By brutal bands from bestial tribes,*
> *The Quaraquorams and the Quaromanlics,*
> *The Arsocids and the Alonites,*
> *The Ghuzz, the Guptas, the gloomy Krimchaks,*
> *The Timurids and Torguts, with terrible cries*
> *Will drag you off to their dream retreats*
> *To dance with your deaths till the dykes collapse.* (518)

The music is clearly foreign, coming from another place and bringing its listeners to yet another place. The music not only transcends boundaries but also breaks them down: "*the dykes collapse*" (518). The effect of the music is not overstated. It does bring people together; soon, Emble and Rosetta are dancing and they grow increasingly attracted to one another. The narrator comments: "In times of war even the crudest kind of positive affection between persons seems extraordinarily beautiful, a noble symbol of the peace and forgiveness of which the whole world stands so desperately in need. So to dancers and spectators alike, this quite casual attraction seemed and was of immense importance" (518-519). Rosetta lays her head on Emble's shoulder, and they kiss and even exchange something like vows: "If you blush, I'll build breakwaters. / When you're tired, I'll tidy your table" (521).

Soon, the characters find themselves in "a euphoric state in which it seemed as if it were only some trifling and easily rectifiable error, improper diet, inadequate schooling, or an outmoded moral code which was keeping mankind from the millennial Earthly Paradise" (523). In their attempts at putting their conception of paradise into words, Emble emphasises the rendering obsolete of borders, saying that in this place, "Where frontier sentries / Stood so glumly on guard, young girls shall pass / Trespassing in extravagant clothes" (524). The reality, however, is much more dimly coloured. When Malin and Quant are gone and Rosetta, after having let them out, finds Emble passed out on her bed, she muses on the reality of borders and their power of exclusion. She realises that Emble belongs in America but she, a Jewish woman whose people has been persecuted since time immemorial, does not, and must forever be prepared to leave a place that she is not welcome to any more:

> ... You'll build here, be
> Satisfied soon, while I sit waiting
> On my light luggage to leave if called
> For some new exile, with enough clothes

But no merry maypole. (527-528)

Borders are not simply a demarcation between different areas that can be crossed at will, if one is only courageous enough. Johnson and Michaelsen write that "for all of border studies' attempts to produce a cultural politics of diversity and inclusion, this work literally can be produced only by means of – and can be founded only upon – exclusions" (3). Borders are very much also presences with great power that can exclude those that one side of the border deems unwanted. In a talk for the Bayerische Rundfunk, Auden takes on the exclusory character of the border from a much more optimistic perspective, arguing that the different perspectives that result from different places that borders define, enables much more engaging dialogue, whereas, if no borders existed and everyone was native to the same place, everyone could only talk to himself, and learn nothing.

> I must not forget that, for most of the population in our countries, life is more agreeable than it has ever been, and I have no choice but to reconcile myself to what I cannot change, and make the best of it. As a poet, I comfort myself with the thought that, so long as different peoples speak different languages, there cannot be such a thing in poetry as an International Style. So long as Germans speak German and I speak English, a genuine dialogue between us is possible; we shall not be simply addressing our mirror images; as Karl Kraus says: 'Speech is the mother, not the handmaid, of thought.' Let us praise *den lieben Gott*, and thank Him for the Tower of Babel. (436)

"The Magical Light beyond Hekla":

The Nordic Countries

In the foreword to the 1965 edition of *Letters from Iceland,* Auden writes: "In my childhood dream Iceland was holy ground" (8). Icelandic culture figured quite heavily in his upbringing;

Auden's father believed himself to be a descendant of Auðun Skökull, one of the first settlers in Iceland. This family myth may have been true, but is probably a fairly fanciful fiction (Carpenter 7). Nevertheless, the elder Auden instilled in his son a fascination for Icelandic sagas that was to have a great influence on him, as Paul Beekman Taylor notes (216). Auden was very excited about the trip he made to Iceland and "The boat's gradual approach to Iceland delighted him" (Carpenter 197). However, the first week which he spent in Reykjavík he described as "very miserable" (qtd in Carpenter 197)[14]. In spite of all these inconveniences, however, Carpenter writes that "As a holiday, a piece of fun, the trip had been a huge success" (202).

Beekman Taylor writes that Auden's first trip to Iceland contributed to his "life-long artistic commitment to Iceland, and particularly to Medieval Icelandic literature" (213). Carpenter, however, has his doubts about the intellectual effects of the voyage. He writes: "whether Auden's more ambitious objectives had been achieved was another question. He had absorbed a great amount of sheer information about Iceland, but he was too independent, too self-sufficient, to respond quite freely to what he saw. It was not an experience that changed him" (202). Beekman Taylor notes Auden's early preoccupation with exile and traces its influence back to Icelandic myths, a common theme in Icelandic literature where it "is the

[14] Even after leaving Reykjavík, the voyage was no undivided success. Humprey Carpenter writes that, when Auden first mounted a horse to practise for his future horseback journeys that would be undertaken once the whole of the travelling party would be together, he "'fell right over the horse's neck while getting on in full view of a party of picnickers'. Later he went to Laugvatn, not far from Thingvellir, where, riding again, he 'shocked an English girl by yelling for help'" (198). When the party took to camping in the outdoors, it turned out that MacNeice had brought no camping equipment and was forced to share a tent with Auden, who was less than pleased. Carpenter writes: "His fears proved justified. The tent, which was missing part of its pole, was far too short for them, and their feet stuck out of the doorway. Auden lay down on a pneumatic mattress – MacNeice said he looked like something out of Breughel when blowing it up – and adopted the foetal position, which left MacNeice almost no room. It began to rain, and the tent, which they had pitched with both skins of the canvas touching, began to subside and close in on them 'like something in Edgar Allan Poe'. The Bryanston boys, who being properly equipped had a dry night, woke the next morning to see no sign of either poet except a flattened tent on the ground. 'Perhaps they had sneaked off to the nearby tin hut for coffee', wondered Michael Yates. 'Then the tent undulated and two wet cross faces appeared'" (201). On another occasion, "the two of them were discovered early one morning lying asleep with their *heads* outside the tent doorway" (Carpenter 202) and even their primus fell apart, so that Auden was forced to make tea with water from a geyser. After a not wholly successful trip to see whales, Auden had the opportunity of describing Yates's countenance as "Picture of a person in a fucking awful temper" (Yates qtd in Davenport-Hines 153) and MacNeice lamented that "everything he touches turns to cigarettes" (qtd in 202).

most wretched of human conditions (see Old English *wrecan* ‘to drive out,’ and *wrecca* ‘exile,’ cognate with Modern English ‘wreck’)” (217). He writes:

> In archaic myth and historical legend Auden saw a distant and clear reflection of the social and intellectual worlds through which he was passing. Foremost in that reflection was the theme of exile that shadowed his own successive moves of residence. A trace of these ‘axial’ turns in Auden’s career reveals an incremental Norse influence on his style and diction, but more importantly, it reveals the growth of the poet’s conception of the profitable uses of poetry. (213)

A characteristic of exile being a preoccupation with the land of origin, it is perhaps not surprising that, for all the influence of Icelandic literature and its theme of exile, prevented Auden from truly connecting to the real Iceland: like any exile, he was too preoccupied with home.

In this section, I will discuss how Auden portrays Iceland as a country fundamentally remote from Europe, but also his own position in the country, as an exile from England still very much, and perhaps irrevocably so, connected to the continent. While a voyage is made and a boundary is crossed, another, new boundary emerges: the one separating the native from the tourist, as well as the boundary between the real and the imaginary. First I will discuss Auden’s distinction between Utopia and Arcadia, after which I will describe how Auden imagines Iceland as an Arcadian place. I will then consider the ways in which Auden positions himself in relation to the border of Europe as at times someone who is removed from the continent, and at other times someone irrevocably imbued in its historical context, showing both the fixity and fluidity that characterise the border.

It is hard to ascribe a genre to *Letters from Iceland*. Although it contains practical information regarding exchange rates, accommodation and transportation et cetera, the many

poems and letters to Auden's wife Erika[15] and friends make it a far from conventional travel guide. The book also contains a section of quotations from other writers regarding Iceland that Auden collected[16] and the Daily Mail called it "The most unorthodox travel book ever written" (qtd in *Letters* inside cover). Auden himself, in the foreword of the book, merely comments: "the three months in Iceland upon which [*Letters from Iceland*] is based stand out in my memory as among the happiest in a life which has, so far, been unusually happy, and, if something of this joy comes through the writing, I shall be content" (9).

Auden did not believe in the idea of a Utopia that might one day be established on earth, preferring to consider the notion of Arcadia, a pastoral world that may once have existed, in Christian theology before the Fall, but that is now gone. Since the first half of the twentieth century, Utopian thinking has mostly fallen out of favour. Irving Howe writes about this: "God died in the nineteenth century, utopia in the twentieth" (qtd in Kohlmann 1). Benjamin Kohlmann comments on this statement that it is influenced by "the assumption that in a world permeated by the forces of capitalism, bureaucracy, militarism and (in some countries) dictatorial power, utopia is a threat rather than a promise" (2). Although Kohlmann questions this attitude (2), it very much holds for Auden, who elaborately discussed notions of Utopia compared to those of Arcadia, another variant of the happy place[17] that is not situated

[15] Auden married Erika Mann, the daughter of German author Thomas Mann, in 1935. It was a marriage of convenience with the objective of granting Erika a British passport. When Christopher Isherwood, to whom Erika had previously proposed, asked Auden if he would marry the German refugee, Auden sent a telegraph that read "delighted" (Carpenter 176), although he had never met Erika. Erika "was largely lesbian by inclination" (Carpenter 175) and the marriage was never consummated, but the two never separated.

[16] This section, entitled "Sheaves from Sagaland: An Anthology of Icelandic Travel Addressed to John Betjeman, Esq." recalls other, meticulously grouped collections of citations that Auden published, such as *A Certain World*, which was intended as a "map of [Auden's] planet" (*A Certain World* vii) that should stand in for a biography. Among many more general quotations, "Sheaves from Sagaland" contains sections providing such useful information as the affirmation of Pliny Miles that Iceland is an actual geographical location (58) and Horrebow's declaration that its inhabitants "are human beings and experience the sensations common to mankind" (61), but also a quotation in which William Shakespeare, "The Immortal Bard proves that nothing escapes him" (60) as he mentioned Iceland in *Henry IV*(60) and one far less jolly one in which "[a]n unknown Nazi" (59) declares that "Für uns Island ist das Land" (59). He also includes two quotations from Morris's *Journals of Travel in Iceland* (68; 72), showing that he was aware of, and had read at least parts of this work.

[17] I will use the term *happy place* to refer to both Utopia and Arcadia, as Auden does in *The Dyer's Hand* (409).

in a future in which the problems of humanity have been solved, but rather in a lost past in which they had not yet come into existence.

In “Dingley Dell & The Fleet,” an essay published in *The Dyer’s Hand,* Auden writes that there is a largely irreconcilable difference between people who favour Utopian images of the perfect society and people who prefer to imagine Arcadian ones:

> Though it is possible for the same individual to imagine both, it is unlikely that his interest in both will be equal and I suspect that between the Arcadian whose favorite daydream is of Eden, and the Utopian whose favourite daydream is of the New Jerusalem there is a characterological gulf as unbridgeable as that between Blake’s Prolifics and Devourers. (409)

As Auden points out, the distinction between Utopia and Arcadia is largely “a temporal one. Eden is a past world in which the contradictions of the present world have not yet arisen; New Jerusalem is a future world in which they have at last been resolved” (409) The characteristics of an Arcadian and Utopian society may be the same. At most, there may be a slight difference in the inhabitant’s respective mindsets, as “Eden is a place where its inhabitants may do whatever they like to do ... [whereas] New Jerusalem is a place where its inhabitants like to do whatever they ought to do” (409).

The most important distinction between Utopia and Arcadia that Auden notes is one of perspective. He writes:

> The psychological difference between the Arcadian dreamer and the Utopian dreamer is that the backward-looking Arcadian knows that his expulsion from Eden is an irrevocable fact and that his dream, therefore, is a wish-dream which cannot become real; in consequence, the actions which led to his expulsion are of no concern to his dream. The forward-looking Utopian, on the other hand, necessarily believes that his New Jerusalem is a dream which ought to be realized so that the actions by which it

> could be realized are a necessary element in his dream; it must include images, that is to say, not only of New Jerusalem itself but also images of the Day of Judgement. (410)

Here, it becomes clear why Auden found Utopian and Arcadian daydreamers to be fundamentally irreconcilable. Here also arise the negative feelings he has regarding Utopianism. He continues:

> while neither Eden nor New Jerusalem are places where aggression can exist, the Utopian dream permits indulgence in aggressive fantasies in a way that the Arcadian dream does not. Even Hitler, I imagine, would have defined his New Jerusalem as a world where there are no Jews, not as a world where they are being gassed by the million day after day in ovens, but he was a Utopian, so the ovens had to come in. (410)

Edward Callan comments on Auden's feelings towards the two types of dreamers of a better world that Arcadias are, in Auden's opinion, preferable because they exclude the possibility of actual violence in the present: "In the realm of imagination he is more tolerant of Edens than of Utopias. Both are imaginatively possible, but while Edens are immediately recognizable as fanciful and therefore innocent or harmless fun, Utopias can cause endless suffering if their agents attempt to impose them on present reality" (244).

Auden, then, is deeply sceptical about the concept of Utopia, but although he sees less danger in it, he is hardly more forgiving towards Arcadia. In his analysis of "Vespers," one of the series of poems named after the canonical hours of Christian doctrine that were published together as "Horae Canonicae" in *The Shield of Achilles* in 1955, Jan Curtis argues that Auden rejected the notions of both Arcadia and Utopia because both ways of thinking entail an escape to a different time which Auden deems unproductive. Curtis writes:

> A particular moment, the right moment, in history compels Auden to let go of the

> dream of safety which the Arcadian and Utopian offer in their siren fantasy of the Happy Place outside time. ... We are bearers of history, responsible for the 'Time Being which is the most trying time of all.' The Arcadian and Utopian elevate themselves above the Time Being by seeking refuge in either a past or a future perfection. Auden cannot accept the arcadian/utopian fib and turns instead to the Christian doctrine of original sin as a metaphor to describe the character of human history. (207)

Nevertheless, Auden's rather jubilant descriptions of Iceland constitute a close approximation of the perfect society, greatly resembling Arcadia. The Fall, when Auden discusses it, is something that seems to have occurred outside of Iceland and therefore affects him and his fellow Europeans, and haunts him even while he visits Iceland, but does not have an effect on Iceland itself. However, different from both Utopia and Arcadia, Iceland is a place that really does exist, in the present rather than in an unattainable future or past. It may therefore be read as a place where the two come together to form a symbol of hope, where the border between these different ideologies of past and present, as well as the border between the real and imaginary world dissolve, albeit with significant reservations.

In different sections of his various writings on Iceland, Auden expresses the idea that Iceland means an escape from the chaotic continent of Europe that is very much like Arcadia. In doing so, he describes not so much a society in which life functions perfectly, but rather one on which the horrors that occur in continental Europe have no effect. In "Journey to Iceland," he writes: "and North means to all: 'Reject'" (*Letters* 23), more specifically a rejection of the events that occur in the homeland. In another poem, "On This Island," a similar sentiment is expressed. The poem contains the lines:

> Far off like floating seeds the ships
> Diverge on urgent voluntary errands,

And this full view

Indeed may enter

And move in memory as now these clouds do (15-19)

Beekman Taylor argues that the island in question is Iceland (217), and the poem suggests a society where real problems do not exist, as even urgent errands are voluntary. It thereby offers an alternative to the "depressed islands of civilization in Western Europe and invit[es] the reader to look for alternate landscapes and other artistic and moral terrain" (Beekman Taylor 217). Perhaps the most captivating description of an Arcadian Iceland occurs in the poem "Iceland Revisited" which Auden wrote upon his second voyage northwards in 1964. The penultimate stanza of this poem reads: "Once more / A child's dream verified / The magical light beyond Hekla" (37-39). This passage suggests that the Fall has in this place not taken place: not in the child's dream, which is perhaps not surprising, but also not in the perception of the adult who reflects on the land as he imagined it once, and as he sees it before him now. The Arcadian aspect of the country is confirmed in the last stanza: "Fortunate island / Where all men are equal / But not vulgar – not yet" (40-42). This is a sentiment that is also present in a poem Auden wrote on another northern place, namely Hammerfest, "The northernmost township on earth" (Auden "Hammerfest" 2), a place in Norway which he visited in 1961. In this poem, which A. Kingsley Weatherhead describes as "pastoral" (103), he writes: "Whatever noise our species cared to make still mattered. / Here was a place we had yet to disappoint" (19-20).

This notion of Iceland as an Arcadian place also emerges from the prose included in *Letters from Iceland.* In the letter to Christopher Isherwood that also includes the poem "Journey to Iceland," Auden writes: "If you have no particular intellectual interests or ambitions and are content with the company of your family and friends, then life on Iceland must be very pleasant, because the inhabitants are friendly, tolerant and sane. They are

genuinely proud of their country and its history but without the least trace of hysterical nationalism" (28). In this letter, Auden also writes about the inhabitants of the island, who emerge as legitimate inhabitants of an Arcadian place, as they are down-to-earth and seem to escape the irrational and violent idealism of continental Europe:

> My general impression of the Icelander is that he is realistic, in a petit bourgeois sort of way, unromantic and unidealistic. Unlike the German, he shows no romantic longing for the south, and I can't picture him in a uniform. ... The difficulty of getting any job at all in many European countries tends to make the inhabitants irresponsible and therefore ready for fanatical patriotism; but the Icelander is seldom irresponsible, because irresponsibility in a farmer of fisherman would mean ruin. (27)

At times, Europe can seem surprisingly far away from Auden's life in Iceland. In a letter to Erika, he writes: "The young headmaster of the school welcomed us, and we sat and listened to the wireless while supper was prepared. Someone apparently had tried to assassinate King Edward VIII. Nobody looked very interested. Supper was poor, and we played rummy till bedtime" (116). Beekman Taylor captures Auden's impressions of Iceland very well when he says: "This is Auden's island-ship Iceland, whose unique centricity affords a privileged and protected perspective over the city-civilization of Europe and America" (219).

Interestingly, another of the Arcadian aspects of Iceland is the fact that the pastoral life Auden witnesses there cannot really be experienced by him. As he says in *The Dyer's Hand*: "Eden cannot be entered; its inhabitants are born there" (410). In the same vein, he recognises that for him, born in England as he is, the idyllic life and "sane" (*Letters* 28) disposition of the Icelanders are inaccessible to him. In the letter to Isherwood from which I have quoted above, he writes:

> But I had the feeling, also, that for myself it was already too late. We are all too deeply involved with Europe to be able, or even to wish to escape. Though I am sure you

> would enjoy a visit as much as I did, I think that, in the long run, the Scandinavian sanity would be too much for you, as it is for me. The truth is, we are both only really happy living among lunatics. (28)

The escape, thus, is never complete. In "Letter to R.H.S. Crossman, Esq.," a letter in verse, he Auden writes:

> For that's our vulgar error, isn't it,
> When we see nothing but the law and order,
> The formal interdiction from the garden,
> A legend of a sword, and quite forget
> The rusting apple core we're clutching still. (91)

The continental traveller to Iceland may think he has escaped the turmoil of Europe, he cannot really get away from the conflicts the Icelander has never known; he has, with Adam and Eve, eaten from the apple and no longer belongs in Eden. Although, as I have pointed out before, this is not always the case, Auden often finds himself thinking back to the situation in Europe. "I listen to everything from England, even the cricket matches and the Stock Exchange quotations. I wish I knew how things were really going in Spain. Do write and tell me if you know anything authentic" (145), he writes to Erika.

Auden realises that, in spite of the resemblance to Arcadia that Iceland has to him, this association results more from his own imagination than from the actual state of the country itself. In a letter to Kristjan Andresson he writes upon his arrival in England, he writes: "Finally the remoteness of Iceland, coupled with its literary and political history, make it a country which, if visited at all, is visited by people with strong, and usually romantic, preconceptions. ... 'I know that we frequently imagine to have really found what we most think of, or most wish for'" (209-210). In *The Principle of Hope*, Ernst Bloch's study of utopianism, Bloch argues that it is exactly this remoteness that makes the traveller a subject

that is in a sense once removed from reality, that allows for a vision of a better world to emerge. He writes:

> Of course it remains true that nothing is as exotic in a foreign country as the foreigner himself; but the latter as *bourgeois* enthusiast at first does not see the everyday life of foreign countries at all, least of all does he want to see the misery in it which does not cash the cheque for him made out in the name of beauty; he sees in foreign countries, often with incurable subjectivism, the personal wishful image of them he has brought with him. (371)

There is an element of fiction in travel that is a condition for the place of destination to be seen as Utopian and that allows memories of travel to become "embellished again post festum with utopian festiveness" (Bloch 374). Augé also notes this, writing: Travel ... constructs a fictional relationship between gaze and landscape (86).

Even if they may be fictional, Auden's impressions of Iceland as Arcadia do add a dimension of lived experience to his Arcadia. Utopia, according to Gilles Deleuze, can be "not only a disguised *no-where* but a rearranged *now-here*" (333 n.7), and the same goes for Auden's Arcadia. It is here that the concepts of the Utopia of the future and the Arcadia of the past, in a sense, come together: in the Iceland of the present. They are simultaneously once removed from reality – as Auden's descriptions of Iceland are those of a foreigner to the place – but also from the complete fiction in terms of both time and place that characterise both Utopia and Arcadia, which typically exist solely in the minds of their creators.

Auden's writings on the Nordic countries thus show that crossing borders between countries may lead to a contestation of metaphysical borders as well; Iceland, in his imagination, is made into a Utopia- or Arcadia-like place. However, the precondition that these observations must be made by a traveller, working in a country foreign to him, means that this conception is restricted to the realm of the imagination. As a traveller who is not

native to the place he describes, Auden is even excluded from the fiction he himself constructs: even if his idea of Iceland is that of an Arcadia removed from Europe, he, as a European, cannot live in this idea. A physical removal from home in this case does not necessarily mean a mental one as well. Nevertheless, the notion of the happy place is one that can still be considered and remains relevant both in imagination and in travel, and that it has certainly not disappeared – not yet.

"What Could Be More Like Mother":

Freudian Landscapes

In November 1939, Auden wrote "In Memory of Sigmund Freud," two months after the death of its subject. In it, he writes affectionately of the father of psychoanalysis for "if often he was wrong and, at times, absurd, / to us he is no more a person / now but a whole climate of opinion" (66-68). He writes that Freud's achievement is that he upset the general neurological theories that saw mental illness as "patterns of frustration" (48). Conversely, he writes of Freud:

> if he succeeded, why, the Generalised Life
> would become impossible, the monolith
> of State be broken and prevented
> the co-operation of avengers. (49-52)

In an essay published in *The New Republic* in 1952, he explains this idea: "if every one of his theories should turn out to be false, Freud would still tower up as the genius who perceived that psychological events are not natural events but historical and that, therefore, psychology as distinct from neurology, must be based on the pre-suppositions and methodology, not of the biologist but of the historian" ("Sigmund" 343).

In psychology, other than in neurology, mental conditions are considered to be not the result of a fixed set of influences that logically lead to a certain typical problem, but it is the individual history of a specific human being that leads to one particular case. The appeal psychoanalysis has to the general public, then, "is based on a sound intuition that it stands for treating every one as a unique and morally responsible person, not as a keyboard – it speaks of the narcissism of the Ego, but it believes in the existence of that Ego and its capacity to recognize its own limitations – and that in these days is a great deal" ("Sigmund" 344). He

adds: “Psychoanalysts and their patients may sometimes seem funny little people, but the fact that they exist is evidence that society is still partly human” (“Sigmund” 344).

The histories of travel of Freud and Auden describe something of a circle. Freud was born in 1856, in Freiberg in Mähren in Moravia, which today is part of the Czech Republic and was then situated in the Austrian Empire. At four years old, he moved with his parents and sister to Vienna, where he would live for the rest of his life until the rise of National Socialism in Austria after the Anschluss[18] forced him into exile. He then moved to Great Britain in June 1938, where he died a year later. In January 1939, Auden moved from Great Britain to America because he wanted to go into exile, feeling that “An artist ought either to live where he has live roots or where he has no roots at all ... In England to-day the artist feels essentially lonely, twisted in dying roots, always in opposition to a group ... in America, he is just lonely, but so ... is everyone else; with 140 million lonelies milling around him he need not waste his time in conforming or rebelling” (Auden qtd in Davenport-Hines 180).

Many people suggested he fled because of the threat of war in England, but Guy Davenport suggests rather: “He could have gone to more terrible places, Rome for instance, but he wanted a place he could not romanticize ... He came to ensure that he was among

[18] When Hitler annexed Austria, making it part of Germany, Auden and Isherwood had been in China for two months, which was at that time involved in the Sino-Japanese War that Auden and Isherwood would report on in the collaborative *Journey to a War*. When the German *aide-de-camp* informs Auden and Isherwood that “Last night the German Army marched into Austria” (qtd in Auden and Isherwood 518), Isherwood writes: “The bottom seemed to drop out of the world” (518) but the ADC seems to take the matter more lightly, saying: “Of course ... it had to happen. And now I hope that England and Germany will be friends. That’s what we Germans have always wanted. Austria was only causing trouble between us. A good thing the whole business is settled, once and for all” (518). Isherwood muses “As we walked home the whole weight of the news from Austria descended upon us, crushing out everything else. By this evening a European war may have broken out. And here we are, eight thousand miles away. Shall we change our plans? Shall we go back? What does China matter to us in comparison with this? bad news of this sort has a curious psychological effect: all the guns and bombs of the Japanese seem suddenly as harmless as gnats. If we are killed on the Yellow River front our deaths will be as provincial and meaningless as a motor-bus accident in Burton-on-Trent” (518-519). Europe stays in Auden’s mind as well. The 12th poem in the sonnet sequence “In Time of War,” published at the end of *Journey to a War*, he states that “maps can really point to places / Where life is evil now / Nanking. Dachau.” (12-13). The first reference is to the Nanking Massacre, which took place in late 1937 until early 1938 and killed between 30,000 and 400,000 people. He finishes the poem, however, with a European place, Dachau, the place where the first concentration camp the National Socialists founded and where over 30,000 people met their ends. As when Auden was in Iceland, Europe is again not far from his mind here.

humanity at its worst in this century" (qtd in Davenport-Hines 180-181). In 1958, Auden settled in Kirchstetten, some 40 kilometres outside of Vienna, where he died fifteen years later. Both, Freud and Auden then, during roughly the same period, envisioned and experienced "a dream of travel and change" (Edmundson 37), in which they would live until the ends of their lives. In this chapter, I will trace the influence of Freud's thinking on psyche and the borders of the psyche on Auden's landscapes.

"An Important Jew Who Died in Exile":
The Borders of Freud

Borders of different kinds feature heavily in Freud's work. The end of his life was in a way an enumeration of borders crossed: he lived across the border of his own country and across the border between dictatorship and democracy. The cancer in his jaw, from which he had long since suffered, had created a hole in his cheek, forming "an open communication between the oral cavity and the outside" (Schur qtd in Edmundson 213) so there was no longer an inside or outside of his head, and indeed he seemed to be living across the border of death, his mouth smelling so foully that it started attracting flies (Edmundson 213). In a way, this was strangely fitting, as the negotiation and transgression of borders was something that Freud had written about throughout his career, from his first publication, *Studies on Hysteria* until he died.

Freud's engagement with his work itself even was a contestation of borders. Mark Edmundson calls him a "mental warrior" (26) who is "possessed by an intellectual form of what heroic cultures call 'battle joy'" (26) and Freud himself described himself as "by temperament a *conquistador*" (qtd in Edmundson 26). Even the position of the field Freud created is one that balances on a border. Edmundson writes:

> Dalí[19] and the Royal Society[20], art and science – those were the borders between which Freud's work unfolded. He would love to be a scientist, so as to assume science's abundant cultural authority; but he never wanted to be constrained by the limits of empirical thinking. ... Freud wanted to speculate; he wanted free play for his mind. Art, too, drew Freud: he adored literature and sculpture, and wasn't immune to painting. ... But art, however great, could never command the level of respect, and more important, of belief, that Freud thought psychoanalysis deserved. Part of what makes Freud's work so rich is that he was unwilling to commit himself to either side of the art/science divide. (170)

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[19] Edmundson writes that Freud was wary of surrealism. Freud's single encounter with Dalí was not a success. Freud told Dalí: "In classic paintings I look for the subconscious – in a surrealist painting for the conscious" (qtd in Edmundson 168). Edmundson comments: "This, presumably, was Freud's way of saying that Dalí's apparently spontaneous dreamscapes were overly intellectual, schematic, mere illustrations of ideas – and Sigmund Freud's ideas at that. The effect was not lost on the painter. 'This was the pronouncement,' says Dalí, 'of a death sentence on surrealism'" (168). Auden shared Freud's suspicion. Pascoe writes: "Auden claimed that his only knowledge of Surrealism derived from 'Mr Gascoyne's books, a few French writers like Breton and Aragon, some paintings of Dali, Ernst, and others, and from the pages of the *Minotaur* [sic]. I have never met a surrealist.' His knowledge was vicarious, indeed, he wanted it to remain so. In late 1936 he expressed misgivings about the imminent trip to Spain: 'I do hope that there are not too many surrealists there'. This was only half joking; for such people were not simply to be avoided, but to be bested. He considered their goals to be at once trivial and totalitarian; ignorant and knowing; and, as such, products of a cynical duplicity" ("Everything" 145).

[20] The Royal Society has its origins in scientific discussion groups that started to gather around 1645. It was officially founded after the Restoration in 1660 and was granted a Royal Charter by King Charles II. Robert Boyle writes that the society engaged with "natural philosophy, the mechanics and husbandry according to the principles of the Philosophical College, that values no knowledge but that it has a tendency to use" (qtd in "The Royal Society" n.pag.). However, its members were not exclusively scientists. Lyons writes about 35 additional members who join the group after an appeal from the founders: "nineteen may be considered as men of science while the other sixteen included statesmen, soldiers, antiquarians, administrators, and one or two literary men" (qtd in "The Royal Society" n.pag.). One such literary man, who joined the society three years later, was John Dryden, who praised it in *Annus Mirabilis* with the words: "O truly royal! who behold the law / And rule of beings in your Maker's mind: / And thence, like limbicks, rich ideas draw, / To fit the levell'd use of human-kind" (stanza 166). His membership, however, was short-lived. His negligence to pay his dues resulted in the termination of his membership only four years after he entered into the society. Claude Lloyd writes: "The lusty praise of the Society in the *Annus Mirabilis* seems to represent only a temporary enthusiasm. It is a part of his celebration of the stirring, hopeful spirit of the time. ... Dryden, it is clear, did not associate himself with the Society; and few, if any, outside the Society itself knew that he had ever had any connection with it. There is little need, therefore, to attempt to reconcile Dryden's 'scientific' beliefs with those of the scientists of his day" (975-976) and the blurring of the divide between art and science in this case seems a lot less heartfelt than in Freud's case.

In Freud's second book-length work, *Studies on Hysteria*, which was co-authored by Josef Breuer and published in 1895, Breuer and Freud suggest that "what cannot be remembered cannot be left behind; an insight never before expressed in a scientific paper" (Stafford- Clark 30). Hysteria, they argue, is the result of traumatic memories which both lie beyond a border that prevents the hysteric from accessing it, but are also "denied the normal wearing away processes by means of abreaction and reproduction in states of uninhibited association" (Breuer and Freud qtd in Stafford-Clark 30). Freud's very conception of the self is one heavily marked by borders, namely those between *id*, *ego* and *superego* which are forever being contested and renegotiated. As Auden says: "Whatever we may think of that famous trio Ego, Super-Ego and Id, we can see that they are like Prince Tamino, Sarastro, and The Queen of The Night and not like mathematical equations" ("Sigmund" 342).

If borders are so central to our constitution as human beings, it is the crossing of these borders that show us at our most interesting, and moreover, can lead us to heal what mental problems we may have. Edmundson writes: "Freud's thinking moved backward into the dark past – rather than forward into the highly reasoned future" (40) and he quotes Auden, who, in his elegy on Freud, writes "He would have us remember most of all ... to be enthusiastic over the night" (qtd in Edmundson 40) and was himself "absorbed by what was old, atavistic, uncanny, and heretofore undecipherable" (Edmundson 40), for Freud believed that "the only way to move forward as a civilization was to face the repressed – the disordered accumulation that was packed down in the cellars and crypts of the psyche" (Edmundson 40).

When Auden writes that Freud encourages us to be "enthusiastic over the night," he gives reasons for this as well: we should love it "not only for the sense of wonder / it alone has to offer, but also / because it needs our love" ("In Memory of Sigmund Freud" 99-101). The visions we conjure up in our nightly hours of rest, "the fauna of the night" (Auden "Sigmund" 18) may be "exiles" (Auden "In Memory of Sigmund Freud" 104) in the realm of

darkness but they want nothing more than “to enter / the bright circle of ... recognition” (Auden “In Memory of Sigmund Freud” 19-20):

> ... With large sad eyes
> its delectable creatures look up and beg
> us dumbly to ask them to follow:
> they are exiles who long for the future
>
> that lies in our power, they too would rejoice
> if allowed to serve enlightenment like him,
> even to bear our cry of ‘Judas’,
> as he did and all must bear who serve it. (“In Memory of Sigmund Freud” 101-108)

Auden suggests that the images our unconscious produces want to help solving problems and move forward, into the future, as much as Freud wants them to, but he also points out what the cost of this would be for them and those who conjure them up: another form of exile; the castigation of the masses who do not wish to see their own dark sides, such as the advocates of the German National Socialist regime. Freud himself said: “To profess belief in this new theory called for a certain degree of readiness to accept a situation of solitary opposition” (qtd in Edmundson 144).

Freud argued that our selves are not only divided, but essentially transgressive. They not only harbour traumas and sexual desires but also inclinations of the most violent kind. Edmundson writes: “Freud believed that even the most apparently civilized people nurse fantasies of violence, rape, and plunder. To Freud, we are all in our hearts criminals” (52). When circumstances allowed for these feelings, which are normally repressed, to emerge, as they did in National Socialist Germany, Freud was not surprised: “Something like this was

inevitable, ... I am not sure that from my standpoint I can blame them" (Freud qtd in Edmundson 53). All the same, Edmundson writes:

> one can find a certain measured optimism in his developing view that in the simple, often-forgotten corners of human life, there is meaning to be found – and that in such meaning there lies hope for freedom from psychological misery. By becoming more conversant with their desires, Freud suggested time and again, human beings might expect a little less renunciation from themselves and so might become a little freer, more at peace. ... simply by attaching words to out deepest wishes, making conscious what had been repressed, we might achieve a level of self-acceptance that would lead to some tranquility and – who knows? – maybe a glint of happiness from time to time. (53)

Bringing the out-of-bounds within the realm of speech, overseen by an analyst working "from a detached, disciplined position" (Edmundson 210), or existing across another border, can thus lead to happiness and peace. Like Auden in the poetry of his German period, then, the crossing of borders can here again be seen as something that is as dangerous as it is necessary to our development, and Freud was the perfect person to facilitate this. Edmundson describes him as "someone worth believing in with fervor and worth following into the future" (229).

In 1939, the person with whom this description would more readily have been associated on the continent was Adolf Hitler. When Hitler crossed borders, however, his actions could hardly be mistaken for attempts at attaining inner peace, even if it would take a long time and the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland before France and Great Britain finally declared war on 3 September 1939 after Germany's invasion of Poland two days earlier. Auden wrote about this occasion in "September 1, 1939," a poem he famously started disliking soon after having published it; he called it "the most dishonest poem I have ever

written" (qtd in Davenport-Hines 319) and refused its inclusion in many later editions of or including his work.

If Hitler was a figure of hope to many Germans, his rise leads Auden to characterise his own situation as one in which he sees "the clever hopes expire / Of a low dishonest decade" (4-5), now that public life and politics invade "our private lives" (9) and the world being divided into "the bright / And darkened lands of the earth" (7-8). Auden refers to psychoanalysis and Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* in which he describes "the dynamics of the leader principle [as] a kind of falling in love en masse, whereby groups of people will turn to a leader and hand over their super-ego judgements to him before introjecting his standards into themselves" (Stafford-Clark 153). He writes:

> Accurate scholarship can
> Unearth the whole offence
> From Luther until now
> That has driven a culture mad,
> Find what occurred at Linz,
> What huge imago made
> A psychopathic god (12-18)

However, he suggests he is equally capable of providing a simple solution to this question:

> I and the public know
> What all schoolchildren learn,
> Those to whom evil is done
> Do evil in return. (19-22)

Masses are a powerful force, and whereas they seem to be a symbol of inclusion and oneness, they exist by grace of the exclusion of dissenting elements. In the case of National Socialism, these are minorities such as Jews, homosexuals, Roma and Sinti and political dissidents, but

historically they have been all kinds of people, as "Exiled Thucydides[21]" (23) could already have asserted in the fifth century BC when he was banished from Athens upon failing to safeguard the city of Amphipolis from Sparta.

James Miller suggests that there is another dictator in the poem, albeit a less politically inclined one. Auden writes that we all want to occupy a position set apart from all the world in the eyes of the ones we love. He uses Sergei Diaghilev, the founder of the *Ballets Russes*, who was criticised for this feeling by his protégé and lover Vaslav Nijinsky, as an example.

> What mad Nijinsky[22] wrote
>
> About Diaghilev
>
> Is true of the normal heart;
>
> For the error bred in the bone
>
> Of each woman and each man

---

[21] Thucydides was an Athenian historian, philosopher and military leader who lived from around 460 BC until around 400 BC. He was sent to defend the strategically important Amphipolis when it was attacked by Spartan forces, but failed to arrive in time, after which he was forced into exile. His attitude towards democracy was ambivalent. Born an aristocrat, he was greatly attracted by the democrat Pericles, although he described his rule as "a democracy in name, but in fact the rule of the first man" (qtd in Bowersock 138). He became completely disillusioned after Pericles died and was succeeded by leaders far inferior to him, and who banished Thucydides from Athens. G.W. Bowersock writes: "It appears ... that in those latter years of the war the democracy could have been managed in a way Thucydides approved of, but the democracy in its worst aspect – in its suspicion and fickleness – prevented this from happening. Alcibiades was driven to treason and subversion, in Sparta and Ionia, before his return to Athens in 407 and second dismissal in the following year. For Thucydides, born a Cimonian and converted to Periclean democracy, the failure of Alcibiades meant the failure of Athens" (140).

[22] Fuller points out that the last two lines are almost a direct citation from Nijinsky's diary, in which he writes: "Some politicians are hypocrites like Diaghilev, who does not want universal love, but to be loved alone. I want universal love" (27). Nijinsky was born in 1889 or 1890 and was perhaps the most famous ballet dancer of his time, known as *le dieu de la danse* (the god of dance) (Nijinsky n.pag.). He performed with the Mariinsky Theatre, the Bolshoi Theatre and later with Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*. In 1919, he stopped performing due to a nervous breakdown. Diagnosed with schizophrenia, he spent most of the rest of his life in institutions. In his diary, he advocates Christianity, vegetarianism and universal love. Nijinsky had a relationship with Diaghilev, which terminated when Nijinsky got married. Nijinsky writes about his relationship with Diaghilev: "I disliked him for his too self-assured voice, but went to seek my luck. I found my luck. At once I allowed him to make love to me. I trembled like a leaf. I hated him, but pretended, because I knew that my mother and I would die of hunger otherwise. I understood Diaghilev from the first moment and pretended to agree with him at once. ... I worked hard at my dancing and was always tired. But I pretended not to be tired at all in order that Diaghilev should not be bored with me. I know what he felt, he loved boys and therefore could not understand me. I do not want people to think that Diaghilev was a villain and that he should be imprisoned. I would cry, if people were to harm him. I do not love him, but he is a human being. Loving everyone, I do not want to cause pain to anyone" (49).

Craves what it cannot have,

Not universal love

But to be loved alone. (59-66)

Miller argues that Auden may have identified himself with Nijinsky, as both were "extremely subject to the public eye, ... and ... homosexuals in countries lacking tolerance for different sexual orientations" (117). He describes Diaghilev as an almost dictatorial figure: "Some speculate that Nijinsky's madness was brought on by Diagilev's [sic] impossible demands of him as a dancer, as an artist" (117) and provides an account of Diaghilev that describes him as "proud of his resemblance to Peter the Great, he was always a dictator. ... Both ruthless and tender hearted, but the ruthlessness was that of the artist: when each [dancer] had nothing new to offer, Diagilev passed on to the next who had. This led to some heartaches and in the case of Nijinsky – tragedy" (Buckle qtd in Miller 117). This brings Miller to the conclusion that "In this light, art or the relentless pursuit of art, is easier to understand as a form of fascism. The theme of dictatorship, weaved throughout the poem, is also strengthened with the example of Diagilev, an auteur, whose instruments of work were human beings" (117), because "Diagilev's 'ruthless' search for the aesthetic ideal ignored human, physiological barriers or limits, and in doing so was progressive yet dehumanizing" (117).

Most of us, however, in our daily lives try to connect on a more human level and our "morning vow" (70) of "I will be true to the wife, / I'll concentrate more on my work" (71-72) may be weak and show us as essentially fallible, but proves we are human and capable of love, which is indeed our only hope, as Auden indicates in what he came to find perhaps the most problematic line of the poem: "We must love one another or die" (88)[23]. In the final

[23] Jenkins indicates that as early as the period between 1942 and 1944, Auden omitted the final stanza of "September 1, 1939" when he compiled the text of an edition of his collected poetry. It was also omitted in a 1950 edition, but reappeared in a 1955 edition with the last line altered to "We must love one another *and* die" [Jenkins's emphasis]" ("Either" 24). Jenkins attributes this revision to Cyril Connolly, who wrote in a copy of

stanza, he shows humanity as constantly endangered by history, “Beleaguered” (97), in fact, in danger of having its borders transgressed by the enemy. Our only hope in this situation is taking the step of communication and bridging the gap between one person and another, not to lose each other in the dark.

Defenceless under the night
Our world in stupor lies
Yet, dotted everywhere
Ironic points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages:
May I, composed like them
Of Eros and of dust,
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame. (89-99)

In “September 1, 1939,” the sense of place is used in an interesting way. As in *The Age of Anxiety*, the poem starts in a very particular place in New York, later to move towards a broader, universalised setting. As *The Age of Anxiety* begins in a bar on Third Avenue in Manhattan, “September 1, 1939” opens with its speaker finding himself in one of the streets intersecting with Third Avenue: “I sit in one of the dives / On Fifty-Second Street” (1-2). He

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poems by George Crabbe that he gave to Auden “Wystan from Cyril / ‘we must love one another AND die” (“Either” 31). Jenkins comments on this alteration: “Because speaking soberly, we clearly cannot prevent our deaths by loving one another, the ‘or’ in ‘We must love one another or die’ does not exactly function to set out true alternatives on a literal plane of meaning just as the ‘or’ in ‘To the citizen or the police’ does not really organize these two groups antithetically. Neither ‘or’ in Auden’s poem quite has the sense of what dictionaries say *or* means. Both are in different ways threshold instances of the word. As such, ‘or’ in ‘We must love one another or die’ indicates that the final line of the stanza cannot be taken as a prosaic statement of fact but rather has to be grasped as an exciting foray into the verbal darkness, a reaching for a paradoxical intuition about spiritual survival, a truth that, as the trembling of the language shows, is almost beyond words. Take away the ‘or’ in ‘We must love one another or die’ and substitute an ‘and,’ and the tensions are lost.” (“Either” 39).

describes the feelings of those around him but soon branches out to other places and more generalised and abstracted opinions, to arrive, after four stanzas, at “the international wrong” (44). Indeed, Stephen Burt points out that Joseph Brodsky argued that the “whole offence” (13) from the second stanza goes all the way back to original sin (536). The opening stanza shows the speaker grounded firmly in the American soil on which Auden has recently landed: “The locality given, and the word ‘dive,’ show a poet both confident in the idiom and geography of a new country, and drawing attention to his confidence” (Bayley n.pag.). After having established this scene, he shows that what he has to say is nonetheless not only relevant for Manhattan, New York, but for all the world. Burt writes:

> To move *from* European history, bureaucrats, and dictators *to* this universal ‘error’ is to shift the ground of the poem’s inquiry to a space (widely shared, transhistorical emotion) where poetry might find itself more at home. Evocations of original sin announce the importance of the literary in general and of this poem in particular, if and only if the problem we face at this moment concerns human nature ... will poems of this kind help us address it. (536)

“Never, Thank God, in Step”:

The Necessity of Borders

Freud understood that borders are everywhere in our mental constitution and that they need to be crossed for us to make progress. He also saw that the existence of borders is necessary, as is contestation of and even conflict regarding borders, because the converse of a life marked by borders is a life of fundamentalism and totalitarianism: a life as that in the home country he left behind. Edmundson writes: “For Freud, “life is best defined as ongoing conflict” (98) and: “At the center of Freud’s work lies a fundamental perception: human beings are not unified creatures. Our psyches are not whole, but divided into parts, and those

parts are usually in conflict with each other; for Freud the psyche is often in a state of tension that borders on civil war" (98). However, he also notes that, according to Freud,

> a measure of inner conflict is not the worst thing in the world: We need to learn to understand the conflict to whatever degree we can and perhaps modify it in certain ways. But overall we need to learn to see some inner tension as inevitable, and to live with it. Freud's view that we need to tolerate and even at times cultivate conflict is part of what makes his thought as radical as it is. (124)

Indeed, a certain degree of conflict is much less dangerous than the total absence of it:

> Freud's implicit ethos in the face of the temptation that fascism and fundamentalism offer – the temptation of oneness – is counterintuitive. He believes that the inner tensions we experience within the psyche are by and large necessary tensions. This is so not because the tensions are enjoyable in themselves – they are not – but because the alternatives are so much worse. ... complete unbinding of the inner tensions is worse: that leads the way to public and private chaos. (123)

Introspection, the ability to at least try to begin to know oneself, exists by grace of abstraction and abstraction necessarily leads to inner tension and conflict. According to Freud, this ability originated with the Israelites, and Moses in particular. In *Moses and Monotheism*, he argues: "The Jew is the one who can invest himself in what is not present, for God exists in the mind of the Jew and there alone" (Edmundson 231). While the Jews have found it hard to keep up the idea of an invisible God and not slide back into idolatry, other religions, including Christianity, tend to worship a God who is more concrete than the Judaic one, because the belief in a totally abstract concept is hard: "Human beings revel in appearance: they delight in the many-toned glories of the world. To renounce the visible in the interest of the unseen is an enormously difficult human task" (Edmundson 232).

The belief in an abstract deity, whom Freud sees as a result of "sublimation" (qtd in Edmundson 232), is hard because it demands the giving up of worldly values in favour of abstract ones and this makes for tension. Edmundson writes:

> Moses was someone capable of more inner tension, more inner conflict than others: he could want and not want something at the same time, feel both desire and its antithesis, and live in that state for prolonged periods. Freud suggests that the ability to sustain such tension turned to a high degree is what makes someone a hero of civilization. ... Ambivalence that has been fully assimilated, that has infused the flesh as well as the mind and spirit, is what civilization is about for Freud, and in this regard Moses was heroic, and heroic in a new way. (233)

The abstraction or sublimation of God is also an intellectually enriching process, for "If [people] can worship what is not there, they can also reflect on what is not there, or on what is presented to them in symbolic, not immediate, terms" (Edmundson 233) and this, in turn, can lead to insight into "the invisible, but perhaps determining, dynamics of the inner world" (234). Indeed, according to Freud, "To live well, to begin to know himself, the modern individual, with his divided psyche, must live with abstraction" (Edmundson 234). It is therefore that "There is no social ceremony more antithetical to Judaic and psychoanalytic inwardness than the mass rally, where the torches flare, the searchlights play against the sky, the banners float and snap in the wind, and the leader reveals the truth behind all appearances." (Edmundson 235): they are culturally too deeply grounded in the history of inner conflict to believe in the fiction of the masses, and they have every right to be, for Hitler proves exactly how dangerous it can be.

The importance of different and conflicting opinions also shines through in Auden's works. In "The Prolific and the Devourer," an unfinished work of prose written mostly in the summer of 1939, in which Auden discusses matters of state and religion, he writes about the

difference between art and totalitarian politics as, again, one that depends on the inclusion or exclusion of conflicting views. He writes:

> To be useful to an artist a general idea must be capable of including the most contradictory experiences, and of the most subtle variations and ironic interpretations. The politician also finds a general idea useful, but for his purpose, which is to secure unanimity in action, subtlety and irony are drawbacks. The political virtues of an idea are simplicity and infallibility.
>
> "How can one think to fill people with blind faith in the correctness of a doctrine if by continued changes in its outward construction one spreads uncertainty and doubt?" (Hitler) (421)

The work of artists exist for the purpose of including different perspectives. He may choose to work within "a framework of general ideas, e.g., Catholicism or Marxism" (421) but he may also work without such a framework: "One can point to Dante as a proof of their value, and to Shakespeare as a proof of their unimportance" (421), Auden writes. He continues: "the value of such a framework lies, not in its scientific truth, but in its immediate convenience. A scientific hypothesis is a provisional framework for organising future experience: an artistic Weltanschauung is a fixed framework chosen by the artist as the most suitable for the organisation of past experience" (421). Although the framework is a fixed one, Auden stresses the point that "Artists, even when they appear to hold religious or political dogmas, do not mean the same thing by them as the organisers of their church or party" (421): the framework is in their case a purely theoretical, not a practical one, as it is for men of state. He summarises this view with two maxims; one for the artist: "Whoso generalises, is lost" (421) and one for the politician: "Hard cases make bad law" (421).

This attitude also leads the artist and the politician, especially the dictatorial politician, to see others in a radically different way: Auden writes of "The Dictator who says 'My

People': the Writer who says 'My Public'" (411). The writer thus sees the people as separate from himself, a group of people who expect something from him, critically engage with the material he produces and may revolt or cast his works aside if they feel they are not useful. The dictator, on the other hand, sees the people as part of himself, belonging to him and denying them agency because they are inseparable from his person. The abolition of this border makes critique of the leader impossible, and that poses a grave danger. In an only partly comic piece in "Shorts," written in 1940, he writes:

> When Statesmen gravely say, 'We must be realistic',
> The chances are they're weak, and, therefore, pacifistic,
> But when they speak of Principles, look out: perhaps
> Their generals are already poring over maps. (1-4)

In many of his poems, Auden shows a mistrust for occasions of too much concord. In another sequence of "Shorts," this one written from 1972-1973 he states: "When truly brothers / men don't sing in unison / but in harmony" (1-3). When, in "In Praise of Limestone," he pictures a "band of rivals as they climb up and down / [the landscape's] steep stone gennels in twos and threes" (21-22), he writes, relieved, that they may do so "at times / Arm in arm, but never, thank God, in step" (22-23): they may belong together but they are not performing a military march.

In "In Praise of Limestone," the main asset of the landscape that is being lauded is the fact that it is unfixed and ever-changing. Auden suggests that this feature is why we are attracted to the "limestone landscape" (93) in the first place: "If it form the one landscape that we, the inconstant ones, / Are consistently homesick for, this is chiefly / Because it dissolves in water" (1-3). Like people, the limestone landscape is constantly worked upon and changed by external factors: Auden anthropomorphises it by describing it as "a stone that responds" (29), and the connection between stone and man is enhanced when Auden writes it can take

the shape of “Innocent athletes and gesticulating fountains” (87). Furthermore, as in us, things are going on beneath the surface of the limestone which we get hints, but which we cannot fully grasp:

> ... 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 (3-9)

In the letter to Elizabeth Mayer in which he refers to the Pennines as his “Mutterland” (qtd in Myers n.pag.), Auden writes that he “hadn’t realised till I came how like Italy [it] is” (qtd in Myers n.pag.). He continues: “Am in fact starting on a poem, ‘In Praise of Limestone’, the theme of which is that rock creates the only human landscape” (qtd in Myers n.pag.). Rock, however, does not mean any rock, but limestone in particular. Fuller writes: “At the heart of the poem is praise of moderation” (*Commentary* 407) and the limestone landscape is indeed a moderate one:

> ... That is why, I suppose
> The best and the 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 (43-47)

Other landscapes call for the attention of those who crave more than the average limestone. The first of these voices is that of another rock, but this time it is the hard and

constant granite of the mountain, and in all its fixedness and resistance to influences from outside, it is far from human:

> ‘Come!’ cried the granite wastes,
>
> ‘How evasive is your humour, how accidental
>
> Your kindest kiss, how permanent is death.’ (Saints-to-be
>
> Slipped away sighing.) (47-50)

The massive, permanent and bare granite wasteland is presented as something of a geological opposite to limestone, and its message is similarly opposed: here there is no nuance, there is no love, only totalitarianism and death. The two other landscapes whose calls are heard convey a similar message: the voice of “clays and gravels” (50) calls for militarism and dictatorship and is followed

> 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.’ (56-59)

In “Bucolics,” a sequence of poems written in the years following the publication of “In Praise of Limestone,” Auden continues to explore the relation between man and nature. The sequence encompasses seven poems that are, “Winds” excepted, about different landscapes, indicated by their respective titles: “Woods,” “Mountains,” “Lakes,” “Islands,” “Plains” and “Streams.” In “Mountains,” Auden elaborates on the hostile nature of mountains. In “In Praise of Limestone,” he adds to the granite’s cry the note that “(Saints-to-be / Slipped away sighing)” (49-50). Rebecca Price Parkin questions this addition, saying: “Are these real saints? Do people in our tradition turn toward sainthood because they are convince that there is no reality beyond death, that even the greatest compassion is an accident, and that any humor or playfulness life may hold is only a flimsy attempt to conceal its essential grimness

and ugliness? Such doctrines breed, not saints, but cynics" (303) and Fuller characterises the saints as "putative" (213). The landscape of "Mountains" seems, indeed, to be inhabited by cynics: "it is curious how often in steep places / You meet someone short who frowns, / A type you catch beheading daisies with a stick" (12-14). If there is religiosity in them, it is dubious to say the least: "They have the balance, nerve, / And habit of the Spiritual, but what God / Does their order serve?" (20-22).

As in "In Praise of Limestone," in "Mountains" there is again a contrast between the average and the outstanding, the changeable and the fixed. Monroe K. Spears writes: "The basic contrast is between the exceptional and isolated (and also unsociable and monstrous) types who love mountains and the normal and ordinary people who don't" (383), but here the focus lies on the other opposite, the landscape that is unchangeable and will not be influenced by whatever events happen there.

Auden acknowledges that the mountains have always been and are "Still, a fine refuge" (45). The ancestors of "That boy behind his goats" (45) were "of a clan / That fled with bronze before a tougher metal" (46-47), a reference to the violent transition from the prehistoric Bronze Age to the Iron Age[24]. Even now, "that quiet old gentleman" (48) who "used to own / Three papers but is not received in Society now" (49-50) can live here comfortably, as "These farms can always see a panting government coming" (51). As for him,

[24] Eric H. Cline writes about the decline and fall of the bronze age: "The Bronze Age in the Aegean, Egypt, and the Near East lasted nearly two thousand years, from approximately 3000 BC to just after 1200 BC. When the end came, as it did after centuries of cultural and technological evolution, most of the civilized and international world of the Mediterranean regions came to a dramatic halt in a vast area stretching from Greece and Italy in the west to Egypt, Canaan, and Mesopotamia in the east. Large empires and small kingdoms, which had taken centuries to evolve, collapsed rapidly. With their end came a period of transition, once regarded by scholars as the world's first Dark Age. It was not until centuries later that a new cultural renaissance emerged in Greece and the other affected areas, setting the stage for the evolution of Western society as we know it today" (xv). As for the reasons for this collapse, he states that evidence is inconclusive. He suggests causes as diverse as earthquakes, climate change, draught and famine, internal rebellions or foreign invaders and the decline or termination of trade routes, or a combination of factors, "a system collapse that was caused by a series of events linked together via a 'multiplier effect'" (165). He is forced, however, to conclude: "No unequivocal proof has been offered as to who or what caused this disaster, which resulted in the collapse of these civilizations and the end of the Late Bronze Age" (164).

Auden declares “I’m nordic myself” (52) and so he does not have to fear persecution, belonging to the race that typically is the perpetrator, not the victim of it. Nevertheless, he says, “I’d much rather stay / Where the nearest person who could have me hung is / Some ridges away” (53-55).

Still, the mountains are unimaginative and do not encourage psychological growth:

... To manage the Flesh,

When angels of ice and stone

Stand over her day and night who make it so plain

They detest any kind of growth, does not encourage

Euphemisms for the effort: here wayside crucifixes

Bear witness to a physical outrage,

And serenades too

Stick to bare fact: ‘O my girl has a goitre,

I’ve a hole in my shoe!’ (36-44)

Auden’s suggestion that mountain people are unimaginative may also be taken as a reference to totalitarian regimes, which, in the twentieth century, have typically advocated what is sometimes called heroic realism, to an style of art meant to “unite their citizens behind an idea or ruler” (Heller n.pag.). Its subjects is the hero “who rises above the ordinary and must therefore appear to be extraordinary. ... The primary method is to use an exaggerated representational style, a form of ‘realism’ that romanticises and even beatifies those depicted. After the warts and blemishes have been removed and the muscles have been fleshed out, what remains is a heroic shell” (Heller n.pag.). This single reality that has no room for critical reflection proves to be a problem for Auden, for this well-organized but dull and totalitarian landscape

... would keep me happy for

What? Five minutes? For an uncatlike

Creature who has gone wrong,

Five minutes on even the nicest mountain

Are awfully long. (62-66)

In the poem dedicated to the landscape that is diametrically opposed to mountains in terms of appearance, a similar sentiment becomes apparent. “Plains” opens to the speaker imagining different situations he could end up in as he gets older, but neither the prospect of being a “quarrelsome, / Disreputable old man” (3-4) who occupies himself with “Cadging drinks from the unwary” (3), nor that of living “A second childhood in a valley, scribbling / Reams of edifying and unreadable verse” (5-6) are as appalling to him as having to live on a plain: “I cannot see a plain without a shudder: / ‘O God, please, please, don’t ever make me live there!’” (7-8). Like the “clay and gravel” (Auden “In Praise” 50) from “In Praise of Limestone,” the plains are “ground for warriors and totalitarian governments” (Spears 383). Much like the mountain, the plain offers no possibility for imagination, because everything can be seen far and wide and “all elsewheres are equal” (17). There are no mysterious places hiding secrets and as for “Romance? Not in this weather” (25). Auden declares: “If I were a plainsman I should hate us all” (49) because there would be no surprises and no miracles. The plain is a scene only for nightmares:

... I know them personally

Only as a landscape common to two nightmares:

Across, them, spotted by spiders from afar,

I have tried to run, knowing there was no hiding and no help;

On them, in brilliant moonlight, I have lost my way

And stood without a shadow at the dead centre

Of an abominable desolation (57-63)

Fuller writes: “plains are a nightmare landscape of victimization to the poet, who is not a man of power. ... They are a reminder of the extensiveness of evil” (221).

In “In Praise of Limestone,” Auden does not deny that there are no fixed facts: death is one, for example. In most other matters of life, however, he expresses a strong desire for things to change. Even heaven and perfect love must be subject to change for them to be human in any way and not to turn oppressive in spite of their supposed ideal nature.

> ... 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. (84-93)

“Dislodged from Elsewhere”:

Auden in Exile

Freud was very attached to his native Vienna and had never wanted to leave the place until his situation in the city under National Socialism became all but untenable. For a long time, he and his family could not conceive of his leaving the city permanently. The situation for Jews had been precarious for decades, even if Vienna was supposed to be a liberal and tolerant city. When Hitler gave a speech in the German Reichstag on 20 February 1938 about “the Austrian

problem" (Edmundson 20)[25] and the streets of Vienna filled with people chanting "Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Heil Hitler! Heil Hitler!" (Edmunson 21), Freud's youngest daughter Anna wrote to psychoanalyst and family friend Ernest Jones:

> There was an atmosphere of panic in Vienna ... which has now calmed down a little. We have not joined in the panic. It is too early, one can not yet fully assess the consequences of what has happened. For the time being everything is as it was. It is perhaps easier for us than for others who are more mobile, we do not need to consider many decisions since for us hardly any come into consideration. (qtd in Edmundson 21)

Edmundson comments on this fragment: "What Anna Freud meant was that her father was too old and too sick to try to escape, and that in any event, he would probably never consent to leave Vienna" (22). Edmundson writes that Freud "loved – and despised – the city a great deal" (23) and that "if [he was] never exactly happy in Vienna (Freud did not put much of a premium on happiness per se), [he] nonetheless knew that it provided him one of the things he most needed, which was productive conflict" (25). A year before, however, Freud had already expressed something of a wish to leave Vienna "a dream of travel and change" (Edmundson 37), and even if his medical situation was precarious, his wish would become reality only a

[25] In this speech, Hitler addressed the question of people of German descent living in areas that had been part of the German Empire before the Treaty of Versailles was signed in 1919, and who were now, according to Hitler, "depriv[ed] of rights" (n.pag.). He says that "In the long run it is unbearable for a world power, conscious of herself, to know there are citizens at her side who are constantly being inflicted with the severest sufferings for their sympathy or unity with the total nation, its faith and philosophy" (n.pag.) and he points out that "It is not only the same people but above all a long communal history and culture which bind together the Reich and Austria. Difficulties which emerged in the carrying out of the agreement of July 11, 1936, [in which Germany recognised the sovereignty of Austria and both states agreed that the internal political order in either country was the concern of that country only] made essential an attempt to remove misunderstandings and obstacles to final reconciliation. It is clear that whether we wished it or not an intolerable position might have developed that would have contained the seeds of catastrophe. It does not lie in the power of man to stop the rolling stone of fate which through neglect or lack of wisdom has been set moving" (n.pag.). Later, he says "The German people is no warlike nation. It is a soldierly one which means it does not want a war but does not fear it. It loves peace, but it also loves its honor and freedom" (n.pag.).

few months after Anna's letter. In 1937, Freud wrote, also to Jones: "If our city falls, then the Prussian barbarians will swamp Europe. I should like to live in England" (37).

Auden, different from Freud, was on the move all his life, applying the notion he had of the importance of crossing borders, it seems, as much as possible to his life. Almost all of it was spent in some kind of self-imposed exile. In "Letter to Lord Byron," he wrote: "no one thinks unless a complex makes him" (355) and for Auden, this complex was exile, a move away from "England, my England" (355) which has

> ... been my tutrix –
>
> The Mater, on occasions, of the free,
>
> Or, if you'd rather, Dura Virum Nutrix,[26]
>
> Whatever happens I am born of Thee;
>
> And Englishmen, all foreigners agree,
>
> Taking them by and large, and as a nation
>
> All suffer from an Oedipus fixation. (355)

Auden also wrote: "The real 'life-wish' is the desire for separation, from family, from one's literary predecessors" ("I" 299) and so, he left home to become a consciously dislocated poet. Patrick Deer characterises the first two cities of his self-imposed exile as "cities in flux, discovered before the storm: Weimar Berlin in the artistic and political ferment before the Nazis came to power in 1933, and New York amongst the European refugees in the neutral United States after the defeat of the Spanish Republic[27] and on the eve of the Second World

[26] Latin for "A stern nurse of men."

[27] The Spanish Civil War lasted from 1936 until 1939. Valentine Cunningham writes: "All wars capture the imagination, get aestheticized, inspire literature. But none more so than the Spanish Civil War" (185) and Auden was to write what Cunningham deems "the most famous English poem to appear about the war" (185). Many writers from across Europe were vocal about the matter, and the majority of them sided with the socialist republicans rather than with Franco's nationalists, who would eventually win. Many of these also actively participated in the war. Auden, too, travelled to Spain in early 1937. Cunningham sums his involvement with military activities up with the words: "Auden went out intending to drive an ambulance ('I shall probably be a bloody bad soldier'), did some propaganda work in Valencia, came home speedily, shocked by Barcelona's churches burned out by republicans, and wrote 'Spain'" (187). In the poem, he writes about "The conscious

War" (24). He continues to write that Berlin "offered a prism through which to defamiliarize the English landscape and body politic. The 'illness' of English culture could be manifested through a series of Weimar tropes that revealed the foreignness of home" (25).

Ten years after the year spent in Germany, Auden moved more permanently, and to the displeasure of many compatriots, to the United States, the country of which he obtained citizenship in 1946. He settled in New York, a place to which he turned "at first as a gritty fantasy of urban alienation, an austere retreat from political commitment and militarization into the abstraction of the modern metropolis. He promoted the myth of his exile in 'Refugee Blues', where the city with 'ten million souls' still has 'no place for us, my dear'" (Deer 28). Even if, as Patrick Deer argues, "Instead of solitude he found love and employment, and home in a series of apartments in Brooklyn and Greenwich Village" (29), he exiled himself again from New York by spending his summers back on the continent, first on Ischia and then in Austria.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud writes that in dreams, "The male organ [is] symbolised by persons and the female by a landscape" (175). Callan characterises Ischia's "fishing ports / that lean against ample Epomeo, holding on / to the rigid folds of her skirts" ("Ischia" 28-30) as having an "association with the term 'anaclitic'[28] in Freud's theory of infant sexuality – 'leaning up against' the mother for safety and nutrition" (221). Auden describes a familial relation to the landscape, which is "Dear to us whether we choose our / Duty or do something horrible" (11-12). He acknowledges that "Dearest to each [is] his birthplace" (13), England in his case, but he is almost equally affected by the Italian landscape he inhibits at present:

... I am presently moved

---

acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder" (94), but, like "September 1, 1939," he would come to find this poem dishonest, altered it and eventually came to exclude it from later collections of his poetry (Grass 84-85).

[28] Anaclitic is a term Freud uses to describe people whose choice of a partner is motivated by a dependence on that other person: they choose mother or father figures as sexual partners.

By sun-drenched Parthenopea, my thanks are for you,

Ischia, to whom a fair wind has

Brought me rejoicing with dear friends

From soiled productive cities. (17-21)

Like England, this country, too, is motherly and educates the speaker:

... How well you correct

Our injured eyes, how gently you train us to see

Things and men in perspective

Underneath your uniform light. (21-24)

In “In Praise of Limestone,” the Italian landscape again takes a motherly role:

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)

Price Parkin writes:

> Negatively considered, the limestone landscape is the beloved landscape of childhood for which the grown-up is always homesick. Symbolically, then, it is the region of immaturity and self-centeredness. It is the landscape not only of the biological child but of the natural man, the “old Adam.” Homesickness for this landscape cannot be altogether condoned. For it is the desire to return to the womb, to be sheltered from reality and comforted, as a mother comforts a child. (300-301).

Auden left Italy permanently for Austria after ten years of summer residence in 1958. Upon leaving, he wrote “Good-Bye to the Mezzogiorno,” in which he takes his leave of the “sunburnt otherwhere” (4) that southern Italy, or the *Mezzogiorno*, is. In using this

characterisation, he achieves an effect opposite to that of the familiarity that was established in “Ischia” and “In Praise of Limestone.” Leaving, he finally renounces the earlier familiarity he saw in the landscape. In “Good-Bye to the Mezzogiorno,” he expands upon the difference in mental constitution of the people from northern and southern Europe and the myths that exist in the minds of the former regarding those of the latter, such as the notion that “*amore* / Is better down South and much cheaper” (13-14), or that “exposure / To strong sunlight is lethal to germs” (15-16). Auden debunks both myths as respectively “doubtful” (15) and “patently false” (17) and after describing the numerous wonders that the northerner is confronted with in the south, concludes that between northerners and southerners,

> ... those who mean by a life a
> *Bildungsroman* and those to whom living
> Means to-be-visible-now, there yawns a gulf
> Embraces cannot bridge. If we try
>
> To “go southern”, we spoil in no time, we grow
> Flabby, dingily lecherous, and
> Forget to pay bills (73-79)

The southern ways make us forgetful and spoiled; overly comfortable. And so, Auden must go although he “[goes] grateful” (85),

> ... invoking
> My sacred meridian names, *Vico, Verga,*
> *Pirandello, Bernini, Bellini,*
>
> To bless this region, its vendages, and those
> Who call it home: though one cannot always

Remember exactly why one has been happy,

There is no forgetting that one was. (86-92)

The people Auden refers to in this poem are significant: Giambattista Vico was an Italian Enlightenment thinker who, in his *Scienza Nuova*, argues against the Cartesian notion that the purest form of knowledge is rational. Vico holds that "The reduction of all facts to the ostensibly paradigmatic form of mathematical knowledge is a form of 'conceit,' ... which arises from the fact that 'man makes himself the measure of all things' and that 'whenever men can form no idea of distant and unknown things, they judge them by what is familiar and at hand'" (Costelloe n.pag.). Not to reduce "the facts of the human world ... to mere contingency or explaining their order by way of speculative principles" (Costelloe n.pag), he argues for the term "*il vero*" (qtd in Costelloe n.pag.) to be complemented by "*il certo*" (qtd in Costelloe n.pag.):

> The former is the object of knowledge (*scienza*) since it is universal and eternal, whereas the latter, related as it is to human consciousness (*conscienza*), is particular and individuated. ... As Vico says, 'philosophy contemplates reason, whence comes knowledge of the true; philology observes that of which human choice is the author, whence comes consciousness of the certain... . These two disciplines combine in a method or 'new critical art' (*nuova'arte critica*) where philosophy aims at articulating the universal forms of intelligibility common to all experience, while philology adumbrates the empirical phenomena of the world which arise from human choice: the languages, customs, and actions of people which make up civil society. (Costelloe n.pag.)

Only when both disciplines are being executed and held in equal esteem, can we arrive at meaningful knowledge, as only then have we "grasped both the necessity of human affairs ...

and the contingency of the events which form the content of the causal chains. Philosophy yields the universally true and philology the individually certain" (Costelloe n.pag.)

Giovanni Verga was a realist writer with a great sensitivity for both landscape and human nature; both his *The House by the Medlar Tree* and *Sir-Workman Gesualdo* are concerned with the difficulties arising from social mobility. He was a major inspiration to Luigi Pirandello (Whitfield n.pag.), whose works are often concerned with the borders, such as that between fiction and reality, as in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, or that between the self and others, as in *One, None, and a Hundred Thousand*. Auden also mentions Gian Lorenzo Bernini, the Baroque sculptor whose works defy gravity and are often concerned with metamorphosis, as in his *Apollo and Daphne* but also in *The Martyrdom of St Lawrence*, which shows the moment at which St Lawrence's burning flesh turns fragrant. Not only does he show metamorphosis, his very sculptures are metamorphoses. Simon Schama says:

> It's no good pretending that ecstasy isn't a physical as well as a spiritual experience; that passion doesn't work through the body as well as the soul. Bernini knew all about passion; that's what his art was about. It was this physical intensity that would transform sculpture. No-one before Bernini had managed to make marble so carnal. In his nimble hands it would flutter and stream, quiver and sweat. ... He could, like an alchemist, turn one material into another: marble into trees, leaves, hair, and of course, flesh. (1:59-3:12)

The last person Auden mentions is 19th century composer Vincenzo Bellini, many of whose operas concerned characters whose love was out of bounds; the objects of their affection belonging to people of rival families (as in *I Capuleti ed i Montecchi*) or political or religious convictions (as in *I Puritani* and *Zaira*). Indeed, Bellini himself would have been a love out of bounds for Auden as a child, had he been interested in opera at the time. He wrote:

"I was brought up to believe that opera was a bastard art-form. The great Mozart operas might just do because Mozart was Mozart, but Wagner in one way and Verdi in another were considered vulgar; as for Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti, they were simply beyond the pale" (qtd in Weisstein 109). Auden's artistic saints whom he salutes upon leaving the island that showed such capacity for changing landscapes are themselves references to this very changeability.

In "Prologue at Sixty," Auden gives what is perhaps his most potent argument for exile. The poem discusses his move of his summer abode to Austria and narrates how he has, ten years after the event, by "chance and [his] own choice ... arrived / To bide here yearly from bud-haze / To leaf-blush" (21-23); from the first signs of new life on the trees until their leaves turn red in autumn. As in "Good-Bye to the Mezzogiorno," he discusses the differences between people from the north, like Auden, and the Austrian population. He writes how he is "By blood barbarian, in bias of view / A Son of the North, outside the *limes*" (24-25): not an inhabitant of the Roman Empire, but one occupying the grounds outside of the *limes*[29], the fortifications that formed the boundary of the Empire, and, to the Romans, that of civilisation. Auden seems to agree with this view:

> Rapacious pirates my people were,
> Crude and cruel, but not calculating
> Never marched in step nor made straight roads,
> Nor sank like senators to a slave's taste

[29] England, including the region of Auden's native York, had in fact been part of the Roman Empire for over three and a half centuries, and lay within the boundary that Hadrian's Wall constitutes. Auden's view of Britain as separate from the Roman Empire may have to do with the fact that the former province of Britain, after Roman rule in the land had been abolished, retained very little of Roman culture, unlike occupied regions on the continent, which saw a much less disruptive cultural transition. Michael E. Jones writes that this fact has been very important for British identity formation: "on the assumption of a fresh beginning [after Roman occupation] rest the very foundations of English national consciousness and constitutional and social identity. The liberties of Englishmen, the 'Ancient Constitution,' limited government, and the rights of property are seen as stretching back from the eighteenth century to the anchor of the free peasant *ceorl* and the new world formed by the Anglo-Saxon conquest. The coming of the Anglo-Saxons purportedly initiated a peculiar, insular historical development" (1).

For grandiose buildings and gladiators. (26-30)

Auden seems to be quite delighted with his barbaric background, and shows no little pride for the fact that his ancestors were a disorganised rabble whose societal structure had little, if anything, in common with the organised society of dictatorial Rome. However, he acknowledges that the barbaric culture of ancient times is gone: "the Gospel reached the unroman lands" (31) and, similarly, "the Greek Code got to us also" (41), teaching the Britons

To make One, there must be Two,

Love is substantial, all Luck is good,

Flesh must fall through fated time

From birth to death, both unwilled, (34-37)

The Gospel, however, does not only teach that life is a string of consequential events that follow the laws of nature: "*Spirit may climb counterwise* / *From a death, in faith freely chosen,* / *To resurrection, a re-beginning*. (38-40). Faith provides a way out of determinism: a choice consciously made by the individual in spite of all the world seems to be, it reverses death, a reversal reinforced by the word "*counterwise*" (38) which itself is an invented word, not part of the system of the English language as it is commonly used.

In spite of the differences between the Austrian and English peoples, the place has become home to Auden, who says the place can now be listed among other places that have been dear to him over his life thus far, many of which have been referred to before in this thesis. First he mentions sites close to his original home:

This unenglish tract after ten years

Into my love has looked itself,

Added its names to my numinous map

> Of the *Solihull* gas-works, gazed at in awe
> By a bronchial boy, the *Blue John Mine*,
> The *Festiniog* railway, the *Rhayader* dams,
> *Cross Fell*, *Keld* and *Cauldron Snout* (69-75)

Solihull is the place where Auden grew up after his parents left York. Carpenter writes of the place:

> Solihull was an undistinguished settlement of houses and small shops, most of them recently built. Down the road, however, was something that the small boy did find exciting: the local gasworks. ... He loved it there. 'Those at the gasworks were my favourite men,' he wrote of his early childhood, remembering the smells and pipes and huge gasometers which rose and fell. The gasworks was the first place that seemed to him (he said) 'numinous', arousing a feeling of wonder and awe. (5)

The Blue John Caves are a system of caves in Derbyshire, named after the semi-precious stone that is mined there, which Auden visited as a child, and which Carpenter links directly to Auden's imagining of an underground system of tunnels in "In Praise of Limestone" (357). The Ffestiniog Railway is situated in Wales and serves the slate mining town of Blaenau Ffestiniog. Carpenter notes that after seeing this railway, Auden the six-year-old "added narrow-gauge railways to his map of special numinous places and objects" (13). Near Rhayader, which is also in Wales, lie the Elan Valley Reservoirs, a system of dams and lakes from which Birmingham gets its drinking water. Cross Fell is the highest point in the Pennines and is close to the waterfalls of Cauldron Snout, and some 25 kilometres south of Cauldron Snout, in Swaledale, lies Keld.

Auden continues to talk "Of sites made sacred by something read there, / A lunch, a good lay, or sheer lightness of heart" (76-77), and in doing so, moves from the mysterious wonder of England to the comparative openness of continental Europe. He speaks of "The

Fürbringer and the *Friedrich Strasse,* / *Isafjördur, Epomeo,* / *Poprad, Basel, Bar-le-Duc*" (78-80). For most of his Berlin time, Auden lived at Fürbringerstraße 8; around the corner, at a distance of 73 metres, was the Cosy Corner at Zossener Straße 7, the gay brothel which he frequented. It was in this area that Auden's homosexuality came to flourish, and which caused him to write: "Berlin is the buggers daydream. There are 170 male brothels under police control. I could say a lot about my boy, a cross between a rugger hearty and Josephine Baker. We should make D.H. Lawrence look rather blue. I am a mass of bruises" (qtd in Carpenter 90). Friedrichstraße is a major shopping street that is almost a northerly continuation of Zossener Straße. From Berlin, Auden moves to Iceland, to the small northerly settlement of Ísafjörður, the not so very imaginative name of which means *ice fjord*, and from there on to Epomeo, the mountain which is described in highly motherly terms in "Ischia." Poprad was a city in Czechoslovakia, now located in Slovakia, which Auden visited during his motor trip through Europe in 1934, during which he probably also stopped in Basel and Bar-le-Duc (Jenkins "Travelling" n.pag.).

The following stanza concerns America. Here, Auden speaks "Of more modern holies, *Middagh Street*, / *Carnegie Hall* and the *Con-Ed* stacks / On *First Avenue*" (69-83). One of Auden's many New York addresses was 7 Middagh Street, a house which he shared with writer and editor George Davis, writers Carson McCullers, Golo Mann and Paul Bowles, his wife Jane, composer Benjamin Britten and his partner, the singer Peter Pears, and theatre designer Oliver Smith (Carpenter 303-304). Carnegie Hall is one of the most famous concert halls in New York, and Con Ed refers to the energy company Consolidated Edison.

It is in this setting that Auden sees himself as being most at home: "Who am I now? / An American? No, a New Yorker, / Who opens his *Times* at the obit page" (83-85). Of all the places he names, he feels he belongs to a place where he is not present, and the place he characterised as one where nobody really belongs. Aidan Wasley writes: "To be an American,

Auden argues, is to be fundamentally nationless, an unknown citizen in a land of fellow pilgrim souls" (51). In addition to a New Yorker, he describes himself as someone who, rather than stories of local or wider significance reads the lives of the dead, those who have passed on to another world altogether. Auden exists, then, indeed, "dislodged from elsewhere" (23), removed from a place that is in itself marked first and foremost by its removal from yet another place.

At the end of the poem, Auden addresses the possibility of communication between different groups. He wonders: "Can Sixty make sense to Sixteen-Plus?" (101) if he is an old man now, no longer hip, let alone a hippie, and his generation and the new one have such different interests: "What has my camp in common with theirs, / With buttons and beards and Be-Ins?" (102-103). He answers the question directly and with much conviction: "Much, I hope" (104). As evidence he refers to *Acts of the Apostles*, the fifth book of the New Testament in which the story of Pentecost is narrated, the day on which the fiery tongues appeared over the heads of the apostles and they gained the ability to speak foreign languages and could tell the Gospel to other peoples. Auden comically reduces this story of the abolition or reversal of the Tower of Babel to the simple line: "Taste was no problem at Pentecost" (105). Neither generation gaps nor worldly distances should pose a problem to communication between people: we are designed for just that: "To speak is human because human to listen" (106), and our speech goes much further than the fashion of the times, indeed, it goes "Beyond hope" (107), speculating on "an Eighth Day" (107), the day when all will be revealed, "When the creature Image shall become the Likeness" (108) or when we, flawed creatures as we are, will finally become like God. Until then, Auden calls upon God to facilitate this communication: "Giver-of-Life, translate for me / Till I accomplish my corpse at last" (109-110).

"My Cosmos Is Contracted":

Landscapes of Religion

In 1965, Auden wrote the words for "The Twelve," a piece of music by Sir William Walton; an "*Anthem for the Feast of any Apostle*" (815). In it, he describes how "Unimportant persons / From an unimportant Province" (815), upon the bidding of the Holy Ghost, "Went forth into a joyless world / Of swords and rhetoric / To bring it joy" (815). This joy of the gospel, "The glad tidings (of the kingdom of God)'" ("Gospel" n.pag.) or evangely, meaning "'good news' of redemption" ("Evangely" n.pag.)[30], is reflected in the chorus, whose words are vibrant with internal rhyme, a feature that is enhanced by repetitions in the music: "When they heard the Word, some demurred, some were shocked, some mocked. ... the sick were healed by the Truth revealed; released into peace from the gin of old sin, men forgot themselves in the glory of the story told by the Twelve" (1:30-2:49).

The "Dark Lord" (815), however, soon decides to put an end to this and "The loud crowd, the sedate engines of State, were moved by his will to kill. It was done. One by one they were caught, tortured and slain" (815). The solo voice that follows it can muster far less merriment than that of the Recitative or the first part of the Chorus could. He sings:

> O Lord, my God,
>
> Though I forsake Thee,
>
> Forsake me not,
>
> But guide me as I walk
>
> Through the Valley of Mistrust,

[30] The *Oxford English Dictionary* states that, when the Old English *gód spel* was adopted as translation for the Latin *evangelium*, it came to be understood to be derived from the words *God* and *spel*, meaning *discourse* or *story*, rather than from the word *good* and *spell*, which was actually the case: "The mistake was very natural, as the resulting sense was much more obviously appropriate than that of 'good tidings' for a word which was chiefly known as the name of a sacred book or a portion of the liturgy" ("Gospel" n.pag.). The new word was taken over by several other Germanic languages, such as Old Saxon, Old High German and Old Norse, but continental Germanic languages today typically use a derivative of the Latin *evangelium* ("Gospel" n.pag.), such as *Evangelium* in German and *evangelie* in Dutch.

And let the cry of my disbelieving absence

Come unto Thee,

Thou who declared unto Moses

I SHALL BE THERE. (816)

The chorus then answers that today, “Children play about the ancestral graves: the dead no longer walk. / Excellent still in their splendour are the antique statues: but can do neither good nor evil. / Beautiful still are the starry heavens: but our Fate is not written there” (816). Nevertheless, it tells us: “Envisaging each in an oval glory, let us praise them all with a merry noise” (816).

In other words, the days of redemption and the conquest of death are over; the Saints are cold, immovable statues that will not hear our prayers and heaven, if anything, is a remote idea. The apostles, in spite of their fiery tongues, are silent today; they cannot be heard or even seen; they can at best be “envisaged” (816) in the particular frames in which we decide to paint them – oval or otherwise. Still, Auden decides they are worth the effort of praising, if only with a not particularly elevated or beatific “merry noise” (816).

Auden’s parents were both children of Anglican vicars, but his mother was the more religious of the two and took her children to church twice every Sunday. When he was six years old, Auden served as a “boat boy” (Carpenter 6) at church, carrying incense-grains to the altar in a boat-shaped container. Carpenter writes about Auden’s early religious experience: “Looking back on this, he felt it had been a thoroughly good thing that his first encounter with religion was aesthetic rather than intellectual. ‘My first religious memories are of exciting magical rites,’ he recalled, ‘rather than of listening to sermons’” (Carpenter 6-7). Ten years later, however, Auden had started to doubt his faith. Carpenter writes: “he gradually ceased to take any active interest in Christianity or to accept its doctrines. On the other hand he did continue to go to church with some enthusiasm, thanks to the fact that he enjoyed

singing in the school choir at Gresham's both before and after his voice broke. He also retained a vague conviction that 'life is ruled by mysterious forces'" (27). Carpenter writes that after roughly ten more years, when he was a schoolmaster in Scotland, Auden showed in a conversation that "he was still very interested in the dogmas and arguments of religion, and he gave no indication ... that he himself had abandoned belief in a personal God" (133).

The first significant shift after his loss of faith in his teenage years, however, came when he was in Spain during the Civil War. He wrote of Barcelona, a convinced Republican stronghold: "I found ... as I walked through the city that all the churches were closed and there was not a priest to be seen. To my astonishment, this discovery left me profoundly shocked and disturbed" (qtd in Carpenter 209). Carpenter comments:

> Auden's sense of shock at this puzzled and worried him. "The feeling was far too intense," he said, "to be the result of a mere liberal dislike of intolerance, the notion that it is wrong to stop people from doing what they like, even if it is something silly like going to church. I could not escape acknowledging that, however, I had consciously ignored and rejected the Church for sixteen years, the existence of churches and what went on in them had all the time been very important to me. If that was the case, what then?" (210)

When Auden and Isherwood travelled to China together, Isherwood suspected that Auden was returning to his faith, and although "Auden did not in fact regard himself as anything like a Christian believer" (Carpenter 237), Isherwood joked about Auden's increasingly Christian leanings: "I have to keep a sharp eye on him – or down flop the characters on their knees; another constant danger is that of choral interruptions by angel-voices" (qtd in Carpenter 237).

In November 1939, Auden saw *Sieg im Poland* in a New York cinema. Some of the, largely German-speaking audience, shouted "Kill them!" (qtd in Carpenter 282) when Poles

appeared on the screen. It was this experience that brought him back to religion: “I wondered then, why I reacted as I did against this denial of every humanistic value. The answer brought me back to the church.” (qtd in Carpenter 282). What Auden missed, and what he hoped to find in the Christian faith was a justification for this sentiment: an objective moral ground that would validate the conviction that dawned on him that “human nature was not and never could be good” (Carpenter 283). It seems, then, that “Auden’s conversion had apparently been an exclusively intellectual process rather than a spiritual experience; and this remained characteristic of his religion in the years that followed it” (Carpenter 298). Like the chorus that is heard at the end of “The Twelve,” he is not partial to miracles and wonder, but a clear-eyed seeker for objects of praise.

“Gone the Boundary Stone”:

Auden and Co-Inherence

Like landscapes, like Freud and like Auden, Christianity is marked by borders. The episode of Auden in the cinema and its aftermath showed his attraction to one of them: the clear distinction between objective good and objective evil. C.S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*, makes a similar suggestion. He writes, in a book that commenced as a series of radio talks during the Second World War, and that was published some years after this war had ended:

> The moment you say that one set of moral ideas can be better than another, you are, in fact, comparing them both by a standard, saying that one of them conforms to that standard more nearly than the other. but the standard that measures two things is something different from either. You are, in fact, comparing them both with some Real Morality, admitting that there is such a thing as a real Right, independent of what people think, and that some people’s ideas get nearer to that real Right than others. Or

> put it this way. If your moral ideas can be truer, and those of the Nazis less true, there must be something – some Real Morality – for them to be true about. (25)

To Lewis, the existence of this Real Morality means that there must be a God. As this supposed law is of no immediate practical use to us,

> this Rule of Right and Wrong, or Law of Human Nature, or whatever you call it, must somehow or other be a real thing – a thing that is really there, not made up by ourselves. And yet it is not a fact in the ordinary sense, in the same way as our actual behaviour is a fact. It begins to look as if we shall have to admit that there is more than one kind of reality; that, in this particular case, there is something above and beyond the ordinary facts of men's behaviour, and yet quite definitely real – a real law, which none of us made, but which we find pressing on us. (30)

It is this notion of a real law that leads Lewis, who converted to Christianity some ten years before Auden did so, to accept the Christian God.

The radio talks that would eventually culminate in *Mere Christianity* commenced only three years after the incident with Auden in the New York cinema. The first theological book Auden read after he became more interested in religion, Carpenter suggests, was Charles Williams' *The Descent of the Dove: A Short History of the Holy Spirit in the Church*. Williams was a writer who, like C.S. Lewis, was a member of the Inklings, the Oxford literary circle to which J.R.R. Tolkien also belonged[31]. *The Descent of the Dove* is also very much concerned with borders but more with their dissolution than their assertion.

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[31] The Inklings were a group of Oxford literary men who met regularly to discuss their work. They shared an interest in Christianity, Old Germanic literatures and fantasy writing. Auden's tutor at Oxford, Nevill Coghill, was also a member and Auden remembered being "spellbound" (qtd in Phelpstead 434) by a recitation of *Beowulf* during a lecture by Tolkien. Auden became a staunch supporter of Tolkien, writing multiple, highly favourable reviews for his *The Lord of the Rings* series; the two also wrote poems for each other. Both Tolkien and Lewis wrote about alliterative poetry and also produced it themselves, but Auden took more liberties with its rules, as he was convinced "it is impossible to comply with them in modern English without 'an obviously artificial diction.' The alliterative verse by Lewis and Tolkien might be said to prove this point" (Phelpstead 455). Influenced by, but contrary to Tolkien and Lewis, Auden "succeeds in using alliterative meter without drawing undue attention to the act of its revival" (Phelpstead 456).

The two central statements to which Williams keeps returning throughout the book are "Another is in Me" and "My Eros is crucified." The first of these is an avowal of Felicitas, a Carthaginian woman who was slave to Perpetua, a Roman noblewoman who was martyred with her. When both women were imprisoned, Perpetua was nursing her infant child while Felicitas was pregnant. Williams writes that, when she delivered the child, "In her pain she screamed. The jailers asked her how, if she shrieked at *that*, she expected to endure death by the beasts. She said: 'Now *I* suffer what *I* suffer; then another will be in me who will suffer for me, as I shall suffer for him.' In that, Felicitas took her place for ever among the great African doctors of the Universal Church" (28). The second statement is by Ignatius of Antioch, who was martyred approximately 100 years before Felicitas and Perpetua were. Williams comments on this phrase:

> Learned men have disputed on the exact meaning of the word: can it refer, with its intensity of allusion to physical passion, to Christ? or does it rather refer to his own physical nature? We, who have too much separated our own physical nature from Christ's, cannot easily read an identity into the two meanings. But they unite, and others spring from them. "My love is crucified"; "My Love is crucified": "My love for my Love is crucified"; "My Love in my love is crucified." The physical and the spiritual are no longer divided: he who is *Theos* is *Anthropos*, and all the images of *anthropos* are in him. The Eros that is crucified lives again and the Eros lives after a new style: this was the discovery of the operation of faith. (46).

What Williams emphasises in his history of the Christian faith is the transcendence of borders between the human and the divine: the human *is* the divine and vice versa. In Jesus Christ, according to Christian theology, God and man have come together: God is man and man is God.

In *The Descent of the Dove*, Williams develops the concept of co-inherence. It becomes apparent, most emphatically, in the doctrine of the Trinity; the notion that Father, Son and Holy Ghost are separate but one; no entity can equate another, but all are God. Origen, the early Christian theologian from Alexandria who developed the notion of subordination of the Son, is crucial in Williams's notion of co-inherence. He writes of Origen:

> He strongly maintained, if he did not discover, the voluntary Subordination of the Son; he contemplated in Deity Itself the joy of obedience: obedience which is a particular means of joy and the only means of that particular joy. The Son is co-equal with the Father ..., yet the Son is obedient to the Father. A thing so sweetly known in many relations of human love is, beyond imagination, present in the midmost secrets of heaven. For the Son in his eternal Now desires subordination, and it is his. He wills to be so; he co-inheres obediently and filially in the Father, as the Father authoritatively and paternally co-inheres in him. And the whole Three Persons are co-eternal together – and co-equal. (39-40)

He argues that this co-inherence is the foundation of theology:

> Was there, in the most Secret, in the only Adored – was there that which can be described only by such infelicitous mortal words as an equal relation, an equal goodwill, an equal love? Was this in its very essence? was the Son co-eternal with the Father? if there had been no creation, would Love have practised love? And would Love have had an adequate object to love? Nicaea answered yes. It confirmed, beyond all creation, in the incomprehensible Alone, the cry of Felicitas: "Another is in Me." The Godhead itself was in Co-inherence. (52)

If objective morality is something that can be asserted through Christian law, as Auden hoped and Lewis suggests, it is also rendered profoundly ambiguous by it. Augustine writes that God's Law is impracticable: "Chaste was what the law had bidden him to be and what he

had not been able to be. The law was precisely impossible. Man precisely was not *in* a situation – not even in a difficult situation. He was, himself, the situation; he was, himself, death-in-life and life-in-death. He was incompetent" (Williams 66). The only way man can be saved was by the Grace of God and the Grace of God, again, is transcendent. In guilt, as in redemption, all humanity is brought together, because all humanity experiences the same fate and suffers and is saved by the same events:

> "*Fuimus ille unus*" he said; "we were in the one when we were the one." Whatever ages of time lay between us and Adam, yet we were in him and we were he; more, we sinned in him and his guilt is in us. And if indeed all mankind is held together by its web of existence, then ages cannot separate one from another. Exchange, substitution, co-inherence are a natural fact as well as a supernatural truth. "Another is in me," said Felicitas; "we were in another," said Augustine. (Williams 69)

If we are all born in sin because Adam sinned, however, we are in the same way collectively saved through Christ.

> The co-inherence reaches back to the beginning as it stretches on to the end, and the *anthropos* is present everywhere. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"; co-inherence did not begin with Christianity; all that happened then was that co-inherence itself was redeemed and revealed by that very redemption as a supernatural principle as well as a natural. We were made sin in Adam but Christ was made sin for us and we in him were taken out of sin. To refuse the ancient heritage of guilt is to cut ourselves off from mankind as certainly as to refuse the new principle. It is necessary to submit to the one as freely as to the other. (Williams 69-70)

In Auden's introduction to *The Descent of the Dove*, which he wrote in 1956, he comments on Williams's personality: "So many conversations, even good ones, are really several monologues which only now and then and by accident relate to each other, for the

talkers are more concerned with their own thoughts than with a living exchange of ideas, but any conversation with Charles Williams, no matter how trivial or impersonal the topic, was a genuine dialogue" (25). This attitude, he is delighted to find, is reflected in Williams's work, which he characterises as follows: "When, later, I began to read his books, I realized why this was so; the basic theme which runs through all of them is a doctrine of exchange and substitution, a way of life by which, it was clear, he himself lived" (25). One of the things he admires most in *The Descent of the Dove* is the fact that Williams is always "courteous to all alike. Whatever the issue, Faith against Works, Pelagian versus Jansenist, whoever the party leader, Calvin, St Ignatius Loyola, Montaigne, Pascal, Voltaire, Williams never fails to be just to both sides" (29). That Auden appreciated one who took such care to show both sides to each case with equal attention is not hard to understand, taking into account his own engagement with stories involving opposing sides.

Robert L. Caserio writes: "W.H. Auden underwent two conversions: one to Christianity; one to American citizenship" (90). He thus equates Auden's religious move with his spatial one. Indeed, landscape plays a significant role in Auden's religious writings that he starts to produce after his conversion. In "For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio," a long poem retelling the story of Christ's nativity in a contemporary setting, landscape plays a big role in the portrayal of the state of society, reflecting the political situation and the ways in which it changes as the events of the nativity occur. The poem is designed as a musical piece, with choruses, semi-choruses and recitatives; it was supposed to be set to music by Britten, who refused it, much to Auden's dismay, because of its impossible length[32] (Hecht 242).

[32] Auden and Britten came from similar backgrounds, and Auden was a great influence on Britten. Paul Kildea writes: "The confidence to read and understand poetry outside the pastoral constraint of his upbringing was indeed an important gift [which Auden brought Britten]" (46), arguing that Auden made "Britten's literary taste ... more sophisticated" (46). They worked together on several projects, including *Night Mail*, a GPO documentary film, the opera *Paul Bunyan* and the song cycle *Our Hunting Fathers.* Kildea writes that, in the works of many left-wing modernist artists, "inclusion, not exclusion, was sought" (48) and Britten was no exception: "In the renowned epilogue to the documentary film *Night Mail*, Auden and Britten did just this" (48). Britten also wrote many works for amateur or semi-amateur performers, so the gap between people and

Anthony Hecht describes it as “an unambiguously Christian work, ... though it is based upon the Kierkegaardian dictum that ‘the quest for faith begins in anxiety’” (242).

The first part of the poem, “Advent,” starts with the chorus uttering the line: “Darkness and snow descend” (349), followed by a semi-chorus which goes deeper into the theme of landscape, lamenting that today, even Hercules stands

> Utterly lost, he cannot
> Even locate his task but
> Stands in some decaying orchard
> Or the irregular shadow
> Of a ruined temple (349)

It gets even worse: not only is the once abundant orchard no longer bearing fruit and the temple deserted by its faithful and, presumably, with them by its godhead, Hercules is “Being watched form the horrid mountain” (349). These mountains, especially since they are populated “By fanatical eyes” (349) recall the mountains of “Bucolics” and “In Praise of Limestone,” in which they are portrayed as symbols of totalitarianism and dangerous to the individual. The chorus follows, strengthening its reference to winter. Not only do “Darkness and snow descend” (349), as it had earlier said, now “Winter completes an age” (349). The landscape, too, is presented even more bleak, and its demise now seems final: “Heaven’s tourbillions of rage / Abolish the watchman’s tower / And delete the cedar grove” (349-350).

The narrator, who in the following section describes the state of the country, alongside different everyday socio-political problems that trouble the contemporary citizen, also pays attention to the threat of “Flood, fire, / The desiccation of grasslands” (351) but all these, he

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performers was narrowed. Britten moved to the USA in the same year as Auden did, but their relation cooled when Britten did not appear very interested in setting “For the Time Being” to music, although he did arrange two parts of it and its full length was decidedly unworkable (Carpenter 323).

mentions, “are our familiar tribulations, / And we have been through them all before, many, many times” (351). The narrator continues:

> As events which belong to the natural world where
> The occupation of space is the real and final fact
> And time turns round itself in an obedient circle,
> They occur again and again but only to pass
> Again and again into their formal opposites,
> From sword to ploughshare, coffin to cradle, war to work,
> So that, taking the bad with the good, the pattern composed
> By the ten thousand odd things that can possibly happen
> Is permanent in a general average way. (351)

Life is a process of crossing borders, progressing from one opposite to another; from war to peace and from birth to death. The narrator emphasises that the only reality we have, next to the progression of history, is “The occupation of space” (351) and in the next stanza he says that we are marked by “the fern’s devotion to spatial necessity” (351), but that is not what emerges from what he, or any other voice, have said so far: all the spaces he has described are abstract spaces with no referent in the real world. Features of scenery have thus far typically occurred accompanied by a definite article: “the Empire” (349), “the horrid mountains” (349), “the watchman’s tower” (350), “the cedar grove” (350), “the boundary stone” (350), “the civil garden” (350), but spatial definition goes no further than that. The location cannot be located. What that means must be apparent to Hercules, standing in “some decaying orchard” (349), the only undetermined space, besides “grasslands” (351), that we have seen thus far: the lack of a definite location means we are lost.

> That, however, was before. Now, the situation has changed, and so has our place:
> ... It’s as if

> We had left our house for five minutes to mail a letter,
> And during that time the living room had changed places
> With the room behind the mirror over the fireplace;
> It's as if, waking up with a start, we discovered
> Ourselves stretched out flat on the floor, watching our shadow
> Sleepily stretching itself at the window. I mean
> That the world of space where events re-occur is still there,
> Only now it's no longer real; the real one is nowhere
> Where time never moves and nothing can ever happen (352)

The real space of existence of before, then, has changed places with the non-space of mirrors and shadows. Lefebvre writes:

> The mirror is a surface at once pure and impure, almost material yet virtually unreal; it presents the Ego with its own material presence, calling up its counterpart, its absence from – and at the same time its inherence in – this 'other' space. Inasmuch as its symmetry is projected therein, the Ego is liable to 'recognize' itself in the 'other', but it does not in fact coincide with it: 'other' merely *represents* 'Ego' as an inverted image in which the left appears at the right, as a reflection which yet generates an extreme difference, as a repetition which transforms the Ego's body into an obsessing will-o'-the-wisp. Here what is identical is at the same time radically other, radically different – and transparency is equivalent to opacity. (184-185)

In describing the world we inhabit as a mirror-world, Auden demotes the place that was originally described as a place that we cannot locate on a map and where we are lost, to one that is fundamentally removed from the real world, a non-place masquerading as a place. If we were lost before, the mirror-world rids us of all hope of finding the way back home, because that no longer exists.

The last part of “Advent” is again the chorus, which now overtly questions its position in the land:

O where is that immortal and nameless Centre from which our points of

Definition and death are all equi-distant? Where

The well of our wish to wander, the everlasting fountain

Of the waters of joy that our sorrow uses for tears? (354)

Again, these are symbolic landscapes that exist to say something about the state of humanity, and they have now lost all pretention of referring to the real world. The Centre, the well and the fountain are very emphatically literary constructs; their artificiality is enhanced by the persistent alliteration, reminiscent of the style he would employ not long after in *The Age of Anxiety*. As in the dream sequence of *The Age of Anxiety*, in this artificial world with no real landscapes, only made-up ones, borders do not really exist, as the wise men note when they relay their travels: they may have travelled miles, but they have hardly moved an inch:

FIRST WISE MAN

Led by the light of an unusual star,

We hunted high and low.

SECOND WISE MAN

Have travelled far,

For many days, a little group alone

With doubts, reproaches, boredom, the unknown.

THIRD WISE MAN

Through stifling gorges.

FIRST WISE MAN

Over level lakes,

SECOND WISE MAN

Tundras intense and irresponsive seas.

THIRD WISE MAN

In vacant crowds and humming silences,

FIRST WISE MAN

By ruined arches and past modern shops,

SECOND WISE MAN

Counting the miles,

THIRD WISE MAN

And the absurd mistakes.

THE THREE WISE MEN

O here and now our endless journey stops. (381)

Here, too, the alliteration emerges at times, and the surreality of the journey is reinforced by the fact that the men seem to travel through time: passing by ruined buildings as well as modern shops. As the conclusion the three men reach indicates, their journey is only over because they stop travelling, not because they have reached their destination.

Williams writes about his concept of co-inherence that it is that which connects humans through the ages; it is that which makes them one and makes them partake of each other's actions: it is co-inherence that makes us all guilty of Adam's sin, and it is co-inherence that makes that we are all redeemed in Christ's crucifixion; it is also co-inherence to which the statements of Felicitas and Ignatius of Antioch refer. Williams writes: "Whatever ages of time lay between us and Adam, yet we were in him and we were he; more, we sinned in him and his guilt is in us. And if indeed all mankind is held together by its web of existence, then ages cannot separate one from another. Exchange, substitution, co-inherence are a natural fact as well as a supernatural truth" (69).

The fact that Auden's places in this poem are almost always undefined is highly relevant in this context. Bahlke notes: "In 'For the Time Being' Auden uses colloquial diction in such a way that the reader at first realizes the relevance of the poem to the contemporary situation and recognizes only subsequently that present and past are one" (117). In the same way, by not referring to any specific location until very late, and even then only sparingly, Auden emphasises that this is not a story of people who are far away from us, but these people could be us, and in fact are. By setting the poem nowhere, it is set everywhere, and because it is set everywhere, it involves everyone, past and present; it is about *there*, certainly, but just as much about *here*.

"You Have to Leap before You Look":
Borders and the Leap of Faith

The notion of borders played a big role in the philosophy of another theologian whose writings on Christianity Auden greatly admired: Søren Kierkegaard. Auden starts his introduction to *The Living Thoughts of Kierkegaard*, which he himself edited, with the following characterisation of the Danish author: "Though his writings are often brilliantly poetic and often deeply philosophic, Kierkegaard was neither a poet nor a philosopher, but a preacher, an expounder and defender of Christian doctrine and Christian conduct" (285). Auden first encountered Kierkegaard in *The Descent of the Dove* (Sharpe 80), in which Williams writes about him: "He forbade us resignation; he denied tragedy; he was a realist and unbeliever – both in this world and in the other; and his life of scepticism was rooted in God. 'God is that which demands absolute love'" (213). Granting Him this absolute love, however, is no easy matter. It requires a step towards something that cannot be known, crossing the border from the empirical world and the world of logic into a world of a wholly

other nature. This is what came to be known as Kierkegaard's famous leap of faith. Edward F. Mooney describes the concept of this leap as follows:

> In *Postscript,* Kierkegaard quotes Lessing's 'leap over an enormous ditch.' From this we get allusions to Kierkegaard's 'leap of faith,' pictured as a hero vaulting wildly over a pit of poisonous snakes. But Kierkegaard's 'leap' is closer to the shifts from numbers to values, from the story of good Samaritans to answering a cry for help, or from evidence of atrocities to faith in (or despair of) humanity. To cross over to value or faith or faithful action of any sort, we must leap these sizeable gaps. (139)

The belief in God is a belief of a wholly different kind than that in most other truths of daily life. That is why, Kierkegaard suggests, "What defeats scepticism ... is not so much cognition as will. The greater the contingency of something we would believe in, the greater the leaps required for conviction" (Mooney 146). Seeing Jesus as the Son of God can never be the result of reason; it is a conviction that must be achieved by other means. Mooney writes:

> in coming to believe that Jesus is the Eternal in Time (for instance), I do not bring myself into a cognitive position. Something displaces my cognitive position, obstructs and dismantles it. If I come to believe that the Eternal entered Time, it is not because I have assumed a position appropriate for making good cognitive judgments. My best cognitive positions are roundly dislodged. The eternal disables my expectations and shuts down reason. If I emerge with a positive Christian conviction, it is because my receptive equipment has been refitted. Closure ... comes primarily through an unseen initiative that undoes my preferred cognitive position and simultaneously provides new angles of orientation – at first unsettling and offensive, at last, satisfying and saving. (146)

This leap of faith is in no way easy. Because it defies rationality, it upsets our way of conceiving the world, and this is in many ways a highly disturbing experience. Mooney goes

as far as likening it to a war trauma. Kierkegaard distinguishes Socratic and Christian knowledge. The former describes knowledge that is innate, that the individual may not be aware he has, but that can be unearthed by a Socratic figure who asks the right questions. The latter, however, is of a wholly different kind and does not connect to anything that we can relate to in any fundamental way. This type of knowledge is

> truth breaking through in soul-shattering conversion-trauma. Christ can make unbelievers Christians 'in the twinkling of an eye.' His Truth fits nothing we were or could know ('Love your enemies!'). Unlike Socrates, a savior provides a jolting awareness of the heterogeneous. In his technical jargon, Climacus[33] says that Socrates gives us the occasion for the arrival of innate Truth, while a savior gives us the design feature and weakness required as a condition of receiving Truth. For a Christian, receiving Truth is receiving the savior who is Truth, whose intervention hollows out a space for his own reception. The Socratic models self-realization as becoming what we already 'eternally' are. The Gospel models radical reconstruction, accepting new being with-and-for-others. But this offer will seem exorbitant and offensive in its demands. To accept appears to be participating in one's own extinction. (139-140)

[33] Many of Kierkegaard's writings were published under different pseudonyms, who comment on each other's works and whose views overlap to greater or lesser extents with Kierkegaard's own. Kierkegaard suggested they were "'poetic constructions' or distinct literary personalities, each having his own characteristic life-view which he expresses with an idea consistency. Kierkegaard insisted upon the importance of his pseudonyms, noted that there were contradictions between their views, begged that anyone quoting from their works would cite the name of the responsible pseudonym, and even suggested that a current misinterpretation of one of his categories was due to the fact that these warnings were not taken seriously" (McKinnon 116). Johannes Climacus, named after the seventh-century saint, and investigates as well as criticises Christendom; he is not a Christian himself. He is the author of *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. In his comments on *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, which was written when Kierkegaard felt he would die soon at the age of 33 (which in fact he would not for another nine years), Climacus "rehearse[s] the products of the other pseudonyms, as well as his own, [and comments] on the signed works" (Hannay ix), which causes Alastair Hannay to suggest "that Climacus occupies a position superior to that of his colleagues – at least one that affords him a certain detachment enabling him to provide a kind of itinerary into which the paths of the other pseudonyms are drawn in a single direction" (ix).

Even being as wildly upsetting as it is, Kierkegaard argues that Christianity is still to be preferred over lack of faith, a conviction which Auden shared. Kierkegaard argued that living by an ethical standard required religion, because a purely ethical state

> made no claims on any transcendent notion of eternity, and because its foundation, a belief in the individual's (or humanity's) basic righteousness would soon prove false – which was precisely what Auden [in 1940] had just realised. In consequence, Kierkegaard argued, a new decision becomes necessary. The individual must either abandon himself to despair, or must throw himself entirely on the mercy of God. (Carpenter 285)

Kierkegaard's ideas appear and reappear throughout Auden's poetry from this period. It is perhaps most obvious in the poem "Leap before You Look," with its invocation of the leap. Auden apparently wrote the poem for Kallman, in an unsuccessful attempt to have him convert to Christianity (Carpenter 300-301). The poem is honest about the difficulty this poses; it starts with the words "The sense of danger must not disappear" (1). If Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), then "The way is certainly both short and steep" (2) and even treacherous: "However gradual it looks from here" (3). Nevertheless, the leap has to be made: "Look if you like, but you will have to leap" (4). The poem ends with a measurement, but similar to the metaphorical way, the space that is measured here is not actual space. Instead, what is measured is "A solitude" (22) which is found to be "ten thousand fathoms deep" (21) and which "Sustains the bed on which we lie, my dear" (22). Not only is this unreal space, however, it is absent even in its unreality and this is why the leap is necessary: the state the addressee is in is founded on nothing: the leap may be dangerous but the only possibility of reaching stabler ground: "Although I love you, you will have to leap; / Our dream of safety has to disappear" (23-24).

In a poem written a month after "Leap before You Look," Auden again addresses a nonexistent place, but of a different sort. "Atlantis" refers to a place that is imagined in very spatial terms, but is fictional[34]. In the poem, the addressee goes in search of the opponent of the perfect state from Plato's *Timaeos* and *Critias*, which eventually fell out of the gods' favour and was submerged into the Atlantic Ocean. As in the case of the leap into religion, a safe arrival is less than sure. However, in the case of "Leap before You Look," only the landing is doubtful. The leap itself is based on rationality; there is no question about its motivation, only its success. In "Atlantis," the means of the journey itself are dubious to say the least:

> Being set on the idea
> Of getting to Atlantis,
> You have discovered of course
> Only the Ship of Fools is
> Making the voyage this year (1-5)

Auden here refers to another concept derived from Plato: the Ship of Fools, a ship with no captain sailing with no sense of direction which Plato used as analogy for democracy. The weather seems to be too unpredictable for any reasonable company to venture out. Whereas the leap of faith is to a certain extent a rational decision, here, to participate in the journey, the addressee

[34] Auden was not the first to blur the boundary between an allegorical and a real voyage to Atlantis. In 1882, Ignatius Donnelly published *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World*, in which he argues that "1. There once existed in the Atlantic Ocean, opposite the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea, a large island, which was the remnant of an Atlantic continent, and known to the ancient world as Atlantis. 2. That the description of this island given by Plato is not, as has been long suppose, fable, but veritable history" (n.pag.). He even suggests "5. That it was the true Antediluvian world; the Garden of Eden; the Gardens of the Hesperides; the Elysian Fields; the Gardens of Alcinous; the Mesomphalos; the Olympos; the Asgard of the traditions of the ancient nations; representing a universal memory of a great land, where early mankind dwelt for ages in peace and happiness. 6. That the gods and goddesses of the ancient Greeks, the Phoenicians, the Hindoos, and the Scandinavians were simply the kings, queens, and heroes of Atlantis; and the acts attributed to them in mythology are a confused recollection of real historical events" (n.pag.). If anything, however, the book shows that crossing borders is all very well, but that does not mean that confusing one thing for another, fiction for fact, necessarily makes for good scholarship.

Must therefore be ready to

Behave absurdly enough

To pass for one of The Boys,

At least appearing to love

Hard liquor, horseplay and noise. (8-12)

The journey may take the voyager many places, the speaker suggests. All of these are actual places in ancient Greece, and all provide different distractions that may be arrived at by different accidents. They may well prevent the arrival at Atlantis, but the narrator suggests the voyager must and can resist them. The first place he mentions is Ionia, a region in modern-day Turkey. Here, the addressee must resist logical arguments against Atlantis:

... speak

With her witty scholars, men

Who have proved there cannot be

Such a place as Atlantis:

Learn their logic, but notice

How their subtlety betrays

A simple enormous grief;

Thus they shall teach you the ways

To doubt that you may believe. (16-24)

As in Kierkegaard, then, doubt to the addressee must give way to faith, and is indeed a condition for it. The speaker then proceeds to describe the temptations of the frenzy of other places: “The Mediterranean metaphor is supported by describing humanistic philosophy as Ionia, religious enthusiasm as Thrace (i.e. the cult of Dionysus) and hedonism as Corinth or Carthage (cf. Augustine’s *Confessions*)” (Fuller 180). What follows is the “terrible trek

inland" (42) to the city of Atlantis "Through squalid woods and frozen / Tundras where all are soon lost" (43-44) so the voyager ends up alone in "Stone and snow, silence and air" (47).

Still, the arrival, even if it is not wholly successful, is occasion for celebration. By now alone and worn out, the speaker encourages his addressee to "Stagger onward rejoicing" (52) and suggests that he will probably not make it to Atlantis after all:

> ... perhaps
> Having actually got
> To the last col, you collapse
> With all Atlantis gleaming
> Below you yet you cannot
> Descend, you should still be proud
> Even to have been allowed
> Just to peep at Atlantis
> In a poetic vision:
> Give thanks and lie down in peace,
> Having seen your salvation. (53-63)

The journey that has been undertaken, then, was not one of personal salvation: the addressee will have gained nothing in his travels himself; he will not be received in the Kingdom of Heaven or any Just Society, but he has gained the certainty that such a place exists, and that is enough. The validation of principles of righteousness is what matters; whether or not the individual can take part in it is of secondary importance.

This unsentimental approach to salvation connects to Auden's own, very unsentimental approach to religion. Carpenter argues that religion to Auden was all but completely void of miracles and wonder; rather, it was a foundation for thought:

> All this is, of course, an attempt to accept Christianity on entirely secular, humanist, and non-supernatural terms. Indeed Auden declares that 'any religious teaching is, at bottom, prudent advice to the human race about how to be successful in the evolutionary struggle.' As to supernaturalism, he argues that Jesus' teaching was really quite devoid of it: 'Jesus took such care to avoid making any statement for or against survival after death and the existence of a supernatural world that one can only conclude that he considered this belief unimportant. (269)

He summarises Auden's reasons for his belief as follows: "Faith might itself be irrational, but it was the door to a system of thought which could explain the whole of human existence; and it was for such a system that he had been searching throughout his adult life" (298).

Spears argues that "In Sickness and in Health" may be Auden's most Kierkegaardian poem (qtd in Bahlke 28). The poem evokes the marriage vows from the *Book of Common Prayer*, which makes those who take them promise they will stand by their partners through good, but also through bad times. Auden shows himself to be very aware of the hardships of love: in the first stanza, he argues that "all benevolence of fingering lips / That does not ask forgiveness is a noise" (1-2); reaching out, and indeed humbling ourselves before the ones we love, is essential, especially because

> Now, more than ever, we distinctly hear
> The dreadful shuffle of a murderous year
> And all our senses roaring as the Black
> Dog leaps upon the individual back. (5-8)

Auden has little good to say about the individual either; he imagines him as a set of "inarticulate wastes where dwell / Our howling appetites" (11-12) and encourages his "dear heart" (12) not to

> Think lightly to contrive his overthrow;

No, promise nothing, nothing, till you know

The kingdom offered by the love-lorn eyes

A land of condors, sick cattle, and dead flies. (13-16)

The closeness which a relationship entails means that negative aspects will be magnified, aspects that will all have to be forgiven:

Let no one say I Love until aware

What huge resources it will take to nurse

One ruining speck, one tiny hair

That casts a shadow through the universe (25-28)

As man is figured as different problematic landscapes – metaphoric somewheres – a redemptive voice comes from nowhere: "tohu-bohu" (63), or "the very word used in Genesis i.2 (translated as 'without form and void') to describe the chaos out of which God created the world" (Fuller 181). His answer resonates with the fate of the traveller to Atlantis, who, even if he does not reach his destination, is still encouraged to celebrate. Here, the voice "utters an absurd command – Rejoice" (64). What is being rejoiced in, in the italicised stanza that follows, is the inventiveness of God that made chaos into recognisable objects, and objects of beauty at that, even if, as Susannah Young-ah Gottlieb argues, "Auden ... weakens the rhetoric of the sublime by binding the image of the numinous 'whirlwind' to the lowly diction of a *bricoleur*" (37):

Rejoice. What talent for the makeshift thought

A living corpus out of odds and ends?

What pedagogic patience taught

Pre-occupied and savage elements

To dance into a segregated charm?

Who showed the whirlwind how to be an arm,

And gardened from the wilderness of space

The sensual properties of one dear face? (65-72)

The fact that order can be created from madness is reason for celebration: “Rejoice, dear love, in Love’s peremptory word; / All chance, all love, all logic, you and I / Exist by grace of the absurd” (73-75). This, as Gottlieb points out, is a phrase that can be linked to Kierkegaard according to whom a satisfactory life of religion depended upon the acceptance of the absurd; the fact that we cannot prove God’s existence rationally, but cannot live a rewarding life without Him. Auden turns this into an affirmative “without conscious artifice we die” (76); “supplement[ing] the first Kierkegaardian formula and condens[ing] his paradoxical defense of marriage” (38-39). The speaker of the poem invokes the “Essence of creation” (84) to

Force our desire ...

To seek Thee always in Thy substances,

Till the performance of those offices

Our bodies, Thine opaque enigmas, do,

Configure Thy transparent justice too. (84-88)

However, he emphasises that although we may glimpse the divine through the worldly, the one should certainly not be mistaken for the other:

Lest animal bias should decline our wish

For Thy perfection to identify

Thee with Thy things, to worship fish,

Or solid apples, or the wavering sky,

Our intellectual motions with Thy light

To such intense vibration, Love, excite,

That we give forth a quiet none can tell

From that in which the lichens live so well. (89-96)

We may use fish as symbol for Jesus, apples as symbols for divine knowledge and look at the sky as the place where God resides, but we must be aware that they are little – if anything – more than metaphors, even if outwardly that changes little: in our thoughts we are silent, silent, indeed, like lichen. Unlike lichen, however, our silence can, and indeed should, mean contemplation.

Auden speaks of marriage in much the same way. It, too, is a way of recognising the divine but recognising it as separate from the subject. He writes:

So, lest we manufacture in our flesh

The lie of our divinity afresh,

Describe round our chaotic malice now,

The arbitrary circle of a vow. (77-80)

Indeed, the marriage vows and other symbols involved in the matrimonial ceremony are highly contingent, in fact, as Auden points out, the "round O of faithfulness" (97) may also be "an empty nought" (98). Marriage has nothing to do with physicality; it is pure symbolism and this reminds us of our humanity. Gottlieb writes about Auden's engagement with the concept of marriage in this poem:

> creation is a divine act, but the union of two individuals, while likewise creative, is contrariwise imperfect. It is without a secure future from the perspective of which, for example, a marriage could be seen as the rebirth of humanity. And this means that the marital vow must and should remain always precarious: 'O, lest we manufacture in our flesh / The lie of our divinity afresh.' ... Unless the 'now' of the vow is continuously created, which requires a word analogous to the one that tamed the 'tohu-bohu,' we fall prey to 'chaotic malice'; unless the precariousness of the vow is constantly recognized, we are in danger of self-divinization. And the precariousness of the vow is

> itself demonstrated in the very word that, as the title of the poem suggests, represents the *condition sine qua non* of the marital vow, namely 'and.' (38)

As I have argued throughout this chapter, the unreal landscapes that appear in Auden's poetry can give a sense of being lost and disconnection, but they also show the possibility for everyone to inscribe meaning in them, and this is also what happens in "In Sickness and in Health," which celebrates symbolism and metaphors that we use to think about our place in the real world; serving ultimately to "hold us to the ordinary way" (112).

The celebration of artificiality is something that recurs in Auden's poetry, for example in "Many Happy Returns," which was written for another celebratory occasion – one that typically occurs more often in a person's life than a wedding does: the birthday. Specifically, this poem was written on the seventh birthday of John Rettger, the son of friends of Auden's in Ann Arbor, although it was inspired by Kallman's twenty-first birthday (Carpenter 321). The poem, like many of Auden's poems, is simultaneously facetious and profound. Auden starts by pointing out some fundamental differences in personality that exist between him and Johnny, on account of their different star signs, and continues to reminisce about how

> Seven years ago you
> Warmed your mother's heart by
> Making a successful
> Début on our stage; (9-12)

The first gift that Auden offers the boy, then, is a "Sense of theatre" (18), so he will be able to discriminate between "what we say and do" (23) and "Who we really are" (24) – something, he implies, quite different from the former. He warns Johnny not to take the analogy too far: he may

> ... any day now
> Have this revelation:

"Why, we're all like people

Acting in a play." (25-28)

Even if this analogy works to some extent, it also raises "Man's unique temptation" (31); even if he recognises that life is like a play, he cannot escape the reality that the story cannot be changed. Auden writes:

Remember if you can then,

Only the All-Father

Can change the cast or give them

Easier lines to say;

Deliberate interference

With others for their own good

Is not allowed the author

Of the play within The Play. (33-40)

Birthdays, however, pose a good occasion of reminding us of our humanity by temporarily forgetting about it: by celebrating life, we forget death, but only for a moment. Auden writes:

Just because our pride's an

Evil there's no end to,

Birthdays and the arts are

Justified, for when

We consciously pretend to

Own the earth or play at

Being gods, thereby we

Own that we are men. (41-48)

Here, too, we “manufacture / ... the lie of our divinity” (Auden “In Sickness” 77-78) to remind us of our humanity. Birthdays are like the carnival as Mikhail Bakhtin described it; a temporary upsetting of life’s order:

> As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed. (10)

He mentions that the carnival, and other feasts from other cultures, like the Saturnalia that Auden also mentions (14), invokes laughter directed at those at the top of the hierarchical society, but also at the celebrating common people themselves: “the people’s festive laughter ... is also directed at those who laugh. The people do not exclude themselves from the wholeness of the world. They, too, are incomplete, they also die and are revived and renewed” (12).

The celebration, then, serves to transcend the normal situation to become conscious of it and reflect on it. Again, however, after this metaphysical reflection, Auden directs Johnny’s and our attention back to the real world: fairy godmother Auden may decide against offering Johnny “Following convention” (58) the gifts of “Beauty, / Money [or] Happiness” (59-60) but wishes instead for him to be able to

> ... combine
> Intellectual talents
> With a sensual gusto
> The Socratic Doubt with
> The Socratic Sign. (108-112)

As Jenkins point out, “The Socratic Sign refers to Socrates’ *daimonion* (‘divine sign’), an inner voice, sent to him by the gods, which, as he explains in Plato’s *Apology*, directed his life away from political involvement” (“Vocation” 27 n. 43); Johnny must learn to doubt and ask the right questions, but he must also be able to make practical decisions. Auden’s final advice is, as in “In Sickness and in Health,” one that relates very much to the physical world and urges Johnny to actively take part in it as much as possible:

> Happy Birthday, Johnny,
>
> Live beyond your income,
>
> Travel for enjoyment,
>
> Follow your own nose. (117-120)

“A Place I May Go Both in And out of”: Coming Home

If Auden’s landscapes became increasingly universal, all-encompassing and as a result, less specific and harder, if not impossible to place in the real world, at the same time, they very emphatically make a point to call attention to, and indeed celebrate daily life. Indeed, home as a specific place is an important theme for celebration in Auden’s later poetry. If before, Auden had been an almost incorrigible escapist, travelling from England to Germany, then to America, Italy and Austria, and even if his travels continued throughout his life, he began to celebrate the home, the most local of places, with a vigour not found before in his work.

Faith and home come together in “Horae Canonicae,” which was written between 1949 and 1954, and first published in full in 1955. Like *For the Time Being*, it relates a New Testament story in a contemporary setting, but this time the story is that of Good Friday and the form that of poem sequence like “Thanksgiving for a Habitat” rather than an extended oratorio. The poems are named after the canonical hours into which the day is divided. The

first, “Prime,” is named after the prayer that is said at dawn, the first of the day. As the speaker, “Simultaneously, as soundlessly, / Spontaneously, suddenly” (1-2) shifts his attention from the realm of dreams to the sensuous world awaking with him, the sibilants of the first two lines hush the tone of the poem, indicating that the speaker is in no rush and has no need to be: “Without a name or history I wake / Between my body and the day” (15-16). He has neither become fully aware of himself, nor of the world that is waking up outside. This situation is one that can only exist by grace of the boundary of the home that keeps danger at bay. In the next stanza, the speaker draws attention to his physical surroundings; as he becomes increasingly awake, he becomes aware of the distinction between inside and outside:

> ... next
> As a sheet, near as a wall,
> Out there as a mountain’s poise of stone,
> The world is present, about,
> And I know that I am, here, not alone
> But with a world (19-24)

It is this dawning realisation that effectuates some sort of small-scale re-enactment of the Fall; as, following Williams, with his consciousness comes the freedom to do wrong and therewith inevitably the doing wrong itself. If he is, as of yet, “Unvexed” (25), this state, as the unfamiliar negative of the verb *to vex* indicates, cannot last. Soon enough, he will be very much vexed; indeed, *vexed* is an understatement for the state he will be in by noon, when he will not only have witnessed a second Fall, but have been complicit in the murder of his saviour. He may now be “The Adam sinless in our beginning, / Adam still previous to any act” (31-32), but soon enough he will

> ... draw breath; that is of course to wish
> No matter what, to be wise,

To be different, to die and the cost,

No matter how, is Paradise

Lost (33-37)

With the realisation of the Fall emerges a distance from the speaker and the objects that were so near to him before:

The eager ridge, the steady sea,

The flat roofs of the fishing village

Still asleep in its bunny,

Though as fresh and sunny still, are not friends

But things to hand (38-42)

His surroundings, from now on, are only defined in terms of usefulness to the speaker, and even his body is distanced from his person: now it is the vessel he inhabits and controls, but one day it will, by dying, take him too into the grave: “this ready flesh / Most honest equal, but my accomplice now, / My assassin to be” (42-44).

Throughout “Horae Canonicae,” Auden will come back to the home on several occasions, but no longer is it the safe haven of the beginning of “Prime.” The hangman who is the protagonist of “Terce” is a good man, as testified by his dog (2), and takes care to “Gently clos[e] the door of his wife’s bedroom / (Today she has one of her headaches)” (6-7) but his innocence, if not feigned is at least compromised by the fact that, even if he is only doing the bidding of others, will kill the Messiah that day, casting a shadow over his homely happiness. When he has performed his duty, the order of the world seems the same, but is still upset. Feebly, the speaker muses: “It would be best to go home, if we have a home” (79). Home is a place of safety and security, a refuge from the outside world, but it is lost with the death of Jesus, who remains unnamed. For Auden to unequivocally celebrate these values, he had to wait for almost ten more years.

This Auden does when he writes about his home in Kirchstetten in “Thanksgiving for a Habitat,” written between 1958 and 1964 and published in 1965. Here, he describes a locale that is very specific; it is one particular house in Austria, but it can also be regarded in a wider sense as the concept of home in general. It is a place that the critic can place in a particular area of Austria, but also one that the reader knows very well from his own experience: it is not, as many places described earlier, somewhere, elsewhere or nowhere. It is here and it is now. Still, it is a place that, like and perhaps even more so than any other described before, exists by grace of boundaries, inclusions and exclusions. Auden is at this time growing older; not many years after would he come to explicitly “classif[y] himself with the Horatian tradition” (Hopper 138) in the poem “The Horatians,” as one who

> ... can only
> do what it seems to us we were made for, look at
> this world with a happy eye
> but from a sober perspective. (qtd in Hopper 138)

In “Thanksgiving to a Habitat,” Auden praises his home in Kirchstetten. Kirchstetten was a great source of inspiration; Auden also wrote about the experience of celebrating Whitsunday there in a Catholic church, as well as about the death of his housekeeper Emma Eiermann. The sequence consists of twelve poems, all dedicated to different people and apart from the first, “Prologue: The Birth of Architecture,” to a different room in the house. Heidi Hartwig writes of Auden’s poetry:

> Auden had sought a version of the ‘great good place’ since his earliest poems, primarily in landscapes; it is a significant departure from these outward locations that he discovers it in the domestic space. From the telegraphic landscape poems of the twenties and thirties up to ‘Good-Bye to the Mezzogiorno’, his valedictory to Italy upon relocating to Austria, much of Auden’s work is vaguely about place. (10)

She identifies a similar pattern of inscribing meaning in space in "Thanksgiving for a Habitat": "We see in [this work] a shift from the various forms of *paysage moralisé* Auden had been writing since the twenties – psychological, symbolic, or allegorical landscapes – to an interiorized domestic space imbued no less with moral values. What Auden informally called his *Hausgedichte* is a *maison moralisée* (10).

Nevertheless, she finds one important difference. Although Auden's poetry had been concerned with borders and exiles from its earliest beginnings, and it still was, its tone had changed dramatically. "Thanksgiving for a Habitat" is a poem of exile in the sense that he is himself in exile in Austria, and the place where he has arrived has historically been a borderland: "Lower Austria being historically Carolingian marchland and in the 1960s on the border of the Iron Curtain" (13). She writes: "Befitting the doubled nature of the Roman god Jupiter Terminus's purview, as that of boundary markers, '[o]f walls, doors, and reticence' ..., but also of destinations, Auden's domestic 'terminus' is a boundary zone. As such, Auden's *Hausgedichte* celebrates and registers the anxieties of being 'at home' in a transnational sense, as a situation that is precarious" (13). However, the associations with notions of borders and exile have changed since the early poems.

> Strikingly different from Auden's poems of the thirties and the forties which feature a distant and detached stance associated with exile, these thanksgiving poems practise a form of literary intimacy, of housed affection among a small coterie in a common world that stands over and against the fundamental condition of exile so pervasive in the landscape of twentieth-century Europe and of the universal condition of threatened extinction, whether by natural causes, 'conventional blunderbuss war' ..., or by the possibility – and Auden notes this parenthetically as if to keep it at bay – that 'at the nod / of some jittery commander / I be translated in a nano-second / to a c.c. of poisonous nothing / in a giga-death.' (14)

Auden starts the sequence by distancing himself from people from bygone eras. Most of history, to him, is "just a still prehistoric *Once* / where anything could happen" (8-9). Ancient structures from earlier days,

Stonehenge and Chartres Cathedral,
the Acropolis, Blenheim, the Albert Memorial
are works by the same Old Man
under different names (10-13)

We can study him and write academic works on him, but will never understand his reasons because we do not live his life: "(To get that, one would have / to be selfish in His way, / without concrete or grapefruit)" (15-17). Auden argues that there is a reason for this distance: architecture, no matter of what type or style, serves to create a boundary between inside and outside, the self and others, those who have obtained special permission to enter and those who have not, as the postscript to this poem makes quite clear:

Some thirty inches from my nose
The frontier of my Person goes,
And all the untilled air between
Is private *pagus* or demesne.
Stranger, unless with bedroom eyes
I beckon you to fraternise,
Beware of rudely crossing it:
I have no gun, but I can spit. (1-8)

In the next poem, also entitled "Thanksgiving for a Habitat," he elaborates on this point. Again, Auden writes that he is different from people from earlier days; this time he describes ancient rituals that would seem ludicrous if performed today:

Nobody I know would like to be buried

> with a silver cocktail-shaker,
> a transistor radio and a strangled
> daily help (1-4)

What unites those who did with us, however, is our fondness of our physical integrity, our personal space: "which of us wants / to be touched inadvertently, even / by his beloved?" (28-30) and the home is a place where he is guarded from this happening: it is "a toft-and-croft / where I needn't, ever, be at home *to* / those I am not at home *with*" (75-77). Still, it is not only a place meant to shut himself in and other people out: it is "a place / I may go both in and out of" (79-80).

The notion of borders continues in the next poem: "The Cave of Making" which is addressed to MacNeice, who had died the year before the poem was written, and is about Auden's study. Auden describes his "antre" (2) as "more private than a bedroom even, for neither lovers nor / maids are welcome" (3-4) and the sense of privacy and exclusion is heightened when Auden addresses MacNeice directly and "The reader feels suddenly marginalized as she realizes she has been overhearing" (Hartwig 16). As the first actual room that is described,

> Structurally, it sits at and as the threshold of the rest of the house, in terms of the order of precedence in which the rooms of the house are 'given' or described in the sequence. ... As a space of poetry-making, where 'silence is turned into objects', Auden acknowledges the frontiers or border zones represented by language itself, especially the frontier of silence that death represents: 'at *that* frontier I wouldn't dare speak to anyone / in either a prophet's bellow / or a diplomat's whisper.'" (Hartwig 15-16)

The house, however, is not only a place from which others can be excluded. It is also a refuge and a place that provides a sense of community, however small. The cellar that is

described in the fourth poem, “Down There,” may be perceived as dangerous, it is not really: there may be “creepy-crawlies or a ghost” (14) but it is safe enough for “A father [to send] the younger boys to fetch something / For mother from down there” (16-17), not for a moment doubting that they will “re-emerge with proud faces” (18). Indeed, even if the cellar is the most disregarded of all rooms, only used for storage and never inhabited, “It takes us as we are” (23), accepting its owners even if they pay it no heed in return. The attic in “Up There,” is a place that stores the family history and where children can find a sanctuary to escape “when Mother is bad” (16) – Auden’s taking the side of the children here emphasising this – and to play games of make-believe; transforming at will into “a schooner on which a lonely only / Boy sails North or approaches coral islands” (17-18).

The last poem in the sequence, “The Common Life,” about the living room, is dedicated to Kallman and it, too, describes a safe place for human relations to flourish: it may shut outsiders very emphatically out, but once inside and welcomed, it is a place of love; this is the room that gives expression to Auden’s conviction that “though truth and love / can never really differ, when they seem to, / the subaltern should be truth” (74-76).

If Auden started to believe in God because he lost his faith in humanity, the home is a place where he is able to find it back. Alan Jacobs notes:

> A consistent theme in Auden’s work of this period is that we lack the power to *undo* the evil that we have the power to *do*. It is this belief that leads Auden to what would become one of the most persistent features of his poetry until his death: his praise of humility. *This* is the point at which his conversion to Christianity and his acceptance of the validity of local culture converge. (552)

In this convergence a Kierkegaardian influence can again be traced, as Kierkegaard too, felt a particular "appreciation of domesticity" (Mooney 119). One of his pseudonyms, Johannes de Silentio[35], writes that the most faithful are often the most insignificant:

> Faith can be embodied by a weaning mother or a jaunty tax-collector – ordinary and unspectacular humans, far from Abraham's monstrosity. De Silentio becomes unsilent as he tells of these 'ordinary' knights of faith, and lets the diction of faith move away from the spectacular to dance steps or leaps, to giving up and getting back an object of love, to walking jauntily home. His ordinary knights give us simple actions and sufferings that speak of grace, courage, trust, and delight in the simple shimmers of a life. They are what they are, not what they represent or try to dramatize on the stage of the Terrible and Holy. (Mooney 118)

This seems a far cry from the literal escapism that marked most of Auden's highly peripatetic life, but although he still existed on a perpetual border, always an exile in more ways than one, perhaps he was, at the end of his life, able to find a place that provided him with a sense of belonging and even contentment. In "Thank You, Fog," Auden writes about a visit to his other home, which he had left behind long ago, but returned to often: Britain. Auden welcomes the disliked weather condition because it prevents his company from leaving the "ancient manor-house" (16) to which "my cosmos is contracted" (15). Thus, a community is established: "four Selves, joined in friendship" (17). Auden proceeds to contrast the indoors with the outdoors. Whereas inside, there are people, distinct from each other as "four Selves" (17), "Outdoors [is] a shapeless silence" (19). No birds can be heard, the trees are but "vaguely visible" (27), and only a small part of the fog condenses into "definite drops" (30).

[35] Johannes de Silentio is the author of *Fear and Trembling.* Like Johannes Climacus, although he studies religion, he is not religious himself.

The situation inside the house is markedly different: “Indoors specific spaces” (31), Auden begins. The house is a clearly defined space, removed from the normal world, although that cannot be kept at bay for very long:

how soon must we re-enter,

when lenient days are done,

the world of work and money

and minding our p’s and q’s. (41-44)

That world outside may be a miserable place, but the house is a welcome refuge that can provide real happiness, and the veil of vagueness that the fog casts over the earth, obscuring boundaries while keeping the house distinct can keep away the tedious forces that make life dreary. They have to be reckoned with, and will in due course, but not yet.

our earth’s a sorry spot, but

for this special interim,

so restful yet so festive,

Thank You, Thank You, Thank You, Fog. (51-54)

Conclusion

When Auden returned to Austria for the summer in 1973, he found himself living no longer on Hinterholz, as he used to, but on Audenstraße (Carpenter 448). Carpenter writes that he had opposed the name change, and still used his old address, but also that he "Privately ... sometimes admitted that he was pleased" (448). It seems fitting that the author who paid so much attention to landscape and the inclusions and exclusions that come with it, should have his own street named after him; if he was ever on the move, escaping homes and finding them in other places, the place he eventually honoured with a poem sequence celebrating the home decided to include him with perhaps the most welcoming of gestures. The Kirchstetten community had decided that Auden was home.

This thesis began its journey at the place that has, in the 20th century, become the staple point of departure for journeys of all kinds, namely at the airport, the opposite, perhaps, of home. As a non-place with no historical background to make it culturally specific and meaningful to the people who pass through it, but do not influence it, to Auden, it gave rise to thoughts of other places: *here* is nowhere, *there* is somewhere, elsewhere. From the airport, I have moved to some of the real places that had a particular significance for Auden. In his writings about the Pennines, he shows great affection for, and knowledge of this landscape. Still, his poems are more about human relationships than the landscapes that are featured so heavily. Auden connects to the voices of Eliot and Hardy in his attempts at engaging with the landscape in this symbolic way, but what emerges most clearly here is a disconnection with the landscape that shuts its visitors out, establishing a divide that is impossible ever to be crossed. Such a divide also emerges in Auden's writings of Germany, but here, it becomes apparent that, even if there are borders and they are dangerous, they have to be crossed to make human interaction possible. However, Auden also shows that this cannot always be done, and that sometimes, to cross a border, one must resort to the land of the imagination.

Even real places, then, can preclude personal interaction with the landscape by setting up boundaries, natural, cultural or otherwise; even *here* can be *elsewhere*, a notion that also becomes apparent in Auden's writings on Iceland, which show that he, as a foreigner, cannot take part in the Icelandic culture and mindset as he perceives it.

That crossing borders is nevertheless essential becomes all the more clear when taking into account Freudian psychology and Auden's engagement with this theme. Freud argues that borders are the foundation of our constitution, and that the contestation and renegotiation of these borders are what makes us human beings rather than machines or, perhaps even worse, dictators. This conviction also emerges from Auden's engagement with landscape: the landscape he likes best is that which has the capacity to change: the limestone landscape. In contrast, he sees the eternity of fixity that other landscapes, such as mountains and plains suggest, as dictatorial and nightmarish. If change and crossing borders is so vital, the step into exile can hardly be a big one, and indeed, Auden continuously moves away from home. He goes from the UK to the US to find a place with no roots, and when he comes to feel at home there, he starts spending his summers in Italy. The Italian landscape he describes in motherly terms on several occasions, and unsurprisingly to us by now, he leaves this place as well, recalling fondly the Italian border-crossers who preceded him intellectually.

Not long after his move to the US, Auden became a Christian again, after having lost his faith as a teenager. What he sought in religion was a clear border between the objective moral good and the objective moral evil, but what he found was yet another myriad of borders, that were not so much contested as dissolved. Williams' notion of co-inherence influenced his writing, for example in the dissolution of temporal and spatial borders in "For the Time Being," which shows the relevance of the Nativity to all, because we are all connected and part of the same story. The step towards belief, however, is a difficult one because it cannot be founded on empirical findings or rational thought. This makes for a very

tentative celebration of life, and in Auden's hands, it turns into a celebration of artificiality, which is set in artificial landscapes with no referent in the real world, but ultimately do come back to that real world. Indeed, they enable a celebration of the physical world, and that is what Auden performs towards the end of his life. After having escaped it time and again, he comes to rejoice in the notion of home and celebrates both it and the borders that define it.

Borders, as we have seen, are hard to theorise. By definition, they exclude people, usually minorities, and to say this is painful would be a painful understatement. When taken too seriously, they can lead to war, as Auden was well aware. He was an outsider himself for most of his life, although, as a white, male westerner, to whom even his queer sexuality was not much of a problem, he did not experience the exclusion or even persecution that many others have faced in the past, and still face today. In this sense, he sought exclusion from a very much privileged perspective. Borders, however, are necessary to make us feel at home; we have to be able to shut others out, if only at times, to feel at ease. Then again, if home is that which is set apart from the outside world, we need the outside world to define home. To shut ourselves in, to have a place to come home *to*, we need a place to come home *from*.

That his place is perhaps equally hard to define becomes apparent in Auden's work as well. If anything, his writing of landscape shows that landscape, to us as human beings, is not just landscape. In our hands, or at least in Auden's, it becomes much more than that. Mountains are no longer just mountains, or even granite or basalt, and woods are no longer woods, or even coniferous or deciduous, fir, cedar, maple, or chestnut. Rather, landscapes of all kinds become settings inscribed with meanings as diverse as the human mind. Richard Peet writes:

> Because landscapes are partly natural, their signs are frequently long lasting, and because landscapes are the homes of women and men, they are particularly suited to the ideological task of framing the social imagery. By recreating landscapes, filling

> them with signs carrying ideological messages, images are formed of past and future 'realities,' patterns of meaning created and changed, and, thereby, control exerted over the everyday behaviour of the people who call these manufactured places their natural, historic homes; this applies to people of all classes. (qtd in Mitchell 120)

Auden's work shows that this practice takes place not only in the real world, but also in the world of literature, and perhaps does so even more strongly there, as the writer, different from the landscape architect, is not bound to the real world. This is only normal: to think of the world and conceptualise it, and to bring across our ideas about it to others, we need language, and by introducing language into the matter of landscape, we introduce our entire system of cultural thought, be it Freudian, Christian or anything else, along with it. A rose is certainly a rose, but in our perception and in our writing it can become much more than that:

> Stones, old shoes, come alive, born sacramental signs,
> Nod to us in the First Person of mysteries
> They know nothing about, bearing a message from
> The invisible sole Source of specific things. ("In Due Season" 21-24)

Appendix:

Landscape Photographs

Shannon Airport in the 1940s.

One Way Bridge. Trafalgar. Photograph by Fay Godwin.

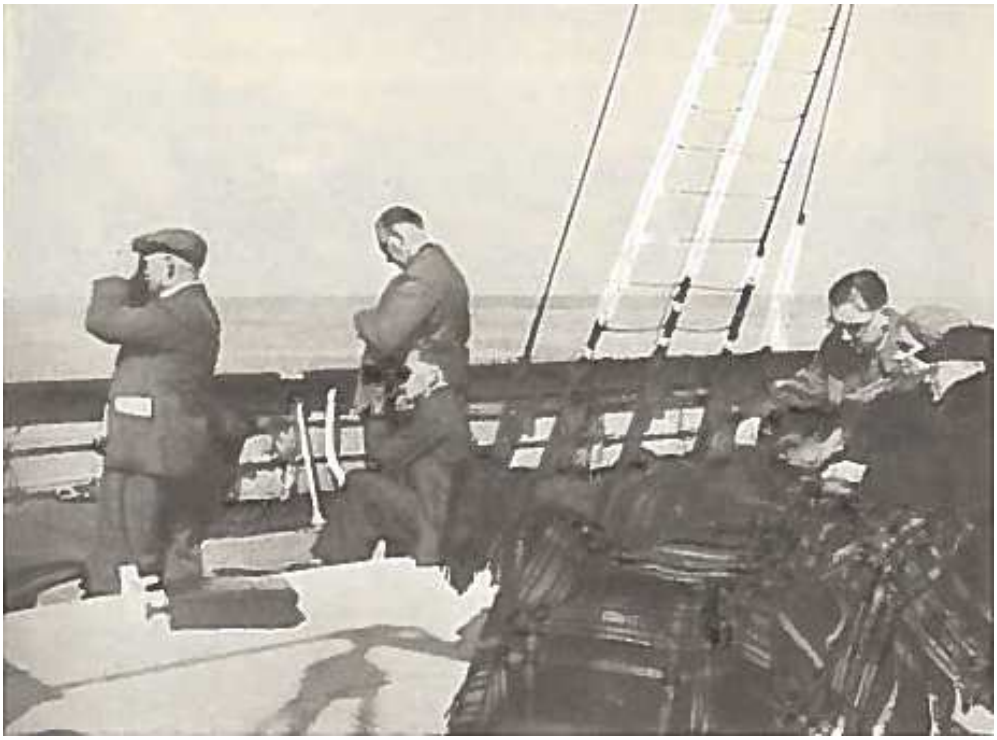
Reedy Lock. Sunderland. Photograph by Fay Godwin.

Choinnich. Cuillin Hills, Skye. Photograph by Fay Godwin.

Friedrichstrasse in Berlin around 1930.

Deutsche Bank Headquarter in Berlin, Mauerstraße, 1929.

View from Alexanderplatz onto Königstraße, 1929.



The Lover of Islands. Iceland. Photograph by W.H. Auden.

Grylla. Iceland. Photograph by W.H. Auden

Mount Hekla from Odde. Iceland. Photograph by W.H. Auden.

The South Side of 52nd Street, between 5th & 6th Avenues – Looking East from 6th Avenue (c. 1948). New York. Photograph by William P. Gottlieb.

52nd Street, New York, N.Y., ca. July 1948. Photograph by William P. Gottlieb.

Changing New York. Photograph by Berenice Abbott.

Portrait of writer and poet W.H. Auden in his garden in Ischia, Italy, 1954.

Photograph by John Deakin.

Kirchstetten, Auden-Haus, Austria. Photograph by Christian Wachter.

Kirchstetten, Auden-Haus, Austria. Photograph by Christian Wachter.

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