The poetry of the 'Auden Group' of the nineteen thirties, though already studied by many critics and literary historians, yet seems to be a subject of unabated interest as evident from the number of critical works which continue to be published on it year after year. Some of the recent studies like Stephen Spender's *The Thirties and After* (1978), Ronald Carter's *Thirties Poets* (1984), and Valentine Cunningham's *British Writers of the Thirties* (1988), have brought into focus a wealth of hitherto unknown details regarding the socio-cultural situation of the period and the nature of involvement in it of some of the eminent men of letters of the time. The present-day emphasis in certain quarters on 'commitment' of poets and other writers also explains in some measure, the continued interest in this poetry. Besides, the autobiographies of some of the important poets of the period like Cecil Day Lewis, Stephen Spender, and Louis MacNeice, critical essays on poetry and dramatic writings by several of them, and works of fiction of some other writers published long after what is often referred to as the disorderly decade, died down, have thrown new light on the thirties as a whole and on the role of the poets in the exigencies of this difficult period. It has been seen that critics have so far viewed this poetry as 'proletariat' or 'propagandist', giving, what now appears to be, undue importance to the Marxist political ideology of these poets, and often overlooking, as is now clear, their religious and cultural background. Moreover, to the best
of our knowledge, no unified study of the phenomenon of the thirties with exclusive emphasis on the social perspective of the three main poets, is so far available. Thus it emerges that there is still scope for a more balanced and comprehensive survey of the literary situation of the thirties in its wider socio-political context, and in relation to the attitude of the chief poets of the day to their times. That, precisely, is the aim of the present work, the main point of emphasis adopted being the social perspective of the poets and other men of letters in general, and of Auden, Spender, and Day Lewis in particular. The purpose is to take into account the various aspects of the situation - social, political, and intellectual - in their totality, to analyse precisely the spirit of the decade that shaped the poets' perspective, and to examine if there was, notwithstanding the experience they shared, any perceptive individual variation of tone in the social outlook of the chief poets of the thirties - Auden, Spender, and Day Lewis. It is also intended to examine the avowed aims of these poets in those days, and make a fresh appraisal of their achievements. For this purpose, the socio-political and literary backgrounds have been closely and elaborately surveyed. The work as a whole is based on a close and critical study of the relevant body of material, literary and social, pertaining to the period, and the method adopted for the purpose is that of analytical exposition. The work is confined to a study of the poetry of the thirties, with special reference to the three main poets already named, and of a few others, i.e., the fringe-dwellers. Although almost all of them continued to write poetry, albeit of a different vein, in their later years, the
The same has not been brought, for the obvious reason, under the purview of this work, and has not been included in the Bibliography. It is necessary to make it explicit here that it is not the purpose of this work to present a total achievement of any of the poets of the 'Auden Group'.

For the convenience of treatment, the work has been divided into nine chapters. Chapter I is a rapid survey of the social background of the thirties; Chapter II is devoted to an analysis of the poets' purpose in a time of flux; Chapters III-V are devoted to a study, respectively, of Auden, Day Lewis, and Spender; Chapter VI examines the social content of the poetry of a number of minor poets who, though not intensely involved in the turmoils of the time, yet showed remarkable social susceptibilities. Special emphasis has been given to Louis MacNeice's contribution to the field of the social poetry of the thirties; Chapter VII takes into consideration the quality of diction of the poetry of the decade; Chapter VIII is a study of the poets' disillusionment with their initial following of the Marxian concept of social change, and Chapter IX, the Conclusion, drawn, obviously on the preceding chapters, tries to present a neat evaluation of the achievements of the poets under study, in so far as it relates to their poetry of the thirties.

The poets under study have their works published in several editions. Due note has been taken of them, but, for the convenience of reference in the present study, the following editions have been cited:

for Auden, The English Auden (1977) for most of the poems;
reference to the other poems quoted has been provided;
for Day Lewis, *Collected Poems* (1954);
for Spender, *Collected Poems 1928-1953* (1955) for most of the poems; reference to the other poems quoted has been provided;

For the purpose of the other poets mentioned in Chapter VI, reference has been given and the works cited have also been noted in the Bibliography.

The Bibliography includes not only the works cited in the study, but also those that were found relevant, in the course of this work, for a better understanding of the subject.

The critical works on the individual poets of the 'Auden Group', being often overlapping, have not been shown under separate headings. The corpus of critical literature on the writers of the thirties is fairly extensive. In the Bibliography, the names of those works alone which have a direct bearing on the limited scope of this study, have been cited.

For the format of the work, the MLA style sheet has been followed.

Tondra Barbora