CHAPTER IV

'THE AUDEN-GROUP' PHENOMENON, VARIOUS INFLUENCES AND THE FORMATION OF A POETIC MIND

The decade which saw "a boom in sorrow", and whose chaos and disorder are summed up in the preceding Chapter, was the one, on whose threshold we see, Auden together with Stephen Spender, Louis MacNeice, Cecil Day Lewis, Rex Warner and Isherwood, making their entry on the literary scene. It is to them that the literary history of the 'Thirties belongs:

"A doomed generation
Seized between wars,
Whose boyhood language
Was hunger and loss."\(^1\)

Often, they are lumped together under the heading of 'The Auden Group' which has always been a controversial issue. Certain vital factors contributed in encouraging the concept of an 'Auden Group'. All the poets associated with it had a refined cultural background, brought up in the British pre-war upper middle-class world. Auden was the son of doctor, Day Lewis's father was an Anglican clergyman, and Spender's a high Govt. official. They received fine education from respectable public-schools and renowned colleges. They all inherited, in one way or
another, the British Liberal- democratic tradition. To a considerable degree, they shared in the political and social beliefs and responded to the pressures of the time in, more or less, a similar way. Their growing fascination for Communism further strengthened the idea of their forming a Group. They were all furious at the Old Gang— the mad politicians, who to satisfy their passion for violence, had brought unimaginable terror and ruin upon mankind. Though, they were born just too late to participate in the catastrophe of World War I, they surely experienced some of its traumas. Their one favourite poet unanimously was Wilfred Owen— the handsome soldier-poet who had bravely fought in the War only to die in its last week. References to War and its drudgery are frequent in the writings of these poets. Besides, numerous anti-war and anti-violence movements (The League of Nations Union, the Peace Pledge Union, the anti-war Council, the Scientists' Anti-War Group, the New Peace Movement to name but a few!) had been organized in the 'Thirties and gained active revolutionary support from many a writer of the Age. 'New Writing' exhibited clearly how they thought on similar lines.

If under such circumstances a few prominent writers were thought as writers of a Group, named after one in whom many witnessed a fulfilment of their own aspirations, it was no wonder. But to favour this idea and to agree with it, would be, in the final analysis, an injustice to all linked with it. It blurs their individual identity to a
great extent and distorts, in the mess of a group-formation, their personal merits of style and thought. Hence, the concept of the "Auden Group" should not be over-stressed.

In fact writers, specially poets, should be considered as individuals and not merely as parts of groups or movements. They can be, at the most, regarded as mere contemporaries. The connotations of the word 'Group' are wide and harmful. It underlines that secret sense of being professionals too. It also indicates the ability to write, keeping certain fixed purposes before oneself, for this or that 'ism' or movement, which is very much against the delicate norms of poetry. Many of the poets associated with the so-called "Auden-Group" left active politics after a few years, and many, (including the leader himself), after the giant disillusionment with politics and political actions, omitted some of their writings having loud political assertions from their later Collections. Many of the 'isms' for which they enthusiastically fought, themselves failed and ended.

Yet, despite the forceful pronouncements against the notion of an Auden-Group by M.K. Spears (who declares that all these writers "were not really a group at all") Julian Symons (who held that an 'Auden-Group' "had never really existed" and only Auden's fascinating poetry and tremendous personality had shaped a certain "climate of feeling") and Day Lewis (whose assertion in his autobiography "The Buried Day" is to the effect that 'The Auden-Group' phenomenon was wrong since he, Auden and
Spender had met together in one room for the first time in 1947, the impression that there had once been a real Auden-Group, survives. Even Julian Symons observes, after stubbornly denying its existence, that:

"The primary function of 'New Writing' was to provide a bigger audience for the writers of the Auden-Group." 4

The 'Thirties have become identified with the work of the writers of this Group and it has acquired, more or less, the same reputation as held by the Georgians, the Absurdists and such other literary groups in the twentieth century.

To some extent, Auden himself was responsible for giving the impression that he and his Chums formed "a poetical clique". He had a habit of dedicating his poems and poetic collections to his friends and often produced literary works in collaboration with them. Interestingly, his friends too had the same habit. There were so many references to Auden, Spender, Upward and others in Isherwood's autobiography "Lions and Shadows" (1938) that Grigson was compelled to regard it as "the key book of the Auden-Age and the Auden-circle." 5

Auden's vital influence on his contemporaries and their deep homages to Auden too worked for the creation of the Auden-Group concept. In his autobiography, "World Within World", Spender asks himself why were he, Auden and Day Lewis so often linked together? "Partly, I think".
he concluded, "on account of the influence of Auden, which was responsible for much of the subject matter of the early poems of Day Lewis."  

In fact, the idea about the existence of an 'Auden-Group' had journalistic origin. What an important role literary magazines and journals played in the formation of this concept is evident from an interesting statement made by Day Lewis in his autobiography:

"We did not know we were a movement until the critics told us we were."

Glancing at the 'Thirties, in the later years, Auden could see the adverse effects of the concept of 'Auden-Group'. In a tribute to Louis MacNeice he wrote:

"From a literary point of view, the contemporary journalistic linkage of the names of Auden, Day Lewis, MacNeice, Spender, is, and always was, absurd."

And, again, in a late interview, Auden cleared the controversy by speaking openly against the common practice of bringing the writers of similar interests down under one banner in the way it is done in the field of politics. He vehemently declared:

"I don't like this business of lumping people together. People of the same age, living at the
same place, are exposed to similar
influences. But to me that would
be the least interesting thing
about them. Differences are more
important."

The last sentence constitutes one of his highly
accurate literary statements, and should be a guide-line
and a warning for those who are too eager to label writers
or form their communities on a first detection of similar
ideas in their writings. As Auden puts it, writers' real
worth should be judged from those areas of thought where
they differ from each other, for it is the difference, in the
treatment of poetic subjects and the ways of their
expression, which would ultimately display their
originality, versatility and individuality, and, in this
way, confirm their supremacy in the proper way.

FORMATIVE INFLUENCES :-

Really speaking, the word 'influence' seems rather
inadequate to use in Auden's case whose mental equipment
never allowed him to adhere to any impact for long. Either
it should be replaced, as Isherwood suggests, with 'crazes',
or the term 'influence' must be taken in the narrow sense
of a short-lived infatuation, and Auden's list of such
influences is too vast to sum it up completely. With
this formal acceptance of essential limitations, only a
few prominent ones are going to be studied in this Chapter.
The first few influences are of a personal nature, i.e. that of his parents, of the congenial environment at home, the literate and intellectual atmosphere in which the poet was brought up and the Scandinavian sagas related to him in his childhood.

From his father, Auden inherited a rational and scientific line of thinking. Though the literary sources of much of the early 'symptomatic' poetry are Freud and Homer Lane, yet, Auden surely owes something to his doctor-father for his famous dispassionate and clinical attitude towards things. To his devout Anglican mother, he is indebted for that religiosity he long suppressed and ultimately, to which, he gave expression in the later writings of 'Christian' phase. A highly-educated atmosphere at home, the affection of elder brothers always encouraging him in the direction of learning, a library at home well-equipped in the books of medicine, mining, science and psychology which laid the foundation of his later prodigious reading—all these helped in moulding the mind of the poet, and great tributes are paid to them by him in a lovely composition, "Letter to Lord Byron."

The influence of the Norse sagas too was profound. "With northern myths my little brain was laden"—Auden recalls in "Letter to Lord Byron." The stark scenery of the world of his poems owes much to the land of the Icelandic sagas. "Paid on Both Sides" particularly, makes much use of the saga-world stuff with its rivalries,
threats, feuds, murders, clashes etc. The same material is
used, later on, in "The Age of Anxiety" as well. In fact,
the impact of the sagas has been much more profound on
Auden's thought than hitherto felt. Isherwood rightly
observes:

"The Auden family came originally
from Iceland. Auden himself was
brought up on the sagas and their
influence upon his work has been
profound." \(^\text{10}\)

Among the literary influences, the earliest is that
of Thomas Hardy. Auden once remarked:

"What I valued most in Hardy, then,
as I still do, was his hawk's vision,
his way of looking at life from a
very great height, as in the stage
directions of "The Dynasts", or in
the opening chapter of "The Return
of the Native".\(^\text{11}\)

Auden himself has made a considerable use of the hawk-
image, including in it a still more fascinating image of
the Aryan—both of whom provide us with useful instructions
for viewing:

"Consider this and in our time
As the hawk sees it or the
helmeted helmeted airmen." \(^\text{12}\)
The symptoms of a decadent society need the sharp sight, detachment and the cruelty of the hawk and the airman to be detected. The image of hawk as a viewer, suggesting sharp vision, remoteness and mobility exhibits the profundity of Hardy's imaginative powers by owning which Auden could achieve that clinical detachment he much desired:

Summarizing his poetic development in 1940, Auden delightfully declares his adolescent fascination for Hardy:

"- - - it was Hardy in the summer of 1923; for for more than a year I read no one else-- -- In the autumn of 1924 there was a palace revolution after which he shared his Kingdom with Edward Thomas, until they were both defeated by Eliot at the battle of Oxford in 1926."13

It is illuminating to see how an early composition written and published in 1923 in the school magazine "Public School Verse" absorbs so thoroughly the Wardenian manners. It is Auden speaking at the age of sixteen and declaring his immediate response to Hardy whom, as he says, he has been reading continuously in 1923. It is also, incidentally, his first published poem. The title is "Woods in Rain.":

"It is a lovely sight and good
To see rain falling in a wood.
--

Flowers open mouths as wide I say
As baby blackbirds do in May:

--
While trees shake hands as grave and slow
As two old men I used to know,

But now the sun has come again
And he has chased away the rain.
The rain has gone beyond the hill
But leaves are talking of it still.\textsuperscript{14}

It is tender, lovely and youthful and illustrates the brilliance of his abundant talent. Above all, it is a boyish Hardy-pastiche. Its conscious use of resounding rhymes, its speedy rhythm and a careful mingling of prose and verse in which Hardy completely believed ("the shortest way to good prose is by the route of good verse")\textsuperscript{15} all remind at once of a nature poem by Hardy. Like Hardy, Auden assembles his images from things actually seen and intimately known. Its lively feeling owes something to Hardy and in its wonderful observation of things of Nature it stands very close to his art, for Hardy had that ear which enabled him to listen to the message of the wind and that eye which made him see in his study one August night "a sleeping fly, that rubs its hands." Though it is an immediate attempt in the direction of writing like Hardy and a deliberate imitation, yet the way Auden adapted himself, even at an early age, to the medium of that great master, indicates his skill as a great craftsman!

What Auden admired most in Hardy's art was that it was modern without being too modern—i.e. it was free from
the more superficial features of modern poetry. For instance, Hardy fully avoided the use of free verse, believing this art not to be his field of expression and he saved his young disciple from it. Auden himself writes in this regard:

"I am also thankful that my first master did not write in free verse or I might then have been tempted to believe that free verse is easier to write than stricter forms, whereas I know it is definitely more difficult."\(^{16}\)

Hardy's technical virtuosity, his metrical variety and his fascination for complicated stanza forms impressed Auden whereby he could acquire a fine training in his craft. Overwhelmed by them he declared:

"Here was a 'modern' rhetoric which was more fertile and adaptable to different themes than any of Eliot's gas-works and rat's feet which one could steal but never make one's own."\(^{17}\)

"We imitate our loves" Auden says in "Letter to Lord Byron" and feels happy to declare: "I grow more like my mother every day." A very similar and curiously interesting statement he makes while describing his love for Hardy:

"His world and sensibilities were close
enough to mine-curiously enough his
face bore a striking resemblance to
my father's - so that, in imitating
him, I was being led towards not
away from myself, but they were not
so close as to obliterate my identify."18

Another very remarkable influence on Auden's poetry
is of Robert Frost. It is one of those few influences which
lasted forever. Paying glorious tribute to Frost, Auden
appreciates his ability "to define experience and draw wisdom
from it."19 Auden himself shares this quality with Frost to
a great degree. For his celebrated natural symbols of a
wide, unexplored landscape and a Wanderer on a Quest, Auden
is certainly indebted to Frost. There exists a close
similarity between Frost's hero and Auden's Wanderer, for,
both depict the resolution, the inner zest and loneliness of
the Truly Strong Man. Frost's universally known lines from
"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening":

"The woods are lovely dark and deep
But I have promises to keep;
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep."20

and, the opening lines of Auden's famous "The Wanderer":

"Doom is dark and deeper than any sea-dingle,
Upon what man it fall
In spring, day-wishing flowers appearing,
Avalanche sliding, white snow from rock-face,
That he should leave his house,
No cloud-soft hand can hold him,
restraint by women;
But ever that man goes"

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make a fascinating comparative study. The similarity of images, ideas and symbols is striking. If read one after the other, both of the compositions enhance the inner appeal of each other!

The same resemblance is to be found between Frost's "Five Nocturnes" and Auden's "Nocturne I" and "Nocturne II." In both the poets, the profound symbolic interpretations of the night scenes, suggest that objects of nature cease to be mere charming things for them.

A comparative study, again, may be attempted of Auden's "Walks" and Frost's "Road Not Taken." Both present the symbolic images of two different ways and the conflict of choice-making. Though Frost's poem is of much larger significance and wider connotations, yet the similarity of thought-content is notable.

"Rocolics", "In Due Season", "In Praise of Limestone" and such other poems where Nature is studied against human background and human condition and forceful truths are derived from the beautiful sights of Nature, implicitly exhibit what Auden got from Frost.

Frost's unique simplicity and plainness too seem to be affecting Auden to a remarkable extent. Some of the
poems in "Homage to Clio", (1960) ("The More Loving One", "The Old Man's Road", "Walks", "First Things First", "Reflections in a Forest" to quote but a few!) are direct attempts in the way of writing like Frost. Extolling Frost's poetic language, Auden says,

"It is the speech of a mature mind, fully aware and in control of itself, is not the speech of dream or of uncontrollable passion."²³

Auden's poetry, particularly the later poetry, too has a poetic language which, like Frost's, achieves great sophistication and sobriety. Incidentally, two favourite themes with Auden in the poetry of 1950's - the celebration of life and its simple blessings and the invocation to make our earth a place for the fulfilment of Agape - too are Frostian in nature!

Despite Auden's repeated denials, the fact remains that Eliot has remarkably influenced Auden. The speech Auden used in unmasking the hollowness of a decadent culture echoes the impressions of Eliot.²⁴ In fact, had he not had a predecessor like Eliot, Auden would have to strive too hard for exploring the infinite possibilities of English language.

It had been a common practice with early Auden, to imitate and parody the style of Hopkins. Auden's celebrated ellipses, inverted syntax, use of speech rhythms and a tough, odd diction are due to Hopkins' impact. Cadences,
resonance, alliterations etc. are used to form his cerebral verse in Hopkins' fashion:

"Good to a gillie, to an elver times
out of mind
Tender, to work-shy and game-shy kind
Does he think?"²⁵

But this sort of style has its own limitations. It is mere artistry. The effect of tautness it produces mars the general appeal of the poem. Auden's renunciation of it, after a few early attempts, has been a sane decision. Not only that Auden avoided this sort of composition, but he also excluded such stuff from his later collections of poetry. A very striking example of such omissions is "Petition" which is commonly regarded as the one in which Auden imitated Hopkins' style to the most possible extent. It is excluded both from "W.H. Auden: A Selection by the Author" (Harmondsworth, 1958) and "Selected Poetry of W.H. Auden" (Modern Library, New York, 1959).

Yet the exclusion least affected the popularity of this poem. The very first word of "Petition" ('Sir') reminds one of Hopkins' detached yet reverent way of addressing God in his famous sonnet "Thou art indeed just, Lord." Indeed, the way this poem had been first written, more clearly indicates the manner of Hopkins. The original, unpublished draft has the first stanza thus:

"Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all
But negative principle of darkness, Will
His treacherous inversion, are everywhere
In desert as the hot extravagant glare
As flash on hills, warning of physical death,
Upon all surfaces, above, beneath
At all times several yet always one
A gymnast's rhythm at Athens, or then
A celibate and certain faith at Tintern. 26

The unanimous reaction to this passage would be that its complete omission has been for the good. But nothing can be more proper to illustrate the way Auden had once mastered the style of Hopkins. It is too full of ellipses, omission of conjunctions and articles and alliterative phrases. This was a way of writing not meant for Auden, as very soon he himself realized.

Quite a large number of shorter pieces, particularly the lyrics, display Yeats' influence. The way in which Auden easily wanders from one subject to another in these lyrics, reminds of Yeats' discursive style. It is on Auden's poetry of the middle phase, particularly on the poems included in "Look, Stranger!" that Yeats leaves his implicit marks. "Out on the lawn I lie in bed", "It was Easter as I walked in the public gardens", "Now from my window-sill I watch the night", "As I walked out one evening" etc. best display how Auden could, like Yeats, "talk" across long stanzas if he wanted. The prose-meaning of a poem was always very important to Auden. He had once defined
poetry as 'memorable speech' and it is the element of
direct conversation between the reader and the writer which
Auden admired most in Yeats.

It is the purely passionate aspect of Yeats' verse
that Auden avoided. In fact, he condemned Yeats for paying
more attention to heart than to head. This sort of pure
sentimentality or emotional rapture, Auden believed, could
lead a writer to produce untruthful stuff - i.e. the things
in which he himself did not believe. For Auden, it was a
sin. The purely intellectual aspect of Auden's poetry has
great poetic justification in its honesty. Commenting on
Yeats' influence upon the formation of his poetic mind,
Auden says:

"In a way, he was a bad influence.
He was an aesthete. What does he
say in "Sailing to Byzantium"?
All that he wants to become is a
mechanical bird. --- I refuse
to believe what he is saying."27

Yeats, so Auden thought, was a perfect aesthete who
wrote things not because he believed in them, but because
they sounded poetic or beautiful. It was something against
Auden's poetic standards and hence his anger at Yeats' poetic
dishonesty is quite justifiable!

Both Auden and Yeats are great portrayers of
Landscape. Yet a close and comparative study of Yeats' "Her
vision in the Wood" and Auden's poems of "Eucolica"
reveals their differences. Both are meditative and profound. Yet Auden's art is distinguished by its dispassionate and objective thinking whereas Yeats's approach to his subject is of a highly personal kind which consequently leads him to a sentimental involvement in it. Yeats' rhetoric is (as usual) magnificent; Auden's (as it should be) controlled, sober and of an intellectual kind.

Blake helped Auden in attacking human despair and fear by arousing the inner forces of energy and liberation. Blake was a fervent admirer of the current psychological theories and believed in the horrible results of the repression of "id", of the emotional side of man. A complete outlet of the hidden fountains of love and energy would cure feeble men. "Will", a very significant term in Blake by which he means conclusions which he draw by reason, the teachings of morality and religious institutions) is always evil and its effects are never good. Supression of instincts (caused because of an obedience to the laws of Will) leads to frustration and distorts human personality. On all these points Auden agrees with Blake. Often, he has used 'Will' in the Blakean sense of the term:

"Every eye must weep alone
Till I will be overthrown."28

In "Petition", human 'Will' is considered as the negation of the will of God and a blind adherence to it is declared an unpardonable sin:

"Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all
But Will its negative inversion--"29
In his erotic concept of Love, Auden is very close to Blake's notion of 'energy' or 'a gushing inner force', most remarkably presented in his "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell". Auden too celebrates Love as a healing force, a vital energy, a releasing power, though besides Blake he has a number of sources for these ideas including Lawrence and Lane:

"The word is Love — —
Surely one fearless kiss would cure
The million fevers". 30

On the technical front too, Auden owes much to Blake. Often, his stanzas are formed in the manner of Blake. They have the same dignity of diction, moving, spontaneous rhythm and a conscious simplicity of expression which we usually associate with Blake. The following stanza sounds like an utterance of Blake in his characteristic manner on his favourite subject of celebration of Love as 'energy':

"In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise". 31

In a number of his later poems, particularly, those included in "The Shield of Achilles", Auden has tried to achieve the simplicity and directness of Blake as depicted by him in "The Songs of Innocence and Experience". The simplicity we find, for instance, in the title poem of
"The Shield of Achilles", or in "Lauds", has a purity and dignity in which the modern colloquial idiom (elsewhere frequently used by Auden) is completely lacking.

Auden has also owned Blake’s device of using a simple and innocent poetic form (ballad, for example) for the expression of ominous contents. "Victor" with its simple form and simpler beginning:

"Victor was a little baby,
Into this world he came—-"

CSP, p. 112

and "Miss Gee" with the easy opening of:

"Let me tell you a little story
About Miss Edith Gee—-"

CSP, p. 109

do not, surely, make one expect the sort of material which follows. Blake, unquestionably, is Auden’s guide here. In his "Songs of Experience", simple images are loaded with double meanings which become clear after a second glance. This is purely a deceptive simplicity which enables a poet to achieve a rare smoothness in the treatment of highly crude subjects.

A considerable bulk of poetry written between 1933 and 1936 is influenced by the ideas of Marx, Engels and other leftist thinkers. Auden’s concept of a Just City founded on humanitarian principles and Marx’s dream of a classless society based on the golden doctrines of Equality,
Fraternity and Justice bear close resemblance. Marxism, naturally, proved to be much fascinating to the earnest mind of young Auden who was always in quest of some way which could replace the social decay and disorder with peace and prosperity. In fact, the poetry Auden wrote under Marx's influence forms a very serious and moving portion of his verse, and due to its genuine social concern, it is unmatched among the literary writings of the Thirties.

In the galaxy of Auden's 'healers', Lawrence occupies a dazzling place:

"Lawrence, Blake and Homer Lane,

once healers in our English land", 33

In fact, the ideas of all these psychologists, with certain differences, form a single philosophy—that of complete freedom of the inner potentialities of an individual from restrictions and repressions and the perfect obedience to the instincts which leads to health and joy. Groddeck's "It", Freud's "Id", Shaw's "life-force", Blake's "Energy", Lawrence's "Unconscious" and Auden's "principle of Love" as a healing power—all may be considered (broadly speaking, of course!) as equivalents of those hidden potentialities which demand a natural release. The teachings of religious establishments, the codes of conventional morality and the lectures of the professional social teachers ("the pedantic, boring cry"—as Auden calls it) are heinous for they all favour, in one way or another, the repression of these
creative powers. Lawrence remarks:

"A tree grows straight when it has deep roots and is not too stifled. Love is a spontaneous thing, coming out of the spontaneous affectional soul, as a deliberate principle, it is an unmitigated evil. Also morality which is based on ideas, or an ideal, is an unmitigated evil." 34

Auden too celebrates Love, in a Laurentian fashion, as a spontaneous, integrating and vitalizing force:

"Shall the bird live
Shall the fish dive
And sheep obey
In a sheep's way;
Can love remember
The question and the answer,
For love recover
What has been dark and rich and warm all over?"

(Poem XXVII in "Poems", 1930)

Lawrence's whole emphasis is on the value and truth of passion, especially sexual passion. He vehemently attacks the accepted social code of his day because it was untrue to experience and because the individual was crushed utterly and inevitably by it. And the new code of morals, he goes to put in the place of what he would destroy, too,
is strict and firm. Being true to oneself and one's nature, recognising one's involvement, and sharing in the raw life of nature, is for Lawrence the highest good, and the way to make a happy world.

These were the ideas which apparently impressed Auden most. They, in fact, enhanced his admiration for similar ideas in other thinkers. In his early poetry, he gives expression to ideas directly extracted from Lawrence's "Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious" and its sequel "Fantasia of the Unconscious". "What's in your mind, my dove, my coney;/ Do thoughts grow like feathers, the dead end of life--" is a clear poetic version of Lawrence's assertion that ideas are "thrown off from life, as leaves are shed--", as feathers fall from a bird. Ideas are the dry, unliving insentient plumage--".35

A Lawrencean view of society predominates in "The Orators". In the middle section, the hero (the redeemer) is requested by the Orators to deliver them from "the drought that withers the lower centres". 'Lower centres' is Auden's coinage for Lawrence's 'solar plexus'- one of the great centres of unconscious life which releases primordial forces and which is talked of throughout "Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious" and "Fantasia of the Unconscious". Spender rightly remarks in this connection:

"'The Orators' is an explosive book in which psychoanalysis becomes
fused with a kind of politics that
owes more to D.H. Lawrence than to
Karl Marx."36

Lawrence "revealed the sensations hidden by shame."37
He saw the futility of a sterile, shrivelled and negative
existence because the Laws of Life are those of lushness,
fertility and creativity. He repeatedly declared that an
attempt by any society to go against the laws of nature
would lead to disorder and ruin. Auden certainly shares
in Lawrence's contempt for a dull and dry life and invokes
love as it is the only liberating force:

"Enter and suffer
Within the quarrel
Be most at home,
Among the sterile prove
Your vigour, love."38

Lawrence, like Groddeck and Lane, believed in the
psychosomatic nature of illness— a subject which interested
Auden most and around which much of his early poetry centres.
In Lawrence's ideas, Auden found a very sound explanation
for the social and moral degeneration of his Age and, hence,
his deep admiration for them was very convincing.

It has often been remarked that on the psychological
aspect of Auden's verse, Freud's influence is supreme and
it is right. Quite a considerable part of Auden's early
poetry deals with neurotics, the anxious and the lonely
people who lead their lives under the constant shadow of fear and despair and end themselves in self-regard or death-wish — both the extreme states of psychosis. This material is purely Freudian in nature, but the way Auden adopted it in poetry shows his deepest human concerns.

Freud has divided human instincts into two—the erotic instincts which symbolise life and creativity and love, and death instincts which stand for the negation of all healthy feelings. Both of them get a perfect expression in Auden's poetry. Often he portrays communal neurosis — a society of the lost and the diseased people — the picture of a class whose "members dream of a new life, but secretly desire the old, for there is death inside them."

The Freudian explanation of instinct helped Auden to explain the decadence of his society, the way to violence which many frustrated people took and the "unbreakable habits of death" in which still many other indulged. All the more, it gave vigour to his singing of 'Love' — particularly communal love and helped him in establishing its supremacy over the death — worshipping creeds cultivated by the 'Thirties. Freud has talked of Love as an erotic instinct — but Auden has widened its sense and significance to an extent only a poet-psychologist (and not a mere psychologist!) can achieve!

Like other psychologists, Freud too dislikes the unnatural repression of human instincts, the inhuman
suffocation of the life-force which he calls "Id." In fact, "death-wish" is a symptom of inner sickness and decadence, of the fact that the creative energy—the human drives are repressed. The individuals are unhealthy because the mind—the super-ego—has got victory over 'id'. So like Lawrence and others, Freud too preaches a release from all inhibitions. But unlike Lawrence, Freud does not think sexual gratification a complete end in itself.

The idea which appealed to Auden most in Freud is that the root cause of almost every disease lies in "a sense of guilt" thrusted on us by a false social system. Cure may come, if the guilt feeling is destroyed. Like Freud, Auden too believes that the function of psychology is not to impart moral teachings, but to give a perfect idea of what is 'truly right' and what is 'truly evil.'

Freudianism and Marxism do not stand poles apart, as thought by many. The only marked difference is, perhaps, that psychologists insist that a change in society may come if its individuals are changed—if a natural expression is given to those feelings which are basically healthy and life-giving. Marxists, on the contrary, believe in changing the existing social conditions—the environment. But there are large areas of agreement among them, the most important being that both perceive an illness among the individuals of society and feel the need of change.

Freud, in his thinking, fused psychology and ideas.
similar to the Marxist beliefs. Like Freud, Auden also believes that Marxism can be "a genuine social science" only when factors of human nature are joined with it. Freud asks for that social system in which the material and the cultural needs of the people are fulfilled. Auden also longs for a society in which "real faces" (whose life-force has not dried within them) live with their needs fulfilled. This is Freud's concept of "Weltanschaung" defined as "Good Place" by Auden.

In his "In Memory of Sigmund Freud", Auden beautifully sums up what mankind owes to Freud—that "important Jew who died in exile" and is no longer a mere person but "a whole climate of opinion." He admits that Freud "wasn't clever at all" but the therapy he suggested was a simple one—to recall the healthy past and see those events closely which have turned the present into a time of unhappiness:

"- - - - he merely told
the unhappy Present to recite the Past
like a poetry lesson - - -"

CSP, p.167

In this respect, George Groddeck's influence too is remarkable. In the notes to "New Year Letter", Auden lists Groddeck among his "modern sources", and on the subject of the mental induction of physical ailments quotes Groddeck's "Book of the It" at length. Groddeck surpasses
all other psychologists in his investigations in the subject of the psychosomatic nature of illness—one of those psychological areas which interested Auden most. He, with Lane and Layard, shares the credit for illuminating Auden on the subject that physical ailments have non-physical (mostly psychological) sources. For example, headaches, Groddeck says, "only come on when an unbearable thought, which at times has been very important, is repressed and not allowed to come into consciousness." 40 Auden makes a use of this very idea in "On the Frontier" in which Mrs. Thorwald's headache is over when she is mentally unburdened.

Disease, Groddeck believes, results out of the starvation of some vital creative instinct. He writes:

"My experience with cases of tumour has convinced me that there, too, a symbolism of pregnancy is involved— - " 41

Auden thinks on the same line while writing:

"That which was creative (becomes)
a stalking destruction:
That which was loving, a tormenting flame
For those who reject their gifts choose here their punishment." 42

The last line sounds like a typical statement from Groddeck that diseases are a means of self-punishment for
the heinous crime of going against the natural laws. This material has often been used in a purely amusing way by Auden who enjoys mocking at the strange victims of neurosis and their physical abnormalities. "Miss Goo"'s theme corresponds to these very ideas, and for a purely comic use of a serious psychological issue, one should turn to lines like:

"I can't think what my It had on It's mind.
To give me flat feet and a big behind."\(^{43}\)

Illness, as its definition by Groddeck goes, is not caused for external conditions not related to the body itself. On the contrary, it is something desired by it and itself is a means of cure. By being true to our instincts, by fulfilling the requirements of 'It', the patient can cure himself and lead a healthy life. These are the ideas very close to Lane-Lawrence thinking and, the sickness Auden saw around him among people, confirmed their truth for him. To redeem his people from the fetters of the Enemy (i.e. the horrible psychosis), Auden hopefully turned to the great healers.

With a mind fed completely by the readings of Freud, Groddeck and others, Auden had left for Germany in 1928 and there became intimate with Homer Lane, through John Layard — who was himself deeply impressed by Lane's doctrines. After listening to his sane discourses — mostly on the subjects of 'disease' and 'sickness' and their causes and cures, an obviously impressed Auden thought these issues fit subjects for poetic discussion.\(^{44}\) The extent, to which
Auden availed himself of Lane's theories shows Lane's profound impact on him. "The Orators", particularly, is too full of references to Lane's theories — ignorance about which adds to its obscurity. In it, three types of neurotics are hinted at and their symptoms too are suggested. The cure prescribed is similar to Lane's cure. For example, Lane had forbidden to show pity for the victims of neurosis because it is always a destroyer. Isherwood informs us that Lane himself had once knocked down a "timid retiring young man---to make him hit back."45 One of Auden's Orators recommends the same:

"Hit them in the face if necessary.
If they hit back you will know they are saved."46

Auden's concept of love too is largely affected by Lane's thoughtful assertions on this universal subject. Self-regard is considered by Lane the most destructive of all the forms of the Enemy. Love should always flourish in relationships. The only true authority, Lane declared, is love, and the only true discipline is founded upon hope. The authority that is based upon force will transform love into hatred and hope into fear. Love should be universal. Fear of another community will infect our own community with hatred, and destroy its harmony. All these views were whole-heartedly accepted by Auden:

"Love has no position.
Love's way of living,
One kind of relation

Possible between

Any things or persons "47.

In the 'Forties and the later years Auden's most significant creditors — just as Freud and Marx in the poetry of the 'Thirties — have been Niebuhr and Kierkegaard. Many of the Christian themes Auden discusses in his later poetry marked by theological understanding of matters are to be found in the works of Niebuhr and Kierkegaard. What Auden found of particular interest in Niebuhr was the conflict between freedom and necessity and the exact nature of sin.

Niebuhr's freedom-necessity concept is formed on very firm grounds and is crystal clear. Man is free— but free only to make a moral choice. His refusal to choose (though in itself a choice!) is a denial of necessity. Either he may choose the way-up (a course of belief) or the way-down (the secular course) but choice he should make! Only when we make our Freedom virtuous by choosing either rightly or wrongly (for even the wrong choice may be illuminating and guide towards the right!), our Freedom gets value and significance.

Niebuhr insists that Man should humbly accept his creatureliness, his inevitable state of sinfulness. In the title poem of "Homage to Clio", Auden, thinking on the lines of Niebuhr, creates an essential contrast by depicting the distinction between the human and the animal worlds. Flowers and birds, in a world of colour and sound, are
beautiful and innocent. We can't achieve this perfection. Our world governed by Clio is different from the fearless world of the animals. As humans, we are bound to be sinful, but our glory lies in our imperfections. Man is the most finite creature in the whole scheme of universe and too sinful to be reconciled to God. Only through a faith in Incarnation and Grace can the finite man be reconciled to infinite God. In fact, Niebuhr offered Auden a very chiselled concept of Christian Faith. He played a vital role in bringing Auden back to Religion. His book "The Nature and Destiny of Man" had highly impressed Auden and to it he had devoted one of his significant pieces of criticism. But for that great change of a religious nature in Auden after 1939, none was as responsible as Kierkegaard. In a poem entitled "A Thanksgiving", composed in May 1973, Auden admits:

"Wild Kierkegaard, Williams and Lewis
guided me back to belief."

CP, p. 671

Kierkegaard had much material of special interest to Auden, like the three categories of existence, the concepts of 'Dread' and 'a leap into faith' in which Auden got a fascinating solution for the various spiritual and moral problems his generation faced. What differentiates Kierkegaard from other thinkers of his day is his emphasis on the soul of an individual (and not on any religious organization), its despair and finally its arrival at Faith.
In his "Preface to Kierkegaard", Auden says that Kierkegaard is a dangerous author — the more one reads him — the more an opposite effect one gains — for he does not lead us to conclusions but only trains us in realizing our specific problems and questioning ourselves the nature of our experience. He treats those areas of human existence which are related to Man's spirit. To the earthly part — that which consists of flesh and blood — he did not pay much heed. However, in the perfection and truth of a religious existence portrayed by Kierkegaard, Auden found a very genuine answer to the needs of a suffering generation. 49

This is, in short, a gist of the various assimilations and influences Auden had during a vast poetic career. That his philosophy and theory were such in whose formation many a renowned intellectuals had contributed, is a fact strongly — professed by Auden himself:

"Part came from Lane, and part from

D.H. Lawrence;

Gide, though I didn't know it then,

gave part.

They taught me to express my deep abhorrence

If I caught anyone preferring Art

To Life and Love and being Pure-in-Heart. "50

In fact, the range and variety of Auden's inspiration and extractions are extremely wide and bewildering. It is very difficult to summarize them completely. However, those discussed above, can give (it is hoped!) a fairly well idea
about Auden's amazing capacity for assimilation and composing poems out of the most unfamiliar (even forbidden!) areas of knowledge ranging from science and theology to psychology and ancient sagas. Drawing material from such varied fields and assimilating it into verse of great power, he published volume after volume in rapid succession.

Auden had once said of Tennyson that among English poets he had the finest ear for the melody of words but also was the stupidest of them all. The truth of the latter remark may be doubtful. May be, it is the one passed in one of those light or comic moods occasionally prevailed on him, or, perhaps, it was a certain moral cowardice on Tennyson's part which compelled Auden to think so. It is definite, however, that Auden too had a fine sense of the deep connotations of English words (for, his 'melody' differs from Tennyson's; he brought out the energy and vigour of diction to communicate forceful ideas) and far from being stupid, he is one of the few highly intelligent writers of this age. Tennyson either had not read much or perhaps he did not put into his poems what he read, whereas, Auden had widely read and tried to put everything he liked in his poems. And it is a still more admirable aspect of his genius that despite his vast gleaning from varied sources, he had a style very original and fresh. As Justin Replogle puts it:

"None of Auden's poems is tastelessly derivative; they are all very much his own." 51

One must only turn, to see the height of decency of form
and contents he could achieve, to the poems of "Look, Stranger!" Here, he produced poetry of brilliant ideas, out of the familiar and traditional media of English poetry.

As a matter of fact, Auden's 'influences' should not be over-stressed. One should, for the sake of a better understanding of his poetry, only be aware of his varied sources. But his real achievement is not the ability to extract or to build on others' line of thinking. It is his wonderful capacity to maintain his individuality and originality by training himself adequately in the art of assimilation. He did never make a hasty or blind adoption of the thoughts of others. He can contradict or bid farewell to those (Lawrence or Hardy, for instance) whose thinking seems inadequate to him. He can point out their flaws or even can learn from them. His is, in fact, the case of a restless spirit groping in those worlds of poetic manner and matter which could really enlighten and regenerate a spiritually ignorant and mentally sick generation of people.