

criticised, reviewed, biographised and collected

ound the volcano

A READER'S GUIDE TO WH AUDEN by John Fuller/Thames & Hudson
15s; hardback 30s

CYRIL CONNOLLY

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the characters' names, Rosetta from the Rosetta Stone suggesting the feminine principle, the past, the unconscious, Malin from the French *malin* meaning clever, mischievous, Quant from Quantum, Embie from Embien which makes concepts manifest to the senses.

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ART

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"Terribly important"—Bernard Crick (Observer)

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Stories 'THE WAR OF TIME' 30/-
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Alistair MacLean writes:

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John Terraine writes:

"In the best tradition of modern historical novels, it really does have the feel of a crumbling

A PAGE OF POETS criticised, reviewed, biographised and collected

Around the volcano

AUDEN is still an active volcano: no sooner have critics filed a "later manner" than it becomes his later manner but one. There have already been at least five books about him, including a bibliography.

This one is, as it says, a reader's guide and so demands that one should have the Collected Shorter Poems (1968) and Longer Poems (1968) beside one. At times Mr Fuller sinks to mere cataloguing; at others he gives whole chapters to the elucidation of obscure works like "Paid on Both Sides," "The Orators" or "The Age of Anxiety." He includes all Auden's poetry except his last book "City Without Walls," which contains the lovely poem "Since" (May, 1966), which Mr Fuller hoped would be collected, and also some of his best writing in the "Marginalia"—a chain reaction of Haiku, in which the sadness of things breaks like a wave on his intellectual awareness and resolves itself into a backwash of humorous resignation.

*He woke in the small hours,
Dismayed by a wilderness
Of hostile thoughts.*

*The shame in ageing
Is not that Desire should fail
(Who mourns for something
He no longer needs?): it is
That someone else must be
told.*

*Thoughts of his own death
like the distant roll
of thunder at a picnic*

Auden has been writing over forty years. He began to publish in 1928 and was encouraged by Eliot, his first publisher, who began to be read in 1915 when Pound was giving Yeats a wash and brush-up in their cottage on Ashdown Forest. And Yeats was making his name in the 1880s. It is not recorded what Tennyson thought about him, or even Swinburne; in fact he belongs to us, not to them. Yeats, Eliot, Auden—the Age of the Antonines, when modern poetry never had it so good.

The fifty years' hegemony of

Eliot and Auden has been a triumph of the intellectual over the sensuous, the Anglican over the pagan, the humanist over the fanatic, the professional over the amateur. Both carry great authority as critics, both have courted other arts (opera and drama) but never lost their dignity. Eliot's sex-life was austere conventional. Auden's unorthodox, but in neither case has heart ever triumphed over head.

The anti-popes of the period, Pound, Joyce, Sitwell, Lawrence, Graves, have rebelled in vain against this clerical establishment. Passion availed these great heresiarchs nothing against the smiling orthodoxy of Harvard and Christ Church. Auden has buried Henry James, Freud, Yeats, Toller, MacNeice, Roosevelt, Kennedy. He has married others, christened a few and produced many epitaphs (though I don't recall one on Dylan Thomas); he can take a well-known character (Housman, Lear, Lawrence, Voltaire, Rimbaud, Montaigne, Luther), remove their salient features and embalm them for ever. He will bury us all. There will be no appeal from his verdict. Among the rhymeless, almost rhythmless, waffling of so much of his "syllabic" verse with its sermonising, its gulps and abstractions, its didactic godderel, its arch neologisms and self-parody, there constantly burst forth poems of outstanding originality and beauty, some of them almost unprintable.

The genial bishop-like figure, less monk-like than Eliot, still shelters a prolific inspiration, an effortless brilliance that we have seldom known. He is certainly the greatest writer of sonnets since Meredith and Arnold, and his hinterland of culture, watershed where science, theology and imagination blend, is inexhaustibly fertile. Apart

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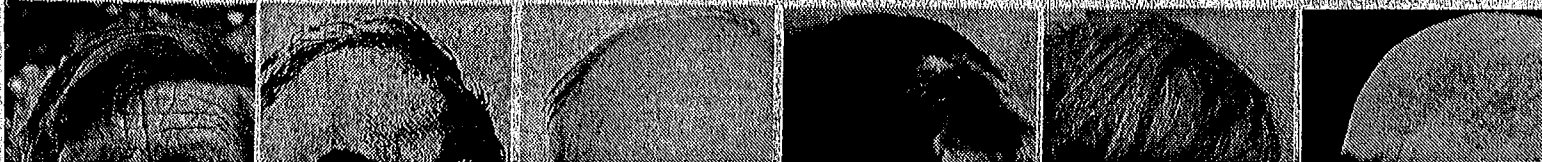
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ART

Allen Jones (Tooth's Gallery, tomorrow). New sculptures include three life-size girls.



Solacing music

He could no longer listen to the reading of prose, though a short poem now and again interested him. In the middle of one night he asked his wife to read aloud to him "The Listeners," by Walter de la Mare.

THUS Thomas Hardy on his deathbed: a tribute to both poets, for it is by no means easy—as I think Wordsworth was first honest enough to say—for a poet to make much of a poet a good deal younger than himself; and there was a difference of over thirty years between these two. What was it in de la Mare's great poem of desolation, disappointment and unresponse that Hardy wanted to hear said to him at that moment? Perhaps.

For he suddenly smote on the door, even

Louder, and lifted his head:—

"Tell them that I came, and no one answered,
That I kept my word," he said.

I have never, myself, wanted to know who the traveller or the listeners are in this poem, and have rather averted the gaze from any exegesis of it. But is this not in itself rather a despicable critical evasion of a kind we have resigned ourselves to in the case of de la Mare?

Let me revert to Hardy. Though Hardy was kindly and hospitable to the many young poets who sought him out, de la Mare was the only one he was genuinely curious to meet. I am sorry I cannot "document" this statement: it was either told me by the second Mrs Hardy in 1936, or is remarked on in one of the several thousand unpublished Hardy letters now being edited by Professor Purdy.

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THE COLLECTED POEMS OF WALTER DE LA MARE/Faber £5 pp984 HENRY REED

might be not too tedious or indecent for the young ears of the Royal Family—I fervently recorded this fact to him. He was too modest to believe it; but eagerly, in a damp, dark Chelsea street, he told me of the barely credible circumstances of his first meeting with Hardy, in 1921. I did not know that a retrospective poem of his on the subject was already in print. And his deeper feelings, expressed in the poem, he did not of course repeat; but they are worth repeating now.

And there peered from his eyes, as I listened, a course of women and men,
Whom his words had made living, long-suffering—they flocked to remembrance again.

"Oh, Master," I cried in my heart, "lohn thy tidings, grievous thy song;
Yet thine, too, this solacing music, as we earthfolk stumble along."

The deliberate touch of pastiche in these lines, written round about 1938, is of course a kind of musical homage, and does not make the poem less moving. It is very different from the real help he had sought from Hardy's poetry in 1921, or just before, when, as Dr Leavis has acutely remarked, de la Mare seems to have recognised "the vanity of his poetic evasions." It is as if, in his straits, he had gone for help to the poet most unlike himself, strong where he is weak.

It is doubtful if he found this help. For some reason, after the publication of "The Veil" in 1921, de la Mare stopped publishing serious poetry (at

least in England) and devoted himself to prose, and to comic verse. When I was an undergraduate, on the rare occasions when twentieth-century poetry was admitted to exist, de la Mare was occasionally mentioned, sadly withal, as one who had not fulfilled his promise.

This was quite agreeable to us: it meant we did not have to go and find out exactly what the promise had been. In any case we had, by then, Eliot and Pound, and they provided quite enough matter for thought, if thought was what it was we directed at them.

There was, however, a genuine feeling that de la Mare had ceased to exist. Then, in 1933, appeared "The Fleeting." But by this time we had Auden to cope with. And "The Fleeting" was much the same mixture as before, though longer poems like "The Owl" and "Dreams" (which mentions, not with much respect, the Id) had begun to appear and to threaten a boredom later to display itself more expansively. Other volumes, light or serious, followed. Towards the end there were efforts at the long "great" poem "The Traveller" is often exciting and terrifying, but only in its last pages really impressive. As for "Winged Charlot," I have to confess to what may be a personal blackout. It is a long poem about time, chronometers, etc., and is often in its early pages humorous and engaging; the trouble is that though it is at no point unattractive, it is largely unreadable.

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EXILE is a funny thing. "I have loved justice and hated iniquity: therefore I die in exile" said Gregory VII; and most writers, whether or not it applies to them, would like to think it so—a nobler vision than admitting to seductive climes, cheap wine, better pay, or more prestige. It cuts both ways, of course: some writers it silences, while for others it means a creative rebirth.

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Edward Brathwaite's Islands (Oxford 22s) completes the trilogy of which the first two parts were "Rights of Passage" and "Masks." As before I am impressed and fascinated by Mr Brathwaite's virtuosity. The Caribbean and West Indies appear here as they have rarely done in literature, breathtaking in their vividness. In this poem the concern is to seek out antecedents, to look for those transcendental aspects of his heritage.

I will return to the pebble

LYMAN ANDREWS reviews a varied selection of recently published verse

FOREIGN PARTS

is speech as glowing as flowers in a desert. He was several years in the revising of the poem. It's worth making the effort to read it.

Poets are notably not the most organised of men, and it is surprising when a young poet builds up a successful publishing house. Such is the case however with Stuart Montgomery, who has published a most impressive list of poets over the past several years, before allowing a book of his own to be printed. Circe (21s) is a splendid retelling of Odysseus's encounter in colours of shot-silk, the tones ranging from

curves caught in the shape of her shoulder thought in sea green to language

white as wood scoured bare by the sea or white as her hair is

This is a love poem, told with a fine combination of zest and finesse.

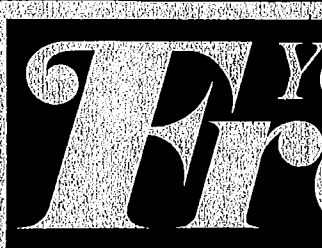
Odysseus also plays a large part in Richard Kell's new collection Differences (Chatto & Windus Phoenix Living Poets, 18s). Mr Kell's rhythms are sometimes lumpy, a sort of coda to the heavy Victorian translations:

I used to marvel as I watched the ship slicing luminous fathoms: she would dip and rise, alive and shuddering on a will.

Too many clichés as well adorn the third section of this book. But strengths in the first two sections suggest reason for hope. From the same publisher is The Pagoda (18s) by David Gill. His use of image distinguishes these poems ("rhinoceros grey and cool as churches") and I look forward to seeing more of his work.

Welcome to a new series of inexpensive reprints called Cape Poetry Paperbacks (8s each). Already issued are two books by Ted Walker, two by Derek Walcott, and one each by Adrian Mitchell and Leonard Cohen. They are large, attractively printed and pleasantly designed.

John Whiting—a Reassessment (Third, tomorrow, 7.30). Ronald Bryden takes another look at the undervalued playwright who died in 1963. John Neville and others in excerpts from Whiting's work. What's Wrong with the Cinema? (Radio 4, Tues., 9.15). Should be an unusually stimulating "Radio Four Reports" inquiry conducted by Richard Mayne.



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RENÉ GARDI

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In 1913, reviewing a "collected" Robert Bridges, de la Mare remarks: "The writing of verse easily becomes a dangerous habit." This is distressingly true of himself: there is simply and blankly and monotonously too much of him. In the same essay he remarks: "Complete editions serve too often merely for an imposing monument." In the present volume his poems occupy in fairly small print, pages 3 to 888. This is a lot of reading matter. I cannot think its gentle author can have wished it all at once upon anybody.

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I will return to the pebble to the dumb seed
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fetish in the vegetable
kingdom.

This book together with its earlier sections is enough to place Mr Brathwaite among the finest living poets in the Western hemisphere.

THERE have been two new books from Fulcrum Press. The first is David Jones's *The Tribune's Visitation* (12s, hardback 25s). Mr Jones in a short introduction calls this a fragment and suggests that it be read together with "The Tutor of the Place." The scene is somewhere in the first decades of the First Century AD: a military tribune visits his troops, and a dialogue ensues. Mr Jones is difficult as ever, but within the bare structure

who has published a most impressive list of poets over the past several years, before allowing a book of his own to be printed. *Circe* (21s) is a splendid retelling of Odysseus's encounter in colours of shot-silk, the tones ranging from
... curves caught in
the shape of her shoulder
thought in sea green
to language

white as wood
scoured bare by the sea
or white as her hair is

This is a love poem, told with a fine combination of zest and finesse.

Odysseus also plays a large part in Richard Kell's new collection *Differences* (Chatto & Windus Phoenix Living Poets, 18s). Mr Kell's rhythms are sometimes lumpy, a sort of coda to the heavy Victorian translations:

I used to marvel as I watched
the ship
slicing luminous fathoms; she
would dip
and rise, alive and shuddering
on a will.

Too many clichés as well adorn the third section of this book. But strengths in the first two sections suggest reason for hope. From the same publisher is *The Pagoda* (18s) by David Gill. His use of image distinguishes these poems ("rhinoceros grey and cool as churches") and I look forward to seeing more of his work.

Welcome to a new series of inexpensive reprints called *Cape Poetry Paperbacks* (8s each). Already issued are two books by Ted Walker, two by Derek Walcott, and one each by Adrian Mitchell and Leonard Cohen. They are large attractively printed and pleasantly designed. Very good value for money.

Twenty Love Poems and A Song of Despair (Cape Editions 8s, hardback 18s) by Pablo Neruda and translated by W. S. Merwin should be on everyone's shelf. Merwin is one of the best translators we have, and this small bilingual collection contains some of Neruda's most memorable and evocative work. He is one of the most lyrical poets since Lorca, and the translator has captured a good deal of this.

Very much out of the ordinary is André Breton's *Ode to Charles Fourier* (Cape Gollard 15s, hardback 28s). Kenneth White is the translator and has provided an excellent introduction to this poem, crammed with that strange brew of pomposity and loveliness which constitutes the flavour of Breton.

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