

Université de Montréal

Wandering Lost: Searching for the End
in Auden and Isherwood's Journey to a War

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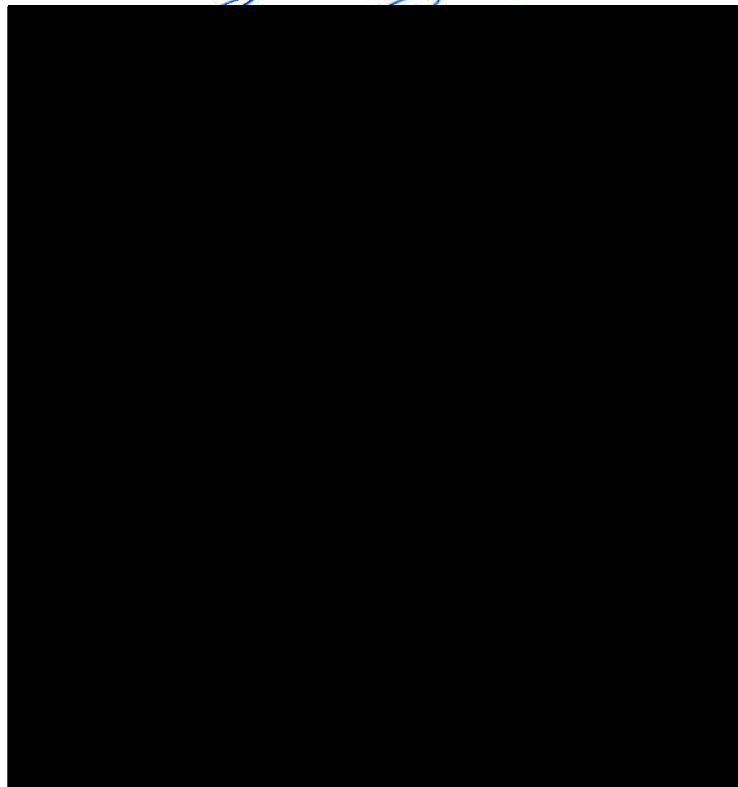
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Cette thèse intitulée :
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présentée par :
Douglas Brown

a été évaluée par un jury composé des personnes suivantes :



RÉSUMÉ DE SYNTHÈSE

Cette thèse offre une lecture à perspectives différenciées de l'ultime collaboration entre W.H. Auden et Christopher Isherwood. Elle montre que Journey to a War, ouvrage négligé, est un texte charnière complexe annonçant un point tournant dans la carrière de Auden et de Isherwood, laquelle remonte habituellement à leur établissement aux États-Unis, et des points tournants dans l'histoire politique, sociale, littéraire et idéologique du XX^e siècle. En situant l'ouvrage dans le contexte historique des années 30, nous montrons que Journey se dissocie du communisme en cherchant à établir une position antifasciste viable. Notre argument est que Journey est un moment clé dans la définition de la poétique et de la rhétorique de Auden, dans son exploration du problème de la liberté, et dans l'attention que Isherwood porte à la situation politique des homosexuels aux temps modernes. Né de la rencontre avec une Chine déchirée par la guerre, l'ouvrage acquiert une perspective critique sur le colonialisme et une perspective messianique qui se situe à l'intérieur des grandes crises géopolitiques. Journey laisse entrevoir la réorientation religieuse imminente des auteurs.

En s'attardant aux dimensions poétique, politique, sexuelle et religieuse de Journey, cette thèse adopte des approches critiques appropriées à ses divers aspects. Elle éclaire le texte grâce à du matériel biographique et d'archives, à l'histoire de la critique du livre et en utilisant l'œuvre de chaque auteur pour expliquer celle de l'autre. Nous abordons le rapport entre l'homosexualité des auteurs et les traits formel, moral et politique de Journey et sur l'imbrication du livre dans des contextes interdiscursif, idéologique et historique. L'analyse textuelle des passages cruciaux met en lumière les interrelations des caractéristiques formelles et thématiques. Nous insistons sur une série de passages charnières où sont problématisées les questions de fin et de clôture et sur l'importance que jouent l'ironie, la réflexivité et la *mise en abyme* dans Journey. Notre discussion souligne l'importance de la

signification de la rencontre culturelle et inter-civilisationnelle avec la Chine. Ainsi, Journey s'avère une anticipation des mouvements idéologiques et politiques subséquents ainsi qu'un précurseur de la problématique littéraire postmoderne et postcoloniale de la fin de l'époque moderne et coloniale.

Mots clefs: Auden, Isherwood, les années trentes, l'homosexualité, les sonnets, le communisme, le messianisme, la guerre sino-japonaise

For my parents, Ken and Janet Brown,
and for Edwin

Of making many books there is no end.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation offers a multifaceted reading of the final collaboration of W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood. It shows their neglected Journey to a War to be a complex pivotal work, announcing turning points in the careers of Auden and Isherwood usually dated to their move to the United States; and registering turning points in twentieth-century political, social, literary, and ideological history. Situating Journey in the history of the 1930s, the argument shows that Journey turns away from Communism while attempting to establish a viable antifascist position. The argument presents Journey as a key moment in the definition of Auden's poetics and rhetoric, in his exploration of the problem of freedom, and in Isherwood's attentiveness to the political situation of modern homosexuals. Through its encounter with war-torn China, the book attains a critical perspective on the colonial world and a messianic perspective from within overwhelming geopolitical crises. Journey announces Auden and Isherwood's imminent religious reorientations.

Attentive to the book's poetic, political, sexual, and religious dimensions, this dissertation adopts critical approaches appropriate to Journey's different aspects. It illuminates the text using archival and biographical material and the history of critical responses to the book, and uses the work of each author to gloss that of the other. The discussion examines the relationship of the authors' homosexuality to Journey's formal, moral, and political features and the book's implication in interdiscursive, ideological, and historical contexts. Close readings of crucial passages reveal complex interrelations of formal and thematic features. A recurrent focus is a series of pivotal passages problematizing the issues of endings and closure. Another concern is Journey's insistence on irony, reflexivity, and the figure of the *mise en abyme*. The discussion emphasizes the significance of the cultural and inter-civilizational encounter with China. Journey is revealed as an anticipation of subsequent ideological and political developments and as a

late-modern, late-colonialist precursor of postmodern and postcolonial literary concerns.

KEY WORDS: Auden, Isherwood, 1930s, homosexuality, sonnets, communism, messianism, Sino-Japanese War

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INTRODUCTION

Journey to a War constitutes a major turning point in the work of W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, and registers as well a transitional moment in the history of twentieth-century British literature. This is not to say that Journey is a great universal masterpiece, only that with it Auden and Isherwood are involved in an important literary transformation. Part of Journey's historical significance derives from the standing of its authors in the late 1930s when Auden's preeminence among young British writers seemed almost self-evident and Isherwood "had been tipped, for every kind of good reason, as the most promising novelist of his generation" (Lehmann 233). So central to the British scene were Auden and Isherwood that Cyril Connolly could call their move to America, a move more or less coincident with the publication of Journey, "the most important literary event since the outbreak of the Spanish War" (cited in Carpenter Auden 290-1), and disgruntled British parliamentarians would call for the condemnation of the supposed cowardly treacherousness of their emigration. Whatever the vagaries of their subsequent reputations, or the ultimate judgements of their work, crucial aspects of Journey's importance are the fame Auden and Isherwood had achieved by 1938 as the literary leaders of their generation and the book's association with radical shifts in their careers.

Auden and Isherwood left England for the United States on January 19, 1939, their emigration seeming to initiate such thorough transformations in their lives and careers that critics have still not convincingly bridged the conceptual gaps between their early English and their later American-based careers. This dissertation demonstrates the sort of challenging multi-dimensional attentiveness to the work of both authors that such a critical bridging will require. January 19, 1939 was also the anniversary of Auden and Isherwood's departure for China. They had been engaged on their Chinese travel book throughout the previous year, and Journey shows that for both of them 1938 had been a year of

reassessment. The seeming unexpectedness of their emigration is in fact a fulfillment of conclusions arrived at after a year of self-examination and ideological reorientation during the writing of Journey. More than most writers, Isherwood and especially Auden felt the need throughout the 1930s and their whole careers to renew and transform themselves. The most radical of these self-transformations have usually been associated with their early years in the United States, but in many respects those controversial American transformations really begin with their journey to China and the writing of Journey.

If the pivotal significance of Journey for both its authors is not widely recognized, various reasons explain this critical neglect. From the time of its publication in March 1939, everything conspired to disrupt the reading of Journey. The factors that helped Journey on its way to relative obscurity are many: the book's experimental oddness; the foreignness of China to Western readers and later to Auden and Isherwood scholars; the immediate British sense of betrayal over Auden and Isherwood's emigration, a "defection" which still "ramifies to the furthest reaches" (Hendon 82) of Auden's and Isherwood's *oeuvres*; the disintegration of the London theatrical milieu to which the Auden-Isherwood collaboration had been central; the subsequent divergence of the paths of the two writers; the more imposing quality, relative to Journey, of the long poems that Auden produced during his first American decade and the seeming lightness of Isherwood's bohemian-Hollywoodian-Hindu later persona; the rapidity with which the outbreak of the Second World War rendered obsolete Journey's political perspectives; and later the dramatically changed conditions of the post-War West; the closing of China and the obliteration of Nationalist China after the Communist victory of 1949; the way Cold War polarities made Journey's questioning of communism and Marxian philosophy unreadable; the confusions consequent upon the author's political and religious transformations in the United States;

and finally, the fact that the interrelations of Journey's ideological concerns and its complex literariness anticipate both controversial ideological developments and the postmodern theoretical habits of reading that the book demands.

Just as we can understand the historical factors that made Journey difficult to read, so we can note developments that make Journey meaningful once more. Only after the *anni mirabili* of 1989-90 did a new world disorder emerge to which Journey can again speak. When the 1989 Democracy Movement and the massacre in Tiananmen Square broke the spell cast by the Chinese Communist Party's grand revolutionary narrative, they also seemed to reveal an ideologically unstable, potentially pluralist, country, reminiscent of the China Auden and Isherwood saw. China's subsequent rise as an international power has led as well to renewed interest in the early decades of modern China, including interest in the traumatizing effect of the anti-Japanese war on the modern Chinese nation. In a comparable way, by 1973 the Cultural Revolution had generated enough buzzing to prompt a second edition of Journey, though there is little evidence that the Maoist extremism that marked that time allowed a full response to the book's sceptical, self-doubting, conscientious perspectives on China and the West. To a significant degree, today's opening, expansive China makes a considered reading of Journey not only a possible but a compelling affair.

A related development was the end of the Cold War. Journey is much concerned with 1930s communism and Marxian philosophy, but it is a complex ambivalent concern. Even as it acknowledges the powerful contemporary appeal of Marxism, Journey announces the end of Soviet Communism as an ideological and political option for Auden and Isherwood. The Soviet Union, of course, would survive the catastrophes of the 1930s and 1940s, and in some respects positively thrive as the Cold War dominated the post-War international political scene for four and a half decades. Yet, rather than seeming

immediately relevant, Journey's oblique perspective on Marxism and Communism proved difficult to read during the Cold War, with some critics egregiously misreading it, and others responding to the book as an aberration. Journey's instructive critical engagement with Marxism, which foreshadows later developments in "Western Marxism" and post-modern debts to Marxism, became fully readable perhaps only with the end of paranoia about actually existing socialism in the Soviet sphere.

The current readability of Journey reflects as well the proliferation of theoretical approaches to literary studies. Without limiting itself to a particular framework, my own reading depends on critical approaches involving intertextuality, interdiscursivity, reader response theory, formalism, existentialism, historicism, Marxism, postcolonialism, postmodernism, deconstruction, critical theory, gay studies, and Queer theory. The interpretation of Journey requires these multiple approaches because the book's poetics and thematics anticipate so many of them, just as it anticipates several significant twentieth-century ideological developments.

My reading of Journey proceeds through eight chapters. Chapter 1 begins with a close reading of sonnet XXVII from "In Time of War," demonstrating the centrality of that poem in Journey. The opening chapter shows the coordination of thematic and formal concerns in XXVII as an exemplary instance of such coordination in Journey. The reading of XXVII effectively involves a reading of the entire first part of "In Time of War," the sonnet sequence that is among Auden's major achievements of the 1930s and one of the defining moments in the development of his poetry. Chapter 2 argues that XXVII is a crucial poem not only because of its function as a *mise en abyme* for the entirety of Journey, but because of Auden's development in that sonnet of the theme of freedom and necessity that is so central to his work and to the ideological history of the twentieth-century.

XXVII's exploration of the themes of freedom and necessity is set in the contexts of Auden's dissenting engagement with Marxist thought and of his abiding concerns with the ideological dimensions of Christianity, homosexuality, and poetics. Chapter 3 discusses the collaborative poetics and structure of Journey as a whole in order to counter the standard critical complaint that the book is incoherent. Similarly, chapter 4 examines the dynamic coherence of the disruptive irony and infinite reflexivity that are at play in the Auden and Isherwood collaboration in Journey. In Chapter 5, I turn my attention to the key structural and thematic issues of the multiple endings in Journey, and to close readings of two premature endings of Isherwood's "Travel-Diary" which foreground political and moral concerns that are central to Isherwood. Chapter 6 is a meticulous examination of the historical and political implications of the provocative actual ending of "Travel-Diary." If previous chapters are concerned with thematic and formal issues, Chapter 6 demonstrates the entanglement of those issues and of Journey with the historical actuality of China and the twentieth-century. Finally, in Chapters 7 and 8, reading the conclusion that Auden's "Commentary" provides for Journey, I look at the place of that poem's messianic vision in Auden's work and in Journey and of that vision's relation to the political and historical context of 1938.

Though no one has insisted on it as I do, several critics together demonstrate Journey's pivotal significance. Ideas of pivotal moments and major turning points abound in discussions of Isherwood and especially Auden. "Turning Points" is the title of Hendon's chapter on Auden's work from the mid-thirties through the beginning of the forties, the period of Journey. My case for Journey as that period's major turning point finds support in the fact that the transition from Mendelson's Early Auden to his Later Auden coincides historically with the publication of Journey, and further support in the juxtaposition of

radically different assessments of Journey. Thus, in chapter 2, I show how Replogle's insistence on "In Time of War" as the end of Auden's engagement with Marxism dovetails with Beach's insistence on "In Time of War" as the point where Auden's Christian revision of his canon begins. In chapter 5, I contrast Fussell's sense of Journey as the end of modernist, colonial travel books with Naipaul's suggestion that in Journey we can see the emergence of a new kind of postcolonial travel writing. In chapter 7, I show that Mendelson's and McDiarmid's reviews of complementary series of poems, respectively Auden's series of early redemptive poems and his later series of visionary 'city' poems, each neglect Journey's "Commentary," a poem that nonetheless links both series. These paired critics' contrasting conclusions all point to Journey as an important pivotal moment.

Only Stuart Christie has insisted on the transformative effect, on Auden and Auden's work, of the experience in China, noting that "After China, Auden's poetics would be forever" changed. Christie argues for the transformative consequences of "the failure of the liberal Western subject to secure identity within any colonial epistemological framework, combined with the ceaseless desire to find a country someplace else, beyond colonialism, where (just as impossibly) he could" (145-6). Along with the wrenching political and epistemological realities of colonialism, the transformation of Auden and Isherwood in Journey involves several other forces or factors. Their transformation is an effect of their experiences of an immense geo-political crisis and of war and aerial bombardment; of their exposure to the arbitrariness of death; of their encounter with the disorienting otherness of China; of an intuition of an open-ended freedom; of the confrontation of homosexual eroticism with morality; of intimations cosmic, religious, and historical; and of a conceptual and ideological complexity which threatens to nullify both their experience of subjectivity and Journey's unity and coherence. The overwhelming

realities which Journey seeks to encompass combine to produce a transformative experience of the sublime to which Journey is the perhaps inevitably inadequate response.

Journey is not just a pivotal moment in its authors' careers and in literary history; it is the culmination of the Auden-Isherwood collaborations. It recounts their Chinese journey to be sure, but it also is the first and last explicit representation of Auden and Isherwood's collaborative relationship. It retains key elements from their collaborative dramas. From The Dog Beneath the Skin, it keeps the zany humour and the themes of the quest and the city; from The Ascent of F6, it keeps the theme of the Test, the mountain climbing expedition, and an eye for geopolitics and colonialism; from On The Frontier, it keeps a leftist antifascist stance, a Marxian perspective on international conflict, and a preoccupation with ethical, conceptual, and structural dualities. Though Stephen Spender considers the Auden and Isherwood plays "strikingly inferior to the separate works of either collaborator" (Haffenden 200), this broadly held view neither diminishes the importance of the collaborations in each author's development, nor conveys their literary significance and imperfectly realized potential. Moreover, despite the fact that some critics are dismissive of Journey also, Spender's judgement may not apply to Auden and Isherwood's final non-dramatic collaboration. Summers, for one, calls their travel book a "success," "the only really distinguished product of the Auden-Isherwood collaboration" (67).

For Summers, Journey is important as one of the period's "most interesting explorations of the nature of war, a subject that preoccupied young writers of the 1930s" (44). Summers is right, and Journey's many fascinations have been underestimated. A book about a war and the nature of war, Journey is also significant and unique as a book about China; as a comprehensive response to the political and ideological crises of the 1930s; as a representation of the relationship of Auden and Isherwood; as a major turning point in the

careers of both authors; and as an exemplary late-modernist text foreshadowing postmodern developments in literature, literary theory, and twentieth-century ideology.

I have noted several instances where the juxtaposition of partial critical views of Journey makes possible a more complete understanding of the book. In other cases, we see critics perceiving similar qualities in Journey, but judging them very differently. Where one critic sees an incoherent project, or an aesthetic failure, ideological confusion, or annoying campiness, another holds up the same qualities of Journey as examples of a kind of work that was not only an appropriate response to its situation, but that was a precursor of later values and sensibilities. The difference in judgement is often a generational one, and coincides with a shift from modernist to postmodernist perspectives. Marsha Bryant's call for "a generative recovery" of Auden's documentary work in Journey to reinvigorate documentary representation in the 1990s (15) is one indication of Journey's availability for critical and creative recuperation today.

I have made a special effort to recover Journey as an instructive record of a Western encounter with China. For Journey is significant not just as an example of 1930s British travel writing, but as travel writing about China, a civilization with which the West has an acute imaginative relationship. In the histories of Western responses to Chinese civilization, Journey comes at the end of a period of intense sinological curiosity: "Westerners were, by the late 1920s and 1930s, being exposed to an extraordinary upsurge of works about China or inspired by it. Not since the middle of the eighteenth century had there been such interest in the country or its culture" (Spence Search 387). Leibniz called China the 'Anti-Europe'; more recently Simon Leys has argued that it is through the encounter with the alterity of China that the West becomes most fully aware of the idiosyncratic limits of its cultural self (61). "China was utterly different," noted Auden in

Big
How?

1963, remembering the disorientation occasioned by Auden and Isherwood's Chinese journey. "Spain was a culture one knew. One could understand what was happening, what things meant. But China was impossible to know" (cited in Carpenter 239). After six months of traveling through China neither Auden nor Isherwood "had come away with more than (as Auden put it) a 'tourist's acquaintance' with China." He and Isherwood could be said to have left China "empty-handed" (239), except that the experience of its radical alterity and unknowability are essential to any encounter with China. Understanding little of China, having spent their six months journey constantly in each other's company, staring into the abyss of the Euro-American West's great crises, they are compelled to turn their encounter with China into an occasion for self-understanding. In tandem with its immediate antifascist, United Front, and journalistic objectives, Journey develops into a literary exercise in Western self-understanding and self-transformation. Such reflective literariness is exactly what Agnes Smedley explicitly sought to avoid in China Fights Back, her own book on the Sino-Japanese War: "I beg of you to help me [edit my manuscript]," she wrote, "just don't make it 'literary'" (xvii). By contrast, Journey—engaged though it was, valuable record of a historical crisis though it is—attains whatever exemplary literary significance it has as a detached work of Western self-understanding. Yet the urgent immediacy of late-1930s warfare and the strange otherness of Chinese civilization remain thoroughly implicated in the complex reflexiveness of Journey, the self-questioning on the part of both Auden and Isherwood, their questioning of each other, and their questioning of their culture's habits, values, conceptual orders, and historical perspectives. Though as a response to war-torn China Journey can appear annoyingly superficial, recalling the historical specificities and actuality of Auden and Isherwood's Chinese encounter reveals the book's thorough involvement with its original context.

CHAPTER 1

ON SONNET XXVII FROM "IN TIME OF WAR"

"At the Beginning I shall *not* begin"

Letter to Lord Byron

HOW SONNETS END AND WHAT THEY DO

Every literary composition, writes Baudelaire, should be composed with its dénouement in mind: “je suis de ceux (et nous sommes bien rares) qui croient que toute composition littéraire, même critique, doit être faite et manoeuvrée en vue d’un dénouement. Tout, même un Sonnet; jugez le labeur” (Correspondance 3: 39). The corresponding principle for interpretation is that the way a work ends, the way it works to resolve its complications will be essential to its meaning. Baudelaire makes his point about the importance of the dénouement in a rare discussion of poetic technique, specifically in a discussion of the sonnet’s properties. In fact, the only other time Baudelaire comments on the peculiar workings of the sonnet form, he again emphasizes the exemplary case of a sonnet’s dénouement (45). An important aspect of Baudelaire’s originality in nineteenth-century France has to do with his adoption of the sonnet as his principal poetic form. He finds in the sonnet’s two-part structure and turn a model for poetic and rhetorical effects that define much of his work such that there is a demonstrable ‘sonnetization’ even of the other forms Baudelaire uses. Baudelaire moreover reinfects the sonnet’s thematic traditions to represent himself as a “Petrarch de l’horrible” and define a new poetic sensibility for modernity. A pivotal figure in the history of the sonnet, Baudelaire achieved a secure place in European literature only belatedly in the 1930s when he was taken up by critics like Walter Benjamin and T.S. Eliot. Baudelaire’s work became a key reference too for Isherwood and Auden, those English *Wunderkinder* who worked so closely through the 1930s: at the beginning of his career, the assiduous diary keeper Isherwood published, at Auden’s urging, a translation of Baudelaire’s “Journaux Intimes” with an introduction by Eliot; Auden for his part in 1930 includes Baudelaire in a list of “boon companions” (English 48) and again in 1940 in the list of the poets before whom his poetry will be

judged (Collected 204).

In the late 1930s and early 1940s Auden would prove himself a great sonneteer who, like Baudelaire almost a century earlier, could make the convention-ridden sonnet a vehicle for poetry that rewrote conventional expectations. In Journey, Auden and Isherwood's last collaborative work, Baudelaire's influence as both keeper of an intimate journal and self-conscious sonneteer comes to fruition in Isherwood's "Travel-Diary" and in Auden's sonnet sequence in "In Time of War." Like Baudelaire's, Auden's innovations have to do with poetic form and with the redefinition of lyric subjectivity and themes. In a noteworthy parallel to Baudelaire, Auden's work with the sonnet in Journey makes an essential contribution to the development of his overall poetics and performs a defining role in the elaboration of his entire *oeuvre*. As with Baudelaire, there is a 'sonnetization' of Auden's poetry and poetics. It is especially in his "In Time of War" sequence that the sonnet form enables Auden to attain a poetic, rhetorical, and conceptual lucidity that will remain a permanent feature of his poetry.

The transformative importance of "In Time of War" in Auden's work is clear if we turn from the opening of Mendelson's Later Auden to the close of his Early Auden. In the introduction to the later book, Mendelson isolates "a characteristic pattern" in Auden's poems after 1939 (xix). In this pattern, Auden presents readers

with two different kinds of experience in sequence. The first offers the aesthetic, formal, ritualized pleasures of a world of myth [. . .]; The second experience is subtly but unmistakably different. [. . .] the language becomes simpler, more straightforward, and makes a personal, not a ritual, statement about the poet's condition and ours [. . .] The mythical world has been disenchanted, and transformed into parable. Typically the poem returns to its heightened ritual style in its closing lines, but its brief descent into a darker tone has altered its mood. (xix-xxi)

This sequence of myth "matches the structure Auden described in the typical detective story, in which the ritualized aesthetic world of the vicarage garden, 'an innocent society' in

a state of grace', is suddenly transformed by the act of murder into a world of guilt where 'the law becomes a reality and for a time all must live in its shadow'" (xxi).

If this is the characteristic pattern after 1939, it is also true that an analogous pattern organizes earlier poems like 1937's "As I Walked Out One Evening." Be that as it may, identifying such a recurrent pattern in the work of a writer known for his chameleon-like changes—"you can never step in the same Auden twice" complains Randall Jarrell (139)—is important for comprehending the unity within Auden's mercurial diversity. Understanding, just how this pattern emerges should prove fundamental to a comprehension of Auden's work in its entirety. Fortunately, Mendelson towards the end of Early has already pointed to a 1938 text that is crucial to Auden's 'discovery' and elaboration of what will become his characteristic rhetorical and imaginative pattern after 1939. This crucial text is the final sonnet of "In Time of War" in which Auden "evokes our fantasies of escape: the dream of a free Arcadian past, 'the warm nude ages of instinctive poise,' and the dream of a planned utopian future where 'the disciplined movements of the heart / Can follow for ever and ever its harmless ways.' But—and the entire sequence depends on the dialectic implied by this recurring word—'But we are articted to error'" (357). Although Mendelson does not comment further on how "In Time of War" depends on the dialectic of its recurring "but," he does emphasize the relevance of this "but" to the sonnet sequence's prime poetic influence and counter-example, the mystic sonneteer Rilke.

For Mendelson the line "Certainly praise: let the song mount again and again" which opens sonnet XIII "borrows from Rilke's tone of *dennoch preisen*." However the emphatic 'Certainly praise' of the opening "intimates the qualifying *But* that will soon follow"(352): "Certainly praise [. . . / . . .] But hear the morning's injured weeping, and know why." "Praise, in Auden's work in 1938 and 1939," Mendelson notes, "was an explicit echo of

Rilke's *dennoch Preisen*. Auden used the word with the same troubled ambivalence he felt about Rilke, who stood for the kind of poetic vocation Auden simultaneously treasured and mistrusted. He honored Rilke's ecstatic visionary freedom while he recognized its indifference to suffering and injustice" (Later 6-7). Mendelson thus gives two examples of how Auden uses the conjunction 'but' in to qualify the initial "aesthetic [. . .] pleasures of a world of myth" and "ecstatic visionary freedom" with a second statement about our actual condition: in XIII there is Rilke's ecstasy, but then there are the "injured weeping;" in XXVII there are our escape fantasies, but then there is our inescapable error.

This thematic and imaginative pattern of an initial moment that is corrected by a second moment becomes an essential, defining feature of Auden's later poetry. Far from being Auden's unique discovery, however, this pattern was already there to be developed as a fundamental formal feature of the Petrarchan sonnet, with its characteristic contrast of octave and sestet signalled by a turn at line nine. Looking at the instances of the recurrent, dialectic-determining 'buts' in "In Time of War," one indeed sees that they (or in two cases, their grammatical near equivalents) occur most frequently at the beginning of the ninth line (v. I, V, VI, X, XIII, XVI, XVII), or, as often happens in sonnets, either at the 'minor' turns between quatrains or at premature or delayed 'major' turns (X, XI, XVIII, XXVII).

One could surmise that it is through the sonnets of "In Time of War" that Auden first fully recognizes the thematic and formal potential of what will be the characteristic structure of his post-1939 poetry. The question of what came first, the mature pattern or Auden's discovery of it in the sonnet, is a chicken or egg sort of question. Did Auden return to the sonnet in "In Time of War" because of its appropriateness as a vehicle for a rhetorical pattern already emerging as a defining feature of his work? Or did his work with the sonnet in "In Time of War" lead him to an awareness of a significance in the pattern?

The congruence of sonnet form and rhetorical or thematic pattern in “In Time of War” is an example of Auden’s genius for seizing on the expressive potential of a poetic form suited to his subject matter. To an unusual degree in Auden’s poetics, form involves a comment on or an analogy to what is being said. Accordingly, the sonnet with its central turn is the appropriate form for him to develop the two-step sequence that will remain an essential feature of his poems.

Just as Mendelson not only draws our attention to the turn from an initial mythic to a subsequent disenchanted phase, but also points to a poem’s return “in its closing lines” to its original “heightened ritual style” as part of the pattern of Auden’s rhetoric, so we will find a concluding gesture of return in the sonnets of “In Time of War.” This return occurs as the sonnets’ endings direct us onward to the next instalment in the human epic that Auden recounts in the sequence. In the case of the concluding XXVII, the dynamic of this return to an original state is especially complex and intricate. Thus, along with the turn, Baudelaire’s emphasis on the endings of literary works and sonnets in particular will be critical in an understanding Auden’s convention-rewriting, subjectivity-reorienting sequence.

The question of endings is, in fact, crucial for comprehending the whole of Journey. We will begin to appreciate this as we examine XXVII, a poem which confirms the observations of both Mendelson and Baudelaire. Indeed XXVII and how it ends have an exemplary significance. For one thing, XXVII must achieve a two-fold labour of unravelling—not only must its dénouement bring XXVII to a close on its own terms, but the poem must serve as a conclusion to the entire sonnet sequence, “summing up the various aspects of [the human condition] defined in the earlier sonnets” (Spears 149). The ways the ending of XXVII deals with the complex pressures of performing its double resolution will draw us into questions which not only animate this sonnet and the whole of “In Time of

War,” but into questions which run all through Journey and which have a more general import. The formal and thematic issues complicating XXVII and its conclusion complicate the entire book and prove as significant to Auden’s development as the mature imaginative and rhetorical pattern which emerges from the sonnets of “In Time of War.” Close attention to XXVII reveals that it provides a remarkable encapsulation of Journey’s thematic developments and a climactic review of Auden’s struggles to define his mature rhetorical pattern, to indicate the new horizons revealed in Journey, and to imagine an ending for Auden and Isherwood’s last book.

SONNET XXVII AS JOURNEY’S STRUCTURAL CENTRE AND PIVOTAL MOMENT

Few poems encapsulate more neatly than XXVII the core poetic, ethical, political, and religious features of Auden’s work. More than a presentation in miniature of issues which Auden would explore more exhaustively elsewhere, XXVII also represents a pivotal moment in Auden’s development. In XXVII, as in “In Time of War” as a whole, we can see the definitive coming into focus of several crucial aspects of Auden’s mature poetics. We see the emergence of the pattern Mendelson describes in which an enchanting, but erroneous myth is succeeded by, or rather transformed into, a disenchanting moral parable. We are also able to see an illustration of how Auden’s handling of the relationship of content and poetic form relates to his preoccupation with the human experiences of freedom and necessity. Finally, we see a crucial statement of Auden’s recognition of the centrality of the themes of freedom and necessity to his poetics and his whole *oeuvre*. Auden not only succeeds in XXVII in defining these central elements of his poetics, he also offers in the lines “Each intricate maze / Has a plan and the disciplined movements of the heart / Can follow forever and ever its harmless ways” a memorable description of what will be increasingly recognizable characteristics of his own poetry and ideas about poetry.

In addition to these issues in the articulation of Auden's "po-ethics," as Seamus Heaney characterizes Auden's thinking about poetry (Electric 55), the sonnets of "In Time of War" and XXVII in particular represent a pivotal moment in several ways. Specifically XXVII and the other sonnets point to the religious turn that Auden's work will soon take. They signal too a concomitant turn away from 1930s Marxian philosophy and politics. These controversial turns are clearly reflected in the criticism that has accumulated around Auden's work in which critics of varying ideological dispositions identify "In Time of War", not only as Auden's definitive achievement of the 1930s, but also as a crucial moment of reorientation for Auden. More obliquely, the sonnets reveal an understanding of sexuality at a crisis point in the history of modern homosexuality, a crisis that Isherwood represents obliquely in his "Travel-Diary." Following Isherwood, Auden's sonnets situate homosexuality, neither in the medical context of psychoanalytic pathology, where it frequently is in Auden's early work, nor in the context of sexual perversion and immorality, where it is in some of Auden's earlier writing and in Isherwood's Mr. Norris and Goodbye, but within a socialized view of human sexuality and a radical and complex view of human freedom. This pivotal significance of XXVII in Auden's development is representative of the importance of Journey as a turning point not only in Auden's career, but, as we shall see, in Isherwood's career too. Beyond the works of either Auden or Isherwood, XXVII and Journey mark pivotal moments in the histories of both Western and Chinese homosexuality and in the ideological history of the twentieth century.

The idea that Journey represents several coincidental turning points in Auden and Isherwood's careers, and more broadly in history and literary history, is a key contention in my discussion of this underappreciated book. In the context of my promotion of the idea of the book's critical importance, it is important to attend carefully to XXVII because within

Journey, XXVII constitutes a textual *mise en abyme*; that is, XXVII offers an embedded image of Journey in its entirety. The idea of the *mise en abyme* is in fact essential to important structural and thematic features of Journey. This figure and the ways in which XXVII functions as a *mise en abyme* therefore require some preliminary comment here.

A literary *mise en abyme*, as Dällenbach defines it, is “any aspect enclosed within a work that shows a similarity with the work that contains it” (8). For Bal, the modes by which *aises en abyme* may be embedded within a text are multiple; thus, a *mise en abyme* refers to “a relevant and continuous aspect of the text [. . .] by means of a resemblance, one or several times” (52). In the case of XXVII, we will find that complex thematic, formal, and narratological aspects of the sonnet mirror crucial features of Journey as a whole. This *mise en abyme* relationship of XXVII to Journey involves several kinds of resemblance between part and whole. Thematically, we will find that religious, erotic, and political dimensions of XXVII recur as principal concerns of the book. Formally, we will find two things. One is that the crucial reflexive relationship between the before of the octave and the after of the sestet implicit in the two-part structure of the sonnet recurs in analogous forms throughout the book. The second formal quality of XXVII that recurs elsewhere in Journey is a sort of infinite self-referentiality. We will find also that the story of XXVII’s wanderings is representative of the journey of Auden and Isherwood that is the book’s subject. Finally, we will find that XXVII’s ending (which involves a complex open-ended closure and a three-fold infinite regress to the sonnet’s own beginning and to the very beginning of the book and to the beginning of Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary” section) is emblematic of Journey’s problematization of its own ending. These multiple analogies and connections between XXVII and the larger text of Journey will become clear either in the discussion of XXVII which follows or later when we turn to a discussion of Isherwood’s

contributions to the book.

There is, however, a further point regarding the nature of *mises en abyme* and the place of XXVII in Journey. In The Mirror in the Text, Dällenbach notes that the relation of a *mise en abyme* to the text in which it is embedded can be variously prospective, retrospective, or retroprospective. A prospective *mise en abyme* reflects what a text will do before the text does it; a retrospective *mise en abyme* reflects what a text has done after the text has done it; while a retroprospective *mise en abyme* reflects what a text does by revealing aspects of the text that are both anterior and posterior to its occurrence in the text (60). A retroprospective *mise en abyme* reviews what a text has revealed up to the occurrence of the *mise en abyme* and prefigures what a text has yet to reveal. For Dällenbach, a retroprospective *mise en abyme* functions as a pivot within a text (89-90). Following Dällenbach, Bal remarks that “the retroprospective *mise en abyme*, which occupies an intermediate position between that which is known and that which remains to be uncovered, is proportionally and qualitatively privileged. It allows ‘the reader to presume starting from that which it summarizes’ [. . .] It is the structural centre of the narrative, even if it is for compositional reasons, displaced toward the beginning or toward the end” (Bal 50). Within Journey, XXVII is such a retroprospective *mise en abyme* and, as such, XXVII represents the “structural centre” and pivot of the overall narrative of Journey.

That XXVII represents a ‘proportionally and qualitatively privileged structural centre’ in Journey implies not only that it will make sense to speak of a centre in such a manifestly multcentred book, and not only that Journey, against all appearances and against critical consensus, can be regarded as a single unified text. It also implies that reading XXVII attentively should provide a privileged means of comprehending the entirety of Journey. Accordingly, whatever significance XXVII has will be strongly suggestive of the

significance of Journey. Establishing that XXVII is a pivotal moment for Auden is a key objective of my discussion of that poem. In so far as XXVII is a figure for Journey as a whole, that pivotal significance of XXVII is suggestive too of the place of Journey in the *oeuvres* of Isherwood as well as Auden, and in the literary history of the twentieth-century.

READING SONNET XXVII

Let us begin, then, by attending closely to the conclusion of “In Time of War,” sonnet XXVII, Journey’s structural centre and retrospective pivot:

Wandering lost upon the mountains of our choice,
 Again and again we sigh for an ancient South,
 For the warm nude ages of instinctive poise,
 For the taste of joy in the innocent mouth.

Asleep in our huts, how we dream of a part
 In the glorious balls of the future; each intricate maze
 Has a plan, and the disciplined movements of the heart
 Can follow for ever and ever its harmless ways.

We envy streams and houses that are sure:
 But we are articulated to error; we
 Were never nude and calm like a great door,

And never will be perfect like the fountains;
 We live in freedom by necessity,
 A mountain people dwelling among mountains. (Prose 1: 680)

The poem speaks of a first-person plural subject whose lost, impoverished, envious, erroneous, and imperfect state is contrasted to a vanished golden age and a utopian future. On the one hand, in the first quatrain are the warm nude poise and joy of an ancient South; on the other hand, in the second quatrain is a planned, intricate, disciplined, harmless, and glorious future. Though we dream or sigh for them, the past and the future utopias are recognized as forever beyond us; for, as a revised version of the first line has it, we will remain forever “Chilled by the Present, its gloom and its noise” (Collected 193).

The poem’s disavowal of the false certainties of nostalgia and utopianism and its

acceptance of irremediable existential uncertainty are at once a timelessly classic statement about human experience and eminently relevant to twentieth-century actuality. Not only does the poem conform to Auden's mature rhetorical and imaginative pattern as described by Mendelson, but the lines "each intricate maze / Has a plan, and the disciplined movements of the heart / Can follow for ever and ever its harmless ways" announce a formalist aesthetic recognizably that of the mature Auden. Those lines, with all their irony, could almost serve as a motto for Auden's later poetry. In XXVII, they can certainly serve as a self-referential heuristic principle for interpreting this intricate and disciplined poem.

Like most of Auden's "Sonnets from China" (as he renamed "In Time of War" when he revised it in 1960 for his Collected Shorter Poems), XXVII seems only obliquely concerned with China or with the Chineseness of Auden and Isherwood's experiences. The authors of Journey have indeed wandered in mountains and slept in huts—so these huts may be Chinese, but mountains are a consistent feature of Auden's *paysages moralisés*, and not one solely associated with China. A further link to Journey's Chinese context could be read into XXVII's penultimate line—"We live in freedom by necessity." The line alludes to Engels' *AntiDühring*, thus acknowledging the Marxism that was certainly in the air during Auden and Isherwood's Chinese trip, as they met Communists like Agnes Smedley and Chou En Lai and sought to assess, among other things, the prospects for Communism in China. As we shall see, though, Auden and Isherwood, in spite of their left-wing reputations, do not have much to say about the communist option for China. In any case, Marxist and Communist ideas about freedom and necessity and about once and future utopias, were such current issues in the late 1930s that these things too cannot be regarded as having been exclusively provoked by the Chinese situation out of which XXVII arose. Christopher Caudwell, for instance, used the same formula from Engels—"Freedom is the

recognition of necessity”—as the epigraph to Illusion and Reality, Caudwell’s “study of the sources of Poetry,” which Auden reviewed favourably in early 1937; and in “Morality in an Age of Change,” an essay which like XXVII dates from late 1938, Auden refers to the same formula from Engels “as a famous definition” (Prose 1: 478).

Along with this engagement with Communist political philosophy, there is another, equally evident, and yet unremarked, dimension to XXVII that seems to lead far away from China. For the poem’s evocations of homosexuality are unmistakable, though the critical silence regarding them would lead one to think otherwise. For, the first quatrain’s “ancient South” involves an allusion to ancient Greece, the perennial Paradise Lost for alienated Western homosexuals. In this poem, homosexuals’ present lostness recalls the idea of Greece’s gratifying long-vanished cult of bodily equilibrium; in that ancient South a guiltless mouth could taste joy—the suggestion of fellatio deriving not just from the emphasis on the oral, but from the sexual connotations of joy’s etymological association with the French “jouissance.” These evocations and associations are reinforced by allusions to Baudelaire’s description of a similar, though explicitly Greek, “ancient South”:

J’aime le souvenir de ces époques nues,
 Dont Phoebus se plaisait à dorer les statues.
 Alors l’homme et la femme en leur agilité
 Jouissaient sans mensonge et sans anxiété [. . .]
 [. . .] Ces natives grandeurs, aux lieux où se font voir
 La nudité de l’homme et celle de la femme.

Auden cites this passage in his 1938 introduction to The Oxford Book of Light Verse (Prose 1: 434); whereas though Baudelaire envisions his ‘nude epochs’ as heterosexual, Auden’s “we” imagines the “ancient South” as predominantly homosexual.

A homosexual fantasy informs the sonnet’s vision of the future too, with its dream “of a part / In the glorious balls of the future.” “Part” and “balls” are synonymous with ‘role’ and with ‘dances,’ so that the line appears to be about a dream that “we” also will

participate in the glorious dances of the future. Dancing here (as it only sometimes does in Auden) serves as a symbol, on the one hand, of human unity and harmony, and, on the other, of an unselfconscious heterosexual glamour and beauty denied homosexuals (cf. “We Too Had Known Golden Hours” and the third interlude in Frontier). “Part” and “balls” can be taken, however, in an indecent sense too—as referring to testicles and to the seam bisecting a scrotum. Here the phrase “glorious balls” echoes the sexual banter of close friends, or of lovers and fellow bath-house habitués like Auden and Isherwood.¹

In XXVII, the scandalous vulgarity of its evocations of fellatio, scrota, and testicles enliven and make lewdly comic the sonnet’s octave. Other homosexual *double entendres* occur in Auden’s work, as in this passage from New Year Letter that recalls XXVII’s superimposition of sexual vulgarity and philosophical concerns, and its opposition of the idea of a carnal innocence to actual temporal human distress:

Yet anytime, how casually,
 Out of his organized distress
 An accidental happiness,
 Catching man off his guard, *will blow him*
 Out of his life in time to show him
 The field of Being where he may
 Unconscious of Becoming, play
 With the Eternal Innocence
 In unimpeded utterance. (Collected 221 [my italics])

Auden’s gestures towards homosexuality are not always as prankish and crude as this reference to a blow job, but in XXVII’s quatrains, they are both. Some readers will take these homosexual indiscretions as embellishments, and others as defacements, of the grand

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The details of this not quite private erotic and anatomical in-joke anticipate by ten years the *samizdat* “purely pornographic poem” (Auden to Kallman, cited in Mendelson Later 298) entitled “The Platonic Blow” in which Auden expands on the same features of the male genitals: “I admired [. . .] the neat / Sutures of the capacious bag” and “[I] tickled his heavy, voluminous balls.” This psychoanalytically rich image of sutures on the male genitals compares with Auden’s use of the image of “the wound” and of the idea of “being wounded” to write about homosexuality in The Orators and about the acceptance of Christ in For The Time Being.

public edifice of Auden's canonical work. In the former case, Auden's indiscretions would constitute something akin to a sexual Democracy Wall and, in the latter, a sort of toilet stall graffiti supporting Kimball's case against the seediness that "sets in shockingly early" in Auden's career (106). Such homosexual vulgarity is, however, only one expression of the homosexuality that is an essential aspect of Auden's vision and poetics.

The more one considers the interplay between XXVII's satire on political nostalgia and utopianism and its evocations of homosexual alienation, the more complex and uncertain becomes one's interpretation of the poem. It is easy enough to imagine that the poem deflates, even mocks, its own tempting nostalgic and utopian political visions by allowing shocking and indecorous sexual fantasies to disrupt and ridicule them. Nonetheless the gravity of the poem's political theme reasserts itself undiminished in the sestet. Furthermore, the ironically disruptive sexual lewdness which deflates the nostalgic and utopian visions' pretensions to political seriousness becomes with the slightest reflection problematic in itself.

Take the "innocent mouth" that would taste the joy of fellatio; whose mouth is it anyway? There should be only two candidates: homosexual men and heterosexual women. Perhaps no sexual act is ever entirely innocent; relative to the homosexual version, though, most dominant moral codes would, perhaps erroneously, hold that heterosexual fellatio is more innocent or at least less guilty than the homosexual act. And if the second quatrain's "glorious balls" and our knowledge of Auden's queerness support a reading in which the mouth is homosexual, the first quatrain's "instinctive poise" seems instead to refer to heterosexuality's non-inverted, 'natural' sexuality. It would certainly be unusual, again from the perspective of dominant moral codes and natural philosophies, including those Auden espoused, to describe the celebration of homosexuality in ancient Greece as

“instinctive”—homosexuality being on the contrary commonly taken as one of the chief instances of the counter instinctive and the unnatural.

The ancient South of the poem may therefore not be ‘counter instinctive’ homosexual Greece at all, but rather the instinctive hetero-consecrating Eden in which Eve’s mouth was not yet guilty of having eaten a forbidden fruit. Or more ambiguously, XXVII’s ancient South may be either Hellas or Eden. The sexual myths of these two ancient contexts have been evoked earlier in “In Time of War”—the second sonnet responds to the Biblical story of a lost Eden, and the eleventh comments on the myth of Ganymede; but in ways that are characteristic of the disorienting qualities of “In Time of War,” Auden disturbs the presuppositions of both myths. XI develops the story of Zeus’ paternalistic homoerotic desire into an unanticipatedly sinister revelation about the hateful nature of the beloved. II reviews the story of the loss of Eden in terms that allow one to read it straight as a commentary on the orthodox heterosexual myth; or, to read it as a comment on the situation of homosexual lovers, and of Auden and Isherwood themselves:

They wondered why the fruit had been forbidden;
 It taught them nothing new. They hid their pride,
 But did not listen much when they were chidden;
 They knew exactly what to do outside.
 [.]
 They wept and quarrelled; freedom was so wild.
 In front, maturity, as he ascended,
 Retired like a horizon from the child;

The dangers and the punishments grew greater;
 And the way back by angels was defended
 Against the poet and the legislator. (Prose 1: 667)

Homosexual lovers know “exactly what to do outside” in order to conceal their homosexuality from a world that has, to them perhaps inexplicably, forbidden it. They must even conceal “their pride,” perhaps as Auden and Isherwood had to hide their periodic homosexual chauvinism. Certainly, as Isherwood remembers in Kind, Auden and

Isherwood on their Chinese journey “wept and quarrelled” like rival queens (303-5). “Maturity” too is a concern for homosexuals, since homosexuality is condemned as immature. They are acutely aware as well of the legal and imaginative challenges to the legislator’s² and the poet’s desire to escape “the dangers and the punishments” and return, against the divine will, to an Edenic sexual innocence.

Recalling XI and II, XXVII’s first quatrain manages to embrace both of Western culture’s principal homosexual and heterosexual fantasies of a paradisaical original sexuality, the one in the philosophical homosexuality of Greece, the other in the religious heterosexuality of Israel. The poem’s first person pronoun “we” might be taken to embrace the ancient poetic lesbianism of Greece as well—were it not for the “balls” in the second quatrain, the habitual neglect of women’s subjectivities in 1930s writing by British men, and Auden’s tendency to think of lesbianism as sexless: witness Auden’s sarcastic caricature of Rilke with his “bodiless visionary ecstasies” as “the greatest lesbian poet since Sappho” (v. Mendelson Early 284n).

The ambiguities concerning the identity of the male homosexual or female heterosexual fellating mouth and about the plural subject “we” are characteristic of a general ambiguity involving all subjective pronouns in “In Time of War.” O’Neill and Reeves describe how “the impression of a collective consciousness is disorientatingly conveyed by the indeterminate subject of the sonnets, in the first twelve usually ‘he’,

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The ambiguity about whether “the poet and the legislator” in Auden’s lines “And the way back by angels was defended / Against the poet and the legislator” refer to a single figure who is both poet and legislator or to two separate figures is significant given that Auden found Shelley’s description of poets as the unacknowledged legislators of the world “to be the silliest remark ever made about poets,” observing that “that sounds more like the secret police” (Prose 1: 348). With respect to the poet’s desire in XI to evade dangers, punishments, and angels, and return to Eden, it is impossible to tell whether the poet Auden is evoking his own futile homosexual utopianism, or his periodic wish (which Isherwood did not share) to turn away from homosexuality back to the heterosexual normality he has left behind.

sometimes ‘they’, until in sonnet XIV the ‘we’ of Auden and our present epoch enters” (172). Regular unannounced shifts of context and subjective pronoun contribute to uncertainties about the identity of those varying subjects so that the “sonnets remain blurred and out of focus” (Davison 141) and “over and over again the reader is put to great pains to identify the character or type referred to in a given sonnet or even to make out the general theme of the poem” (Beach 42)

Beach complains that such disorienting ambiguities could have been avoided had Auden provided the poems with titles. Auden easily could have done so too, since Journey’s opening sequence does have titles, and since he published about a third of the sonnets of “In Time of War” (or versions of them) at various times with unambiguous titles—The Bard (sonnet VII), Ganymede (XI), Economic Man (XII), The New Age (XII), Surgical Ward (XVII), Press Conference, Air Raid (XIV), Chinese Soldier (XVIII), Embassy (XIX), Exiles (XXI), and A Major Port (XXV) (Prose 1: 825). There is as well a list in Auden’s barely legible hand in the diary that he and Isherwood kept on their way out to China which provides titles for twenty-four poems which correspond roughly to the poems of “In Time of War:” Creation (I), The Fall (II), Language (III), Truth (VI), The Warrior (V), The Priest (VI?), The Peasant (IV), The City (VIII?), Ganymede (XI), The Poet (VII), Tunes (XXII), Air Raid (XIV), Exiles (XXI), Soldier (XVIII), G.H.Q. (XVI), Hunting, The Ambassador (XIX), The Great Men (XXIV), The Little Men (XXIV), Prayer, Love (XXVI), The Wanderer (XXVII). (The last title, if I have deciphered it correctly, is noteworthy in that it repeats at the end of the 1930s the title of a well-known poem of Auden’s from the very beginning of the decade, and in so far as it describes XXVII’s vision of humanity: what is more, the typescript of the first draft of Kind, the later autobiographical work in which Isherwood recounts his life in the 1930s, shows that

Isherwood had given the book the provisional title Wanderings). Auden's omission of titles in "In Time of War" is a deliberate decision whose motivation is not difficult to divine. Perhaps Beach "does not see how the imaginative effect of [the poems of "In Time of War"] would have been impaired by giving them titles, provided the titles given suited the subject and intention of the poem" (42), but clearly by omitting titles, Auden introduces a sense of ambiguity, indeterminacy, and disorientation which is essential to the sequence's telling of the story of mankind.

The poems compel the reader to constantly wonder who "he," "they," and "we" might be (there are no 'she's or 'you's or 'I's). One wonders as well about the genetic or genealogical relationships between the poems' vague grammatical subjects, since the solemnifying Roman numerals heading each sonnet, the thematic and lexical repetitions, and the syntactical continuities of pronouns and of the transition-easing conjunctions that repeatedly open the sonnets, all imply that the human subjects are connected to one another in some sort of temporal or developmental sequence. And wonder one should. For, as Mendelson observes, "English poetry has nothing else quite like them" (Early 349). A reader does not get a definitively satisfactory sense of either who all these subjects are or how exactly they are related; rather one's sense is of identities and relationships that are always fluid, unfinished, dissolving.

Auden's use of third person pronouns enacts the variability of the human subject in the history of mankind. His insistence on the first person plural pronoun reflects the collaborative authorship of Journey and is also representative of the experience of subjectivity of the Auden generation in the 1930s. The vague pronouns in the sequence's sonnets reveal that Auden has learned to exploit the polysemous potential of pronominal ambiguity in ways that are more philosophically coherent than those discerned by

Cunningham and Imlah in the 1932 poem “A Communist to Others.” For Cunningham in “A Communist to Others,” it is “not possible at any point [. . .] finally to settle” who the speaker is or who “we” are; rather the poem’s “pronouns prove, strictly, unreadable.” Cunningham sees these ambiguities negatively as “helplessly contradictory and [. . .] perpetually misleading and frustrating,” as a “messy wash [. . .] utterly apt to the confusions and contradictions of Auden’s wavering social allegiances, his well-known uncertainties as to political and moral direction at the time of writing” (Bucknell Map 184-85).

Imlah sees Auden’s special attention to the pronoun “we” in a larger context that allows us to imagine Auden striving between the purported confusions of “A Communist to Others” and the deliberate indeterminacy of “In Time of War” to find a viable way of conceiving of a first person plural subjectivity:

Many poems of the 1930s make distinctive use of the pronoun ‘we’: ‘A Communist to Others’ is their prototype. The Marxist, iconoclastic ‘we’ created here became, in the hands of a small number of writers under Auden’s influence, simply their version—anti-athletic, misogynist, exclusively cosmopolitan—of the clubbishness they deplored in other circles [. . .]. As a result in the second half of the decade, the public-school-communist ‘we’ loses its mischievous thrust in the shadow of a more urgent and less voluntary historical force; in [. . .] MacNeice’s “The Sunlight on the Gardens” [this ‘we’] is revealed as an emblem of doomed shared enjoyments. [In ‘We are dying, Egypt, dying’] it is the pronoun that is dying [. . .]. In Auden’s case, the transformation of the pronoun is compressed into a few months. He is quick to discover a ‘we’ that has personal as well as communal meaning. (192)

By the time we get to 1938 and to “In Time of War,” Auden’s pronouns have moved beyond the messy wash Cunningham rejects and evolved into something akin to what Imlah perceives: they have become a subtle means of registering the urgent ethical dimensions of personal and plural subjectivities and of exploring the historical instability and fluidity of individual and collective (if male-biased) human subjectivity. Auden will again exploit the ambiguity of pronouns in his explorations of human subjectivity through his second sequence of Rilkean sonnets “The Quest.” A prefatory note included when those sonnets

first appeared in 1940 explains that the “‘He’ and ‘They’ referred to should be regarded as both objective and subjective” (Fuller 336). Such an objective and subjective “he” recalls as well the third person Isherwood narrators that Isherwood was developing in his fiction.

For Spears, Rilke’s exploitation of pronomial vagueness is an important example for Auden’s procedure of “putting unidentified persons, indicated only by pronouns [. . .] in usually symbolic landscapes, with the sonnet beginning in the middle of an unexplained situation.” This Rilkean procedure enables Auden to generate “a fresh union of abstract and concrete, of generalization about life and particular example” (25-6). Behind Rilke’s indeterminate pronouns lies the abiding Germanophone philosophical interest in the nature of transcendental subjectivity, and thus it is possible to trace the ‘unEnglish’ grammatical subjects of “In Time of War” through Rilke back to Kant, Fichte, and Hegel. Later in his “Dichtung und Wahrheit,” Auden imitates the manner of another Austrian (in this case, Wittgenstein) to explore again, though in a very different manner, the possibilities of the sense and reference of personal pronouns and the philosophical problems of subjectivity.

“The Quest” and “In Time of War,” in their manner, subject matter, and use of pronouns, are at times complementary and at others contrasting sequences. Whereas the pronouns of “In Time of War” convey an impression of the history of humanity’s collective consciousness, in “The Quest,” the “He,” and “They” correspond to “the self’s discovery of a personal quest for its own true ground of being through the rejection of false paths” (Fuller 336). “The Quest” gives an account of the individual search for authenticity; “In Time of War,” an account of humanity’s transformation and revelation of itself. And in spite of the pronominal indeterminacy that Auden exploits, recognizing what sort of historical human figure is being spoken about in specific poems in “In Time of War” remains crucial to understanding the poems and the sequence. This is not as difficult as

Beach lets on. Callan, Mendelson, and especially Fuller (234-241) have identified subjects of many of the sonnets. Some of the sequence's grammatical subjects, not including those whose identities Auden's titles have at least partially established above, are I) an Adamic Man created in Biblical fashion, after and in contrast to the plants and animals, II) the fallen "they" who have lost an Eden-like original condition; IV) the hunter; V) the soldier or militarist; VI) a monk-like scientist or philosopher; VIII) modern bourgeois man; IX) kingly or saintly heroic individuals; X) the Word or Law as an anonymous Christ; XXIII) Rilke; and XIII, XIV, XVI, XX, XXV, XXVI, and XXVII) an indeterminate "we" in the present.

The we's that dominate the sequence's second half are not as disparate as the various he's and they's in the first half, but they often involve the crucial possibility of there being several competing or complementary identities for the subject of a single poem. The oddest of the first person plural pronouns occurs in XVIII where Auden writes that an anonymous Chinese soldier has died so that "our daughters / Might keep their upright carriage," an unaccountable "our" which can be taken as representing "a generous gesture of united-front sympathy, or an insulting colonialist appropriation" (Kerr in Izzo *Legacy* 286), or perhaps as an emptily non-partisan though idealistically charitable gesture toward the unity of all humankind. Kerr's conscientiousness in criticizing Auden's use of the plural "our" to speak of Chinese daughters is consistent with similar objections in Emig when he refers to Auden's use of the pronoun "our" as a bad "act of colonisation [. . .] for it implies that personal history, here a privileged middle-class perspective, is the same as that of the invaded China" (128). Emig and Kerr, though, are allowing their own cultural conscientiousness regarding that problematic "our" to blind them to the conscientiousness and concern that is already in Auden's text with its ongoing explorations of possible modes of shared plural subjectivity and its circumspection regarding the indeterminacy and fluidity

of human subjectivity. The issue of a cross-cultural “our” is raised explicitly in Auden and Isherwood’s journalistic travel piece “Meeting the Japanese” (Prose 1: 448). As we shall see, neither Kerr’s nor Emig’s comments do justice to the multiple and shifting identities of the first person plural subjectivity of Auden’s sonnets. In any case, more politically incorrect than the self-conscious colonialist overtones of XVIII’s “our daughters” is how that possessive pronoun subordinates silent feminine subjectivities to the sequence’s masculine and male homosexual perspectives.

All the diverse pronomial and substantive subjects in “In Time of War” stand in historical relationships to one another, which tend to be genealogical, evolutionary, or revolutionary in the first half of the sequence, and in the second half, a question of complex contemporaneousness. The subjects are also linked to one another because most confront situations, challenges, and issues that are analogous to those facing the others. One such issue which is found in several sonnets and which is prominent in XXVII is that of “choice.” The unifying theme of choice has invariably been seen as central to “In Time of War,” and we will return to it too, but other similarly unifying themes, crucial to the coherence of the sequence and to the relationships between the various sonnets’ subjects have not been emphasized enough. This is most true of the erotic aspects of the sonnets—even though the sonnet as a form has been so intimately involved with erotic poetry that one would expect Eros to figure prominently in a sequence of sonnets. However, when Mendelson distinguishes Auden’s “writing on public themes” in Journey’s sonnets from “his writing on Eros” in other sonnets and poems (Early 348), his blindness to the centrality of Eros is typical of commentary on “In Time of War.” Yet eroticism and sexuality are key attributes of many of the subjects of the sonnets of “In Time of War,” and Auden’s treatment of Eros displays concerns which are clearly homosexual.

We have noted how XI recasts the homosexual Ganymede myth and how II allows a queer reading of the myth of Eden and the Fall, but the problems of Eros and homosexual Eros in particular arise repeatedly as Auden moves through human history “round our sex and reasons,” in IX’s phrase. In I the concluding line draws attention to one of the supposedly key differences between humans and other creatures, namely that Man “[chooses] his love.” This ambiguous phrase can refer to either a choice of the individual who is loved, or to a choice of sexual orientation. Auden acknowledges, as we have seen, complexities and anxieties concerning the second kind of choice in II, and again in III where the representative human figure, prey to the delusions made possible by the powers of language and to the confusions of misdirected desire, “knew of love without love’s proper object.” In IV, the peasant farmer has no choice in love; rather in his nature-dominated, necessarily-heterosexual life, “The mountains chose the mother of his children” while “his young cousins in the city / Pursued their [. . .] unnatural course.” Sexuality haunts the philosopher-scientist who in Biblically euphemistic language “fell in love with Truth before he knew her” and who in his celibacy (and in one of Auden’s periodic evocations of masturbation) “mocked at those who served her with their hands.”

Erotic implications lie in inconspicuous details. In the “Chinese Soldier” sonnet (XVIII), the line “His name is lost for ever like his looks” suggests a wistful eroticism, consummated metaphorically when the “daughters” his sacrifice will save are said to “love” the “earth” he will become. In “Surgical Ward” (XVII), the patients (like the sequence’s various subjects) “lie apart like epochs from each other.” They can not lie together, as lovers would, because suffering isolates them: “Only happiness is shared, / [. . .] and the idea of love.” In such an anxiety-ridden context, only the idea of love, not love itself, can be shared. Sexual pleasure, in contrast, can be shared, like the tunes in XXII which “speak

to the muscles of the need for joy,” shared (with an Elizabethan pun) by “the dying and the lovers soon to part” who “have to whistle” as the sonnet alludes to Cole Porter’s “Do you love me as I love you?” and Charles Trenet’s “Il y a de la joie.”

Whereas aspects of love and sexuality are kept in the background, or implicit through most of the sequence, in the penultimate XXVI love becomes the principal theme. Perhaps for that reason, XXVI is among the sequence’s two or three most obscure poems and its presentation of love is camouflaged behind the incongruous language of industrial production and commerce whose “metaphors [. . .] mischievously violate the decorum of love poetry” (Mendelson Early 356). Love, contends the octave, is a modest, anonymous workshop that should manufacture not an unsaleable product (unsaleable because antiquated, foolish, childish, quaint, or impractical), but a saleable one. The sestet, however, is less interested in the unsaleability of the product than it is in love itself, for this love, though “a minor item of our daring plan,” is the “single product that since work” in love’s workshop “began / Through all the cycle showed a steady profit.” “We’re amazed to find it” so, because in ‘our’ mistaken busyness “We took no notice of it;” and “We can’t believe that we ourselves designed it,” because it is so easy to “imagine as Auden once did that [love] came into being instinctively, as one of the natural functions of the flesh” (356-7). For Mendelson love in XXVI is Eros, and its “we,” the “we” of lovers; but for Fuller the love in XXVI is Charity, concomitant with the “pity” of the previous sonnet XXV’s last line, and its “we”, the “we” of a more inclusive human community. Thus, XXVI’s profitable love is the charitable love which enables us “to endure disaster” and prompts us to “feed a beggar rather than find him picturesque” (Fuller 240-1).

Neither Mendelson’s nor Fuller’s reading excludes the other. By the end of the 1930s, Auden’s love poetry encompassed simultaneous visions of Eros and Agape. A rarer

feature of the poem's treatment of love is the linking of the uniquely positive use value of love with the world of capitalism. This is more than mischievous in the political context of Auden's late 1930s milieu: the metaphoric identification of love with manufacturing and profitability violates not only sentimental and spiritual ideals, but also the left-wing anti-capitalist orthodoxy with which Auden was associated. The erotic and ideological bad taste of such metaphors may explain the poem's obliqueness and obscurity. Another motivation for the obscurity is that the poem comments on Auden and Isherwood's own professional and amorous relationship. That the "we" that dominates the second half of "In Time of War" has a shifting identity is clear. That one of its possible references in XXVI is to Auden and Isherwood themselves has a precedent in the post-Edenic pair of II, as suggested above, but has an even more clearly demonstrable antecedent in XXIII. There the sequence's reference narrows for the one and only time to the first person singular as Auden, acknowledging the personal and poetic example of his model Rilke, identifies himself in the minimally conspicuous form of the objective pronoun "me." This inconspicuous "me" in XXIII is clearly Auden, and XXVI's more obscure "we" may be profitably taken as referring to Auden and Isherwood.

As a poem from Auden to Isherwood, XXVI gestures toward the gap between Auden and Isherwood's public names and fame and the private workshop where they are both lovers and diligent working partners. The poem reviews elements and attitudes (now seen to be mistaken) reminiscent of the earlier work of both writers, but especially of Isherwood's. The poem recalls from Isherwood's work, the condemnation of "the old manors" (Memorial) and "the children's games" (Isherwood and Upward's suppressed "Mortmere"; Auden and Isherwood's unpublished "The Enemies of a Bishop"); the "artistic girl" who loves "quaint / Unsaleable" art (Goodbye's Natalia Landauer on Isherwood and

the narrator's Conspirators); and with a likely pun on "bugger," the self-loving, "selfish," propensity to see "In every impractical beggar a saint" (Otto and others in Mr. Norris and Goodbye). Isherwood himself would mock this last aspect of his 1930s self when he looked back on the period in the bugger-satirizing "Ambrose" section of Down There. Finally, the closing lines of the poem seem to comment on the almost completed "cycle" of Auden and Isherwood's youthful careers and of their collaboration—the "daring plan," amid whose otherwise mixed results, the sole reliable project has been the love that neither of them has been troubled by or even taken the trouble to acknowledge.

The earlier sonnets of "In Time of War," culminating in XXVI, provide ample justification for pursuing an erotic reading of XXVII, and for taking its first quatrain to refer to lost sexual paradises, whether Eden, Lesbos, or Athens. We can sigh and sigh for whichever lost paradise is ours or for all three of them. Perhaps we can even sigh for the idea of a lost equilibrium, an "instinctive poise," comprehending the homosexual and the heterosexual. What we sigh for will be our choice, for the poem implies that sexuality is now as much a "choice" as it ever was "instinctive." Though Auden does not try to resolve the quintessential Western debate on the naturalness or willfulness of (homo)sexuality, the first quatrain does identify the chief causes of the painfulness of the debate. On the one hand, when XXVII describes our pining for an "instinctive" sexual poise which we do not have, it acknowledges our perennially frustrated desire to see sexuality and our sexual "choice" made natural; on the other hand, when it reminds us that it is this very power of choice that has led to our being lost and nostalgic, the poem also refuses any facile satisfaction at our having the freedom of sexual choice.

Although questions of the natural versus the volitional origins of homosexuality which Western culture has discussed for so long locate the poem in a Western context,

XXVII's "ancient South" may turn out to be Eastern rather than Western. We are, after all, supposed to be in China—among the most ancient of lands—and XXVII like most poems in the sequence's second half may actually be a 'Sonnet from China'. It is easy enough since, as Auden writes later, the "East is definitely southern" (Prose 2: 335), to convert the "ancient South" into an "ancient East" by rotating the East-West axis along which Europe has been opposed to China to align it with the North-South opposition which resonates throughout Auden's work (cf. Iceland, F6, "Goodbye to Mezzogiorno," "Hammerfest"). East-West and North-South oppositions certainly mark in comparable ways the colonial and post-colonial history of the twentieth century. XXVII's "ancient South" can now stand for an exotic Other, and as with Hellas and Eden, this Other involves a corresponding fantasy of sexual innocence: the fantasy of a less troubled, instinctive, non-Western sexuality to be encountered in the ancient vicinities of Timbuktu, Tahiti, Thailand, Taiyuan, or Watutsiland.

It is difficult perhaps to accept a Chinese setting for this paradisal vicinity, given the thousand year old cruelties of Chinese foot binding, of the slicing away of boys' entire genitalia to ensure their sexual neutrality as eunuchs, and of other sexual and gender practices, and given the deserved reputation of the People's Republic of China for repressiveness in sexual matters, including the matter of homosexuality. It is not so difficult to accept that potentially bisexual fantasies of exotic ethnic or anthropological sexual paradises could replace the more hallowed homosexual and heterosexual golden ages of Lesbos and Athens, and of Jerusalem and Eden. In spite of the foot binding (which Isherwood duly remarks upon³), it would have been possible for Auden to imagine China as

3

The first occasion of Isherwood's interest in foot binding presents a combination of the clinical and the surreal: "in the operating-theatre, we watched [the medical missionaries] McClure and Brown at work. The patient had a vaginal-urethral fistula, sustained in childbirth. We took the

one such exotic homosexual paradise. According to Bret Hinsch, traditional Chinese tolerance of homosexuality was a recurrent source of surprise for Westerners (2). Hinsch traces the literary contours of the male homosexual past in China, and argues that the Chinese homosexual tradition “fell victim to a growing sexual conservatism and the Westernization of morality” in the mid-twentieth century (4). With the 1949 Communist takeover, homosexuality became a criminal offence in China, and subsequently earlier Chinese attitudes to homosexuality have been so totally annihilated that, as Hinsch rightly observes, “anyone familiar with the situation of homosexuals in modern China finds evidence from earlier centuries almost unbelievable” (163). Yet in 1935 Matignon could reaffirm (2) that in his experience in China public opinion “reste tout à fait indifférente à ce genre de distraction et la morale ne s’en émeut en rien: puisque cela plaît à l’opérateur et que l’opéré est consentant, tout est pour le mieux.” Pederasty was rather considered “comme une chose de bon ton, une fantaisie dispendieuse et partant un plaisir élégant. [. . .] Pratiquer la pédérastie, c’est un luxe cher, tout comme manger des nids d’hirondelles ou des oeufs de cent ans” (267). So common did homosexual acts appear to be that Matignon could record as an axiom that “tout Chinois qui se respecte pratique, a pratiqué, ou pratiquera, la pédérastie” (262).

Modern ignorance of traditional Chinese homosexuality has been even more characteristic of China than the West. Lamenting this forgetfulness, Hinsch wants to explain both as entirely due to the nefarious influence of homophobic Western morality and

opportunity of examining her feet” (536). This bizarre vignette could serve as an emblem for representing issues of gender, gynophobia, cultural history, and semi-colonial domination that are significant elsewhere in Isherwood’s work and in the history of China as well. A second occasion—“From one of the huts beside the line an old woman emerged on minute bird-like feet leading by the hand a child of ten. She beckoned invitingly. I laughed, shook my head, and turned back towards the train” (556)—allows Isherwood to present foot binding in conjunction with child and youth prostitution, issues that we will have reason to return to in our discussion of Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary.”

erroneous Western scientific attitudes to homosexuality. Hinsch's survey of the refinements of the "Male Homosexual Tradition in China" ignores, however, how sordid and cruel Chinese homosexuality and particularly its elaborate system of paedophilia could be (cf. Matignon 270-71), and ignores the possibility that modern Chinese forgetfulness is also a response to intolerable and humiliating memories of the realities that Georges Soulié de Morant commemorates in his tragic masterpiece Pei Yu, Boy Actress and that, as we will see, Isherwood records as well in "Travel-Diary." Be that as it may, in ways that are now more readily associated with places like Thailand, this tolerance of homosexuality and juvenile prostitution drew Western homosexuals to China right up until 1949, and the Republican period in which Auden and Isherwood visited China "marks the twilight years of the history of sexual tolerance" (Brady "West Meets East" 103-106).

In this context, we begin to see XXVII and Journey against the backdrop of a major recasting of the nature of homosexual experience. If we can take XXVII to involve the envious sighing of the Westerner over non-Western erotic insouciance, or supposed insouciance, we can also understand XXVII's nostalgia for "the taste of joy in the innocent mouth" as a response to the guilt of the colonial or semi-colonial (and even post-colonial) Westerner as he pursues his ancient fantasy of innocence in a disorienting but obviously decadent ancient South—just as Auden and Isherwood had to take "afternoon holidays from their social consciences" to indulge themselves with boys in a bathhouse in Shanghai (Isherwood Kind 308). The prospect also arises, though, that the innocent mouth Auden is referring to belongs, not to a man or a woman, but to a hired, or enslaved, Chinese boy. This horrifying prospect is consistent with Soulié de Morant's concluding vision of the degraded decadence of traditional Chinese paedophilia early in the Republican period through whose twilight Auden and Isherwood passed. More to the point, the prospect, Auden's ironic

renunciation of it in XXVII, and a historicized presentation of paedophilia, are consistent with themes introduced in Journey's 'Ganymede' sonnet and Isherwood's "Travel-Diary." (The theme of the homosexual exploitation of poor boys occurs elsewhere in Isherwood and in Auden's early "Uncle Henry," and the spectre of homosexual rape recurs in Auden's "Epistle to a Godson" and Anxiety [Collected 480]).

If the homosexuality in XXVII has a disturbingly exotic Eastern aspect, another possibility is that the "ancient South" is the phallus itself. The first quatrain's landscapes seem a typical Audenesque allegory for the human body or, as Spears has it, a "moralized anatomy" (141): mountains for breasts is a common trope, and one found elsewhere in Auden's work ("By landscape reminded once of his mother's figure / The mountain heights he remembers get bigger and bigger"). There are other examples in Auden's work of eroticized landscapes providing figures for the human body, and though not found in Auden's lists of slang for male and female genitals in A Certain World (268), the "ancient South" quite plausibly refers to human genitalia. The movement from the mountains to "the South" thus imitates a movement from a lover's breasts down south to the warm, nude "instinctively poised" phallus; or—since the sestet's "great door", whose calm nudeness we do not share, can suggest any of the variously uncalm, penetrable human orifices, this southward movement can also be imagined as imitating the movement to a feminine "door," to the vulva and labia majora, to the vagina, or (to be oecumenical about it) the movement to a masculine or feminine ass, to the anus and rectum. ("Nothing," XXV has just reminded us, "is certain but the body"). This corporal journey of XXVII's lover is repeated in "The Platonic Blow" in the movement from the "masculine tits" down to a raunchy exploration of lower areas, including the lover's asshole. Taking the ancient South as the phallus, one begins to hear a paradoxical pun in the "warm nude ages of instinctive poise" such that

what we sigh for is rather the phallus' 'warm nude *aegis* of instinctive poise'. The image of a phallic father figure like aegis-bearing Zeus has antecedents in XI and V, and the longing for protection in the absence of such a father Auden will explore at greater length with irony and elegiac dignity in *Anxiety*'s "Lament for a Law-giver." In XXVII, the retrograde potential of such longing resonates in the nostalgic fantasies and the utopian desire for discipline that our sexual lostness generates in the poem's second quatrain.

We began, then, by noting a disruptive sexuality which mocks the poem's political themes and now note a corresponding political longing and nostalgia which haunts sexuality in the poem. The erotic and the political dimensions of the poem seem to call each other into existence as they certainly call each other into question, each tending to disturb the other and to complicate the other's compulsions. XXVII's first quatrain is masterfully ambiguous in the way it simultaneously evokes the desires and anxieties of a specific sexual act, fellatio, and of several rival myths or master narratives of the history of sexual happiness and unhappiness. Further ambiguities temper how we can regard all these erotic paradigms and exacerbate the ironies and paradoxes associated with the tension between the quatrain's political and erotic themes.

Why, for instance, are we sighing? We might be sighing out of the fatigue that comes with our journey's arduousness. We might be sighing out of fulfilment as we repeatedly glimpse "the ancient south" in the course of our mountainous wandering. We might sigh for an ancient South out of regret, because we immediately lose sight of what we can only glimpse, or because the myths of a lost paradise of sexuality touch us. We might be sighing on another level out of exasperation, sighing not at the recognition implicit in these narratives that sexual unhappiness is a basic human condition, but sighing out of exasperation at the naivety of such tales about a once-upon-a-time-and-place sexual happiness.

This exasperation arises from the obvious unreality of the comfortable nudity of those dreamt of mythical ages. We know too well that humans cannot simply go nude because we are exposed to the cold and wet, or to the unbearable heat of the sun, and because whatever their landscapes, we live with the knowledge of misery, death, peril, work, and human oppression. It could be too that most human nakedness is so uninspiring that we actually find the idea of the desirability of those nude ages too farfetched to entertain with anything more than a sigh of self and species-deprecating resignation.

Whichever is the reason we sigh, having sighed our fill in the first quatrain over the impossibility of returning to our ancient south, we move to the second quatrain where rather than making warm nude love, we find ourselves “asleep” in our poor huts, dreaming of the balls of the future. The shocking ambiguity of the indecorous puns on “balls”—as glamorous dancing celebration of heterosexuality, as testicles, even as occasions of fucking itself—typifies the whole stanza. Politically, there is a disturbingly ambivalent image of a guerilla army, like the Chinese Red Army (which in 1938’s United Front has been reconstituted as the Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies), biding its time in huts preparing to celebrate its assumption of power. It is disturbing not because of right or left wing ideological considerations, but because the guerrillas’ orientation to the future and enduring of present deprivation are destined to be succeeded by glory even while justice goes unmentioned.

It is disturbing too because, whereas Auden had written a year earlier in his own political pamphlet poem “Spain 1937” of the “conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder,” here the “disciplined movements” are in denial about the harmfulness of their plans or their intricate mazes. Behind this denial or blindness lurks much of the dark history of modern utopian political movements whose violence had already troubled Auden in late-Weimar Germany and Republican Spain and which he would come to understand as

inherent in their forward-looking orientation: thus, “the Utopian dream permits indulgence in aggressive fantasies” because “the actions by which [Utopia] could be realized are a necessary element in [the Utopian’s] dream” (Hand 410). Whereas the first quatrain’s evocation of political tendencies circa 1938 seem most relevant to right-wing Fascist and Nazi themes of nostalgia and paternalistic authority, the second quatrain’s seem most relevant to Marxist and Communist themes of revolution, future utopias, and self-sacrifice, and to 1930s leftist duplicity regarding Soviet and Spanish Republican atrocities. We are disturbed finally because the second quatrain’s dream of a glorious future seems no more destined to be realized than the first quatrain’s happy past is to be regained—the earlier “again and again” of unassuageable nostalgia being echoed now by the perpetual deferral of the glorious future as “for ever and ever” we only *follow* the mazes’ *plans*. “Plans,” whether XXVI’s “daring” plan or even Soviet “five year plans,” may be the new “choice” of the “disciplined movements of the heart,” but they are no more likely to lead us out of the lost, impoverished condition our choice has left us wandering in than the first quatrain’s southern fantasies are. Indeed the echoes in XXVII of the Anglican conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer—“for Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the *Glory, for ever and ever. Amen*”—suggest ideas of eternity and transcendent perfection that make a mockery of human plans for glorious futures.

As significant as the shift in temporal orientation between quatrains from nostalgia and visions of past fullness to utopianism and visions of future glory is the shift from our original vague “wandering” to the second quatrain’s “disciplined movements.” The dissatisfactions of pointless vagabondage prompt a fantasy about an earnest discipline leading us out of our maze, but with the phrase “the disciplined movements of the heart” come the political, moral, and sadomasochistic implications that the idea of discipline

entails. The association of sadomasochism with the late Auden's civil persona is not so obvious, but in 1935 Isherwood, in a conspiratorial nod to his friend's reputation as the *enfant terrible* who from undergraduate days had presented himself to friends as shockingly uninhibited and sexually adventurous (Carpenter 48), dedicated to Auden the scandalous tale of the sadomasochistic *roué* Mr. Norris. (As in the case of XXVI, several details in XXVII gain depth when read with Isherwood in mind: the first quatrain's vagabondage and interest in an illusory South can be taken as referring to Isherwood's ceaseless wandering through the thirties and to the ill-fortuned Greek queer-topia he satirizes in Down There; the very word "lost" of the first line is a keyword in Isherwood's 1930s writing; indeed "The Lost" was to have been the title of Isherwood's projected epic of the period of which Goodbye and Mr. Norris are the fragments; lastly, not only does the latter novel inform the second quatrain's sadomasochism, but it is possible to see in the coincidence of utopianism and homosexual frustration and in-joking in the second quatrain, a nod to the gay liberationism that is a unifying socio-political concern of Isherwood's life's work).

With the emergence in the second quatrain of the idea of discipline, we see that just as erotic fantasies and sexual vulgarity mock the power of the political themes, so political anxieties haunt the heart's erotic themes. Like the first quatrain's implication that choice in sexuality leads to sexual unhappiness and its suggestion of a paedophilic fantasy, the intrusion of the ideas of social and sado-masochistic discipline into the poem's sexual fantasies makes it impossible to read the poem lightly, even after we become aware of the poem's shocking or comic sexual vulgarity. The sexual, the erotic, the hedonistic may deconstruct, critique, or ironize the graver political problems and earnest ideological perspectives the poem explores, but this happens only ambivalently; for the political themes of the poem also make the poem's sexual prankishness and erotic longing tactless, even sinister.

As we turn to the sestet, “our” wistful nostalgia and hopeful dreams have been transformed into “envy,” with its overtones of the French *envier* in so far as we *desire* the assuredness of those streams and houses, and of the etymological *invidia* in so far as we resentfully wish ill upon them. The ever-moving streams and the sedentary domestic “houses” represent two contrasting ways of being “sure,” neither of which “we” possess. Instead, “we” must envy them because “we are articted to error.” Here the root of ‘error’ in ‘err’ allows Auden to couple the earlier idea of wandering with the idea of being mistaken: so that, if in the first line, “our choice” is the origin of our “wandering,” here our wandering is linked to our having been mistaken in that choice.

It is crucial to see that the turn from octave to sestet really involves in quick succession two drastically different turns. The first is the move that replaces the octave’s nostalgic desires and utopian hopes with an envy into which our frustration and jealousy cause us to lapse. (Auden links the themes of Eros and of human envy of the natural world’s simpler certainties in the 1936 song “Fish in the unruffled lakes.” One also discerns in XXVII a shadow of homosexual enviousness of apparent heterosexual certitudes. There may even be a nod on Auden’s part in the direction of Isherwood’s heterosexual-resenting experience of homosexuality). The morally destructive alternative of envy, however, must be turned away from immediately; it offers no solution to the octave’s disappointments and unsolved problems; such envy is in fact an expression of our despair. Yet only once envy’s false alternative has been proposed can the recurrent “but” which Mendelson has identified as defining the sequence’s dialectic reorient the entire poem (Early 357). This is because the “but” must accomplish two linked but distinct reorientations at once. The “but” of “But we are articted to error” turns away from both the positive temptations of nostalgia and utopianism and the negative temptations of envy and despair; moreover, it overcomes those

intertwined temptations as it turns towards the unpromising laws of the sestet.

The legal diction of “we are articted to error” remind us of the Audenesque intrusion of the reality of the law into the aesthetic world of myth. It is consistent too with Auden’s use elsewhere of legalistic language, images, and concepts to discuss moral and erotic issues (see, for instance, “Law like Love”, a poem behind which one senses Auden’s awareness of the legal prohibitions against homosexuality; and see Hyde’s summative discussion of the concept and force in Auden’s work of “The Hidden Law” [446-463]). In XXVII, Auden’s legalese suggests that the association of our freedom to choose with our inevitable mistakenness and our consequent errancy is a law by which we must live. Moreover the law is categorical in its negativity: we “never” were in an unanxious past so our sighs for it are futile; we “never” will be in a perfected future so our dreams there are futile as well. The sestet’s two ‘nevers’ nullify once and for all the realisticness of the erotic and political visions both of the nostalgia of the first quatrain’s “again and again” and of the hope of the second’s “ever and ever.”

Once those negative conditions have been asserted, we move to a positive statement of the nature of the law. For the implications of the law according to which we must live are rendered explicit in the formula of the sonnet’s penultimate line: “We live in freedom by necessity.” This final revelation of the law is consistent with our having been “articted to error,” not only because ‘being articted to error’ describes so aptly a modern truth-seeking, law-formulating scientific method, but also because a “hope for change persists faintly in the word *articted* [since] one is articted to apprenticeship [. . .] for a fixed and finite term” (Mendelson Early 200). We have been articted to error, and the end of our erring coincides with the recognition of the law, though the law our error has taught us to recognize will be the law of the infinite return of the problem of freedom: “We live in freedom by necessity.”

Pronounced with the definitive authority of a proverb, this sounds like a conclusion to the sonnet's explorations of its themes. Actually the line's philosophical abstractness and spare language stand at several removes from the poetic images and human situations that the sonnet describes. The relation of this conclusive unequivocal-sounding statement to the various ambiguities of the poem would soon become problematic, except that before we can begin to come to terms with the meaning of the proverb, the sentence moves on to the poem's final line and back to the already established images and more familiar language of "A mountain people living among mountains."

The poem's last line takes us from the finality of the previous line's conclusion back to the original lost condition of the poem's opening, our beginning "upon the mountains of our choice." We are returned to the lost condition from which we have tried and always will try to escape, whether to a wished-for past which has never existed or a dreamed-of future which never shall come to pass. Rather than ease our dissatisfaction with our lostness, the poem leads to the recognition that this condition is permanent. In fact, our dissatisfaction is now more profound because the poem seems to close off both past and future as avenues of escape, even for fantasy.

That our dissatisfaction is more complete is signaled in the mutation of the first line's "wandering lost" into the last line's "dwelling"—for if we once hoped to move from a condition of lost wandering through a condition of purposeful hut-inhabiting movement to a more secure condition of dwelling, like those of the "streams and houses that are sure," the first and last lines tell us that whether we are "wandering lost" or "dwelling" in the mountains, the mountains remain the anxious mountains of our uncertain, erroneous choices. "Dwelling" cannot, anymore than "wandering," preserve us from the moral peril of those mountains. "Dwelling" here echoes XIV's "We dwell upon the earth," a phrase

Mendelson traces in Auden, as in Heidegger, to Hölderlin's "dichterisch, wohnet der Mensch auf dieser Erde." Whereas though the Nazi-tainted Heidegger uses the line to confirm that "Being itself is founded by poetic language," Auden uses it "to expose the corruption of any system of thought that regards the ethically neutral powers of language or nature as the measure of all things" (Early 354). In English, "to dwell upon" has the idiomatic sense of "to worry or be anxious about." This other sense of "dwell" in XXVII's last line means that our dwelling place ultimately always remains a place of anxiety too. We can either choose to dwell in the moral mountains of that anxiety, or in a probably futile effort to escape, we can choose to resume our anxious wandering again.

So at the end of this poem we return to the difficulties we begin with. We have learned to negate two false solutions to our erotic and political problems, and have acquired one bit of abstract wisdom that will stay with us. It is, however, a wisdom that does not promise any respite, any way out of the mountains; a wisdom that heightens awareness but which provides no answers. There is no end in sight to the moral problems, and so the only way for this poem to end is for it to put us back in an infinite regress where it began, which is not where we think we belong, but where, happily or unhappily, we must reside.

"The last line, 'A mountain people dwelling among mountains,' is a conclusion to the sequence that leaves everything to be played again, where still [as Auden writes in "Morality in an Age of Change"] 'we do have to choose, every one of us'" (O'Neill and Reeves 176). Notice, though, how this conclusion's radically disorienting implications are mitigated to the extent that the final line's repetitiveness and concreteness, in tandem with the formulaic certitude of the preceding line, make those lines familiar and reassuring. XXVII, even as it rules out any possibility of a truly reconciled conclusiveness, manages thus to suggest a sense of closure. Like, however, the Christian numerological convention

that the number twenty-seven (as the triply Trinitarian product of three times three times three) involves perfection and completion, XXVII's closure is conventional and formally punctual, but it is not substantive. The closure is essentially illusory, for the ending in no way resolves the problems XXVII has presented; it simply returns us to them; and the sense of completion in its closure does not hold in the larger contexts of "In Time of War" for any longer than we need to turn two blank pages to the introduction of "Commentary" which, as the sonnet sequence itself does, opens retrospectively with Mankind's tentative beginnings.

The ending of XXVII may not even allow us to move on to "Commentary" at all. For the anxious mountains and the potential for renewed wandering in its close return not only to the beginning of XXVII, but also to the very beginning of *Journey*, to the shipboard questions of the first stanza of the opening poem "The Voyage" "when the mountains swim away [. . .] / and the gulls abandon their vow" (if there is a pun on "gulls", it refers to the once again departing travel-snobs Auden and Isherwood). In fact, the last line of XXVII also returns to the first sentence and pages of Isherwood's "Travel Diary," where the riverboat called the *Tai Shan* carries Auden and Isherwood into China, since "Shan" means mountain and the name of the *Tai Shan*, which Isherwood thrice draws attention to, refers to one of China's most sacred mountains. The association of mountains, motion, and human journeys occurs repeatedly in *Journey*. It occurs in the book's, twice staged, departure scenes—first from England or Europe in "The Voyage" and second from colonial Hong Kong to China in "Travel Diary." It occurs again at the beginning of XXVII and again in the "Travel Diary"'s F6-like hike up mountain passes to the summit. The recurrent associations of mountains and journeying mean that when the last line of XXVII returns us to the sonnet's own beginning, it refers as well to the very beginning of the book and the beginning of the "Travel-Diary." The return and the infinite regress at the end of XXVII is

thus three-fold, and the mountain journey thematized in the poem is repeated endlessly.

“In circling back to its own opening, [a] poem appropriates one of the simplest and most effective closural devices” (Herrnstein Smith 256). However, when a poem’s opening is a vista of lostness, nostalgia, desire, anxiety, and wandering, the effect of this device becomes anti-closural. At the end of XXVII, Auden thus creates diametrically opposed effects: on the one hand, he successfully suggests the “strong and secure” sense of closure that is almost inherent in a Renaissance form such as the sonnet; while, on the other hand, he actually offers the “weak” and “minimal” closure typical of Romantic and modern poetry which has tended to involve “ultimately unresolvable” dialectical processes (234; 247). Smith’s description of Eliot’s modernist poems as allowing for “the expressive qualities of weak closure—a sense of open-endedness, a refusal to [. . .] solve the unsolvable, resolve the unresolvable— [though] they also secure adequate closure” (250), applies also to XXVII. The complexities of XXVII’s closure are indicative of the modernism of Auden’s 1930s renovation of the sonnet. Following Smith, we see in XXVII’s complex and illusory closure, the coincidence of Renaissance and Romantic concerns and poetics, and take XXVII’s closing inconclusiveness as representative of Auden’s contribution to modern poetics. Moreover, just as the political, religious, and erotic themes identified in XXVII are exemplary of the themes that Journey as a whole explores at greater length, so the poem’s anticlosural closure is exemplary of all the other concluding moments in Journey that we will explore. Before we can consider those other moments though, we have yet to finish with the ultimately unresolvable dialectic of the conclusion of XXVII.

CHAPTER 2

LARGE CLAIMS FOR A SMALL POEM:

XXVII IN AUDEN'S WORK, JOURNEY,
AND THE ANGLO-AMERICAN TWENTIETH-CENTURY

THE DIALECTICS OF NECESSARY FREEDOM

The allusion to Engels in XXVII's conclusion has less to do specifically with Chinese Communism than with the general ideological situation of 1938. In the context of Auden's work as a whole, however, the line is crucial. It constitutes a fulcrum around which we can see Auden deftly moving into place several ideological burdens which are central not only to his own work and to Journey, but also to twentieth-century political controversy. The implications of XXVII's "We live in freedom by necessity" open onto a vast range of ideological problems, the responses to which in Journey are expressions of core struggles of their time. At issue in that one line are Auden's existential appreciation of the problems of the philosophical comprehension of the relationship of freedom and necessity, the relevance of modern Christianity, and the limitations of twentieth century Marxism and Communism.

As with its paradoxical anticlosural closure, XXVII presents the human condition as irremediably uncertain with an artistry that is nothing if not assured. XXVII "achieves the perfection whose absence it laments" (Morson 287) largely because of Auden's certainty about our uncertain moral freedom. "We live in freedom by necessity" resounds at the end of XXVII with the definitive authority of proverbial wisdom, yet this apparent certitude, even as it rises above them, is undermined by the ambiguity, erroneousness, and negation out of which the line is pronounced. In the midst of moral certainty, the line's declarative certitude memorably preserves what is perhaps the crucial moment of an ideological dynamic central to Auden's work. Far from providing a definitive conclusion, XXVII's penultimate line announces a new departure in Auden's intellectual odyssey to find an equilibrium in his understanding of the relationship between freedom and necessity. One cannot overemphasize the importance of this issue in Auden's work. The title of Greenberg's study of Auden, Quest for the Necessary underscores its centrality. Replogle

notes that a “freedom-necessity-choice conception of human existence” was central to Auden’s “intellectual development” (“Marxism” 594), and argues that, as XXVII’s allusion to *Anti-Dühring* suggests, Auden got several of the freedom-necessity-choice ideas that preoccupied him through his career from Marx and particularly from Engels (590, 594). Philosophy and religious thought richly illustrate the paradoxes, contradictions, complementarities, doctrinal mysteries, and institutional controversies associated with ideas of freedom, necessity, and choice. In some respects it is easy to locate Auden’s handling of these themes within the histories of philosophy and religion. His linking of freedom and necessity reflects Auden’s affiliation with post-Hegelian thought (“Hegel and his left-wing followers looked upon freedom and necessity as two sides of the same coin, two ideas dialectically interconnected” (Marcoulesco 419)). In other ways, however, it is not easy to appreciate what distinguishes or drives Auden’s thinking on these two dialectically connected ideas.

To comprehend Auden’s position, it will be “necessary to recognize, as several commentators have noted [. . .] Auden’s fondness for paradoxical statements about the relation between choice and necessity” (Jacobs 118). Auden’s appreciation of the paradoxes that ideas regarding “freedom-necessity-choice” lead to means that as he returns to these problems later in his career, he is less interested in arriving at simple solutions to them than he is in illuminating their difficult undecideable reality. And though Auden returns to the knotty complex of ideas regarding “freedom-necessity-choice” frequently in his subsequent career, “In Time of War” remains the pivotal moment in his lifelong engagement with the problem of freedom. In comprehending Auden’s position, we need to recognize the historically specific dimensions of his preoccupation with freedom and necessity, for “the nature of liberty [. . .] obsessed the young intellectuals of the thirties”

(Hoskins 85). This generational fixation is directly related to larger political crises of the 1930s, and is particularly relevant to Journey since young 1930s intellectuals saw liberty as the central issue of the Sino-Japanese War.

Auden dwells obsessively on the themes of freedom and choice throughout “In Time of War.” The first sonnet notes that one of the features that distinguished humanity in contrast to the animals from the very beginning is that the malleable, dissembling, fearful, erroneous, childish human creature “chose his love.” II recounts that the heterosexual and/or homosexual post-paradisaal ‘they’ “wept and quarrelled [because] freedom was so wild;” and IV observes that for the unfree peasant, it was “the mountains [who] chose the mother of his children.” Then in V, the military leader comes “to free [the young] from their mothers.” IX speaks of an enigmatic heroic “they” who “are what we feed on as we make our choice. / We bring them back with promises to free them [. . . / . . .] They could return to freedom; they would rejoice.” The gods and goblins of the old superstitious world are glad in XII “To be invisible and free.” In XV, the evil-doing Japanese bomber pilots who, though “free,” “chose a fate / The islands where they live did not compel,” thus demonstrating that “At any time it will be possible / To turn away from freedom.” XVI speaks of “Exiles” who along with their countries have lost their freedom, of other people’s “Freedom” being hostile to them, and of the “may” of possibility and choice becoming a “must” of compulsion. Before returning in the sequence’s final sonnet, variations on the theme of freedom have been encountered in a bewildering set of combinations that opens horizons of thought stretching far beyond the terms of the freedom-necessity-choice conception of human life that Replogle suggests Auden initially derived from Engels.

Recognizing the affiliation of this complex of ideas with Engels and Communist thought is crucial to understanding the dissenting, transformative, intellectual labour that

Auden performs in “In Time of War.” An ideological orientation sympathetically influenced by Marx and Engels, to say nothing of a partisan identification with Communist Party orthodoxy, was so widespread among Auden’s contemporaries in the mid to late 1930s that it is hardly necessary to demonstrate its importance. Only months before Auden and Isherwood travelled to China, their mutual friend and literary conscience Edward Upward—who had joined the Communist Party as early as 1932 (Spender World 132) and whom Auden in Iceland had lately named his literary executor (Prose 1: 359-360)—had published his “Sketch for a Marxist Interpretation of Literature” in Day Lewis’ Mind In Chains; and Auden himself had claimed to “agree with” Illusion and Reality, Caudwell’s “Marxist book on the aesthetics of poetry” (Prose 1: 386-87). If Auden came closest to endorsing Communism as a political movement in late-1932 and early-1933 (Mendelson Early 18-19, 148-51), 1937-38 is the considered expression of Auden’s theoretical openness to Marxism with “Spain 1937,” Frontier, and “In Time of War,” each representing thorough engagements with Marxian and Communist perspectives (Replogle 590-593), and with “In Time of War” being “more indebted to Marx and Engels than anything Auden ever wrote” (592). This indebtedness is most productive in the Marxian analyses of the material and ideological limits of the subjectivities that Auden presents in the sequence’s early sonnets. However, as the trajectory of Auden’s meditations on freedom and necessity shows, “In Time of War” reveals not Auden at his most Marxist, but Auden surveying Marxian philosophical themes even as he is definitively turning away, in XXVII and “Commentary” especially, from the possibility of a Communist political position.

It is a received critical idea that Auden’s unambiguous public articulation of his differences with Communism took longer than it should have. This is a view common among American critics of an anti-communist sensibility and British critics who can still

feel the slight to English self-esteem caused by Auden's emigration. Cunningham describes how, for Auden as for many others, the turn away from Communism or fellow-travelling proto-Communism began with disillusionment regarding the Republican side during the Spanish Civil War, and suggests that fears both of abetting the fascist cause in Europe, and of being "maligned and ostracized on the Left" (as Orwell was for Homage to Catalonia) prevented a quick unequivocal goodbye to the Popular Front and all that. It was far easier, suggests Cunningham, "to let one's enthusiastic tones leak slowly out and the damning confessions to emerge, if at all, slowly and later. This was Auden's way" (461).

As Auden's revisions and rejections of poems from this period attest, Auden had things to answer for with respect to his adoption of, or his willingness to allow others to project onto him, a public role as poet for a clearly compromised Left (though sometimes Auden's detractors conveniently forget that many others have as much or far more to expiate for their alignments, whether with the Left or with an at least as egregiously compromised Right). However, it is also true that Auden's engagement with Marxian-Engelsian ideas—his borrowings from them, his debate with them, and his detachment from them—though characterized by complexity and some ambiguities, is untainted by the spineless disingenuousness and lingering sneakiness of Cunningham's insinuations.

Whatever the particularities of Auden's case in so far as he allowed himself to be identified as a partisan spokesman, Journey does involve Auden and Isherwood's clear disassociation of themselves from Communism. More pertinent than the issue of whether Auden in the late 1930s made a clear break with Communism is the fact that on a philosophical level his encounter with Marx and Engels and Communism provokes a productive intellectual exactingness that leads to a lasting wisdom. The association of Auden with proto-Communist partisanship, in whatever respect it might be justified, and

Auden's disavowals of rhetorical political poems that others valued highly, are interesting as special instances of phenomena of ideological and political alignment, schism, and reorientation experienced in countless twentieth-century lives. Grosvenor's argument that Auden's intellectual crisis in 1937-38 "was a personification of the crisis of a moment in British literary history" (Izzo Legacy 240) actually applies to more than just literary history or just Britain. One must be careful, though, about how one projects those broader crises onto Auden's work. Auden's crisis is important as a representative expression of a critical moment, but the instructive record of Auden's transformation during that crisis of ideas derived from Marx and Engels exhibits considerably more integrity and clear sightedness than many have allowed him. One reason Auden's 1937-38 crisis is widely misrepresented is that so few critics have given Journey the attention it requires. Correct but undeveloped is Replogle's assessment that Auden "escaped nearly all the frenzied doubts and conflicting anxieties [regarding Communism] of his neo-Marxist middle-class friends," but that "in the end the philosophical tenets of Marx and related thinkers probably had a more lasting effect on [Auden] than on the others" (Poetry 24). XXVII, like Journey as a whole, reveals the complexity of this individual and epochal crisis in partisan engagement and philosophical comprehension. If Auden had been a committed Communist before Journey, Cunningham's snideness about Auden's equivocal ways of signaling his disaffection would be justified because Journey could then be condemned as not presenting this ideological shift forcefully enough as a major turning point that is a break and a disavowal. Since, however, Auden had not so committed himself, no such disavowal was in order, and Journey rather than being principally concerned to articulate a break with Marxism reveals instead Auden seeing through 1930s Marxism to other horizons.

XXVII's line "We live in freedom by necessity" is important because it records an

epiphany in Auden's long meditation on the themes of freedom and necessity, but also because with this line Auden signals that he is well beyond the limits of contemporary Communist orthodoxy or proto-Communist partisanship. When O'Neill and Reeves observe that XXVII "not only cites but also breathes life into Engels' dictum that 'freedom is the knowledge of necessity'" (176), they are only half way to the truth. For in XXVII, Auden does not just cite Engels, he radically revises Engels' understanding of the relationship of freedom and necessity. Auden's variations on the themes of freedom and necessity would continue to involve revisions of Engels' phrasing and thought, but would do so in an effort, not to simply reject, but to critique and contextualize the Marxian and Communist positions. Henceforth Auden's explorations of the freedom-necessity-choice complex are part of a search for a fuller understanding—which for Auden would include an orthodox Christian understanding—of the implications of the conclusion of XXVII.

The radical nature of XXVII's reformulation of Engels' conception of the relationship between freedom and necessity has not been clarified adequately in the critical literature. Replogle in his review of "Auden's Marxism" refers to XXVII only as a "final summation," and not, as he should have, as a 'transforming revision' of Auden's understanding of Engel's comments on freedom and necessity. Replogle notes that "the freedom-necessity-choice concept does not disappear" (593) after "In Time of War" and argues that Marx and Engels "laid the foundation for a conception of human existence that, incorporated into and transformed by Christian theology, became the central theme of [Auden's] later poetry" (595). Replogle does not explain why "oddly enough, with [XXVII's] final summation of the human condition, Auden's Marxism ends abruptly" (593). This is not strictly true, since Marxist vocabulary again dominates in the fifth age of Anxiety (Gottlieb 95), but it is true that the degree of Auden's engagement changes

drastically after XXVII. Replogle cannot explain why this is so, because like other commentators, Replogle has not noticed that through XXVII Auden is already articulating an understanding of freedom and necessity which contradicts Marx and Engels.

Replogle's presentation of Auden's treatment of Engels is lucid, but incomplete. Later critics like O'Neill and Reeves simply beg the question by telling us that Auden "breathes new life into Engels' dictum." Other critics confuse the issue by persistently aligning Auden with Engels even after Buell's 1973 observation that in XXVII "Auden has wittily transformed Engels' famous dictum that 'freedom is the consciousness of necessity' into a statement that no longer concerns the relation of the individual consciousness to historical law but rather the aloneness and fallibility of man within a world that gives him no assurances" (176). The inability to perceive what XXVII means derives from the complexity of the sonnet's ending with its returns, its infinite regresses, and illusory closure. It also derives from resistance and projections engendered by the controversies regarding Auden's relationship to twentieth century socialism and communism, and of Auden's beliefs regarding these -isms in the 1930s and after. Thus, Stan Smith (misquoting) writes "It is a travesty of this sequence, which ends up with the orthodox 'Marxist' proposition, 'We live in freedom of [sic] necessity...', to cast it as a rejection of socialism, as [. . .] Callan does" (118). Far from travesty, what Callan actually does is to situate the sequence "at a critical point in [Auden's] intellectual development between early 1937 when he went to Spain, and late 1939 when he assembled the collection Another Time" (Callan 135). Smith's objection that Callan reads the sequence in the light of hindsight finds support in the fact that Callan considers, not the original "In Time of War" sequence, but "Sonnets from China," the sequence as Auden himself rewrote it much later. Nonetheless Callan's conclusion that by "the end of the thirties [Auden] had become, philosophically, not a

Communist, but a would-be Christian,” in spite of its misleading suggestion that Auden ever was a Communist, trumps Smith’s mistaken claim that “In Time of War” ends with an “orthodox ‘Marxist’ proposition.” Seen in the overall context of Auden’s career, “In Time of War” and XXVII reveal what Jacobs following MacIntyre describes as a “fault line” where the tectonic plates of different “traditions of moral inquiry” meet and where the claims of these conflicting traditions must be adjudicated (Jacobs xvi-xvii)—the conflicting traditions in this case being Marxism and Christianity.

Smith argues that it is “illicit to import Auden’s subsequent biography into the poem to justify this reading” (118), but reference to Auden’s subsequent biography does not constitute an “illicit” justification for a reading, even if it is not an entirely ‘necessary and sufficient’ one. The problem for Smith is not whether Auden’s later biography and ideological development can be ‘imported’ into an interpretation of XXVII. Smith’s problem is that he wishes Auden’s later biography were other than it is. A further problem is that aspects of what Smith thinks of as “subsequent biography” are already in the 1938 poem. For Auden in XXVII has already rejected Marxist philosophy in favour of something resembling Judeo-Christian philosophy.

XXVII’s revision of Engels became a permanent feature of Auden’s thinking and is closely related to ideological developments central to the twentieth-century. In order to understand Auden’s revision of Engels, we need to recall exactly what Auden was responding to. Engels writes in Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science

Hegel was the first to state correctly the relation between freedom and necessity. To him, freedom is the appreciation of necessity. [. . .] Freedom does not consist in the dream of independence of natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work toward definite ends. [. . .] Freedom of the will therefore means nothing but the capacity to make decisions with real knowledge of the subject. [. . .] Freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature which is founded on knowledge of natural necessity; it is

therefore necessarily a product of historical development (125-26).

Engels returns to the relationship of freedom and necessity in a conclusion to *AntiDühring* diametrically opposed to that of XXVII, and in a partisan flourish, Engels prophesies that “humanity’s leap from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom” will happen once and for all only when the “modern proletariat” accomplishes its “world-emancipating [. . .] historical mission” (310). For Engels, freedom progressively supercedes necessity so that he predicts humanity’s eventual accession to a realm of total freedom.

There is no such utopianism or even progressivism in the conclusion of XXVII. On the contrary, in spite of some hints earlier in the sequence and later in “Commentary” that Auden does want to see freedom as emerging in history, the poem categorically rejects utopianism and progressivism. Auden would later describe as Un-Christian the ideas “that man can become free by knowledge” and “that he who knows the good will will it,” and holds instead that “knowledge only increases the danger” (Lectures 312). A second difference from Engels is that XXVII has us not only ending in freedom, but beginning in it. “We live in freedom by necessity” is far less compatible with Engels’ point of view than it is incompatible. The line is so riddingly polysemous as to be impossible to reduce to any single reading. What the line means varies according to what “by” is taken as meaning and to whom the “we” in question refers. We noted in the previous chapter the ambiguities throughout “In Time Of War” surrounding Auden’s use of personal pronouns, particularly his use of “we.” In XXVII the candidates for first person plural subjectivity range from a universal humanity in its political and erotic aspects; to more specific political collectivities, left, right, ethnic, or national; to gender and erotic groupings, including male homosexuals

in particular; to Auden and Isherwood themselves.¹

As if those permutations were not enough, depending how one takes the preposition “by,” there are several possible senses in which one can interpret the line. Only one of these amounts to an agreement with Engels who claims that for freedom-comprehending Hegel “ist die Freiheit die Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit” (Engels Gesamtausgabe 118). Each of the other senses means something quite different and some are distinctly at odds with Communist orthodoxy of 1938, specifically with Stalin’s argument—an argument in a text dated from September 1938 and so exactly contemporaneous with XXVII—for the extension to the study of history and society of the same Engelsian principles that dialectical materialists employ in the study of nature (Stalin Dialectical 5). Only if “by” is read as “by means of” can Auden be taken as saying with Engels that we become free through our mastery of necessity, i.e. by means of our knowledge of natural law. In this case “We live in freedom by necessity” does mean something like “Freedom is the appreciation of necessity.” Such a sense of “by”, though, is neither idiomatically, nor the sense most consistent with the poem’s rejections of utopian and progressive anticipations of future certainties, and with the poem’s insistence on the inevitability both of choice and error and of having to live with the consequences of our choices.

Idiom and context suggest a reading of the line that says that we are free because we

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Auden exploits the ambiguity of personal pronouns again in “In Praise of Limestone”: The ‘we’ / ‘they’ of the poem may, then, be successively (a) human beings v. animals (ie. “the inconstant ones” versus the “beasts who repeat themselves”); (b) artists v. non-artists (ie. the child v. his rival brothers, in Auden’s theory of art this rivalry being a wish to please the *Urmutter*); (c) English v. Italians (with their different conceptions of God); (d) valley-dwellers v. mountain-dwellers and nomads; (e) the lovers (Auden and Kallman) v. the seekers of “immoderate soils”; and (f) human beings v. statues. The poem’s power comes from the suggestive and shifting variety of its propositions” (Fuller 406).

I would add homosexuals v. heterosexuals to the ‘we’ / ‘they’ oppositions of “Limestone.”.

must be: we are free *faute de mieux*; we cannot choose not to choose; our freedom has been thrust on us from the beginning. Or, as Smith tellingly misquotes the line, “We live in freedom *of necessity*” [my italics]. In Engels’ Hegelian terms the only necessity that the poem teaches us to recognize is the necessity of recognizing our freedom. Instead of breathing new life into Engels’ dictum, Auden turns Engels’ idea of the relationship of freedom and necessity inside out, and converts it to the idea, which he would restate twenty-five years later in The Dyer’s Hand, that “Necessity is the consciousness of Freedom” (61).

The readings of the line suggested so far are all compatible with the broadest senses of the poem’s first person plural subject, with the “we” as humanity in its entirety coming to terms with its collective story, common situation, and shared nature. Other contexts and plural subjects, however, radically reorient the import of the line. In Journey, there are also far less universal ‘we’s contrasted with far less universal ‘they’s. In “The Ship” and “Hong Kong,” there are ‘we’s’ as Occidentals or British versus them as Orientals; in XIII, it is versus a ‘them’ as Chinese; in XV it is versus a ‘them’ as Japanese. Since freedom is not just an abstract philosophical question in Journey, but an urgent geo-political problem, this non-Japanese “we” is a democratic “us” versus a dictator-dominated “them.” Spears holds that the “surface reference [in XXVII] is topical and political—democracy versus totalitarianism” (142). Auden elaborates on this opposition of an “us” as democrats to a “them” of Fascist, Nazi, and Japanese totalitarianisms in “Commentary.” In this context, XXVII’s second last line confirms that ‘We live in democratic freedom *faute de mieux*.’ This is what Auden implies in his panicky “Democracy’s Reply to the Challenge of Dictators,” the text of a speech delivered in October 1938 (Prose 1: 816), and in the 1937 pamphlet “Education” (415). These two texts do much to clarify Auden’s proclaimed politics and stand as a contemporary refutation of the idea that Auden can be thought of as

Communist in this period.

XXVII's next to concluding line can also be read as involving a very different sort of contrast, since "by" can mean 'beside,' 'next to,' 'in proximity to,' such that 'we live in our freedom beside a contrasting necessity.' Contrasts between the realm of human freedom and that of natural necessity are among Auden's most characteristic themes. Appearing early and recurring regularly to the end of his career, variations on this contrast find expression in poems from "This Lunar Beauty," "Our Hunting Fathers," "Our Bias," "Their Lonely Betters," "Homage to Clio," to "Address to the Beasts." In "In Time of War," Auden opens both the sonnet sequence and "Commentary" with the contrast of natural necessity and human freedom. Sonnet I is devoted to establishing the features that differentiate humans from plants and animals; and the first five stanzas of "Commentary," occurring immediately after the conclusion of XXVII, are devoted to situating Man within a natural cosmos which he seems both to belong to and stand apart from. Reiterating the contrast of man and nature later in "Commentary," Auden revisits the phrasing XXVII: "*Men are not innocent as beasts and never can be, / Man can improve himself but never will be perfect*" (686). It is a mistake to expect or seek the enviable assurance of natural necessity, like that of XXVII's streams that are "sure" or of Engels' *Anti-Dühring*, because humanity lives in a distinct world of imperfect moral freedom and incertitude.

An already noted feature of the contrast in I of nature's animals and plants to humanity is that the latter from the beginning "chose his love." As also noted, this theme of choice in love embraces both the choice of lovers and that of sexual orientation. Given XXVII's systematic entanglement with problems of Eros and sexuality, the line "We live in freedom by necessity" has a specific relevance to matters of Eros and homosexuality, especially since questions of freedom and necessity frequently arise out of questions about

the nature of homosexuality. One way of looking at homosexuality has been to describe it, as the medical and psychological disciplines have often done, not as a matter of personal erotic choice, but as an expression of necessity, either of a psychological and biological orientation determined innately, or of a pathological neurotic compulsion determined by involuntary forces of heredity or environmental (de)formation. "In Time of War" opposes to this a thoroughly voluntarist view of homosexuality that is as ideologically radical and transformative as Auden's revisions of Engels on freedom and necessity and his rejections of nostalgic and utopian political visions.

Auden was acutely aware of the peculiar freedom of the homosexual. The specious contrast of homosexuality and heterosexuality implicit in IV has already pointed to the peasant's choice-deprived, reproductive, heterosexual ethos, determined by the natural necessities of "seasons," "mountains," "the sun," "the earth," which stands in opposition to the townsman's freer "unnatural course." In IV, it is the agrarian heterosexual hero who is dominated by necessity, while the townsman, whose sexual orientation is unspecified, pursues an unnatural freedom. The theme of the freedom of the homosexual recurs in Isherwood's work. The narrator in Goodbye, reflecting on his "ill-defined" position as homosexual, describes an "exhilarating" realization of his lack of "kinship with ninety-nine per cent of the population of the world, with the men and women who earn their living, who insure their lives, who are anxious about the future of their children" (56). Freedom from the worries that things like life insurance are designed to assuage seems primordial in Isherwood's conception of the homosexual and seems part of the cause of his disdain for heterosexuals.² Homosexuals' relative freedom from responsibility is one cause of an

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Isherwood is still on about freedom-loving, insurance-scorning homosexuals in A Single Man. Resenting his noisy familial neighbours, George reflects on the Californian bohemia he once knew and typically Isherwood has George blame wives and mothers, for ruining it: "The vets themselves,

envious heterosexual resentment of homosexuals, and is perhaps the aspect of homosexuality which most justifies the designation of modern homosexuals as “gay.” For Auden in “In Time of War,” however, such freedom does not seem so gay: “They wept and quarrelled: freedom was so wild” (II); he “knew of love without love’s proper object, / And was oppressed as he had never been” (III). Nor does it seem so exhilarating, rather it is chosen “by necessity.” The homosexual’s freedom from natural and social obligations is the necessary precondition of what “we” have chosen. It seems an enabling condition of the writing life that Auden and Isherwood have both chosen. For the “we” of XXVII’s second last line can be taken to refer specifically to Auden and Isherwood, in the same way that earlier “we”s like those of “Wandering lost upon the mountains of our choice / [. . .] we sigh” and “Asleep in our huts, how we dream” can clearly refer to Auden and Isherwood on their Chinese journey. Homosexuality thus becomes an aspect of their choice to maximize their freedom, even if it means being “articled to error” and resenting, as Isherwood and some of his fictional creations do, natural “streams” and [heterosexual] houses that are sure.” Read this way, XXVII sums up the sequence’s reflections on Auden and Isherwood’s homosexual erotic experience and the privileged class-freedom they enjoy. These essential personal dimensions of “In Time of War” allow us to think of the sequence as involving, along with its epic and philosophical concerns, love poetry written by Auden to Isherwood. The sequence is surely a significant work of homosexual love poetry, though this love poetry of Auden’s is characteristically not made up of “love poems,” but of “poems about love.” As in poems such as “A Bride in the 1930s,” Auden’s erotic lyricism is embedded

no doubt, would have adjusted pretty well to the original bohemian utopia [. . .] But their wives explained to them right from the start and in the very clearest language, that breeding and bohemianism do not mix. For breeding you need a steady job, you need a mortgage, you need credit, you need insurance. And don’t you dare die, either, until the family’s future is provided for” (14). (cf. chapter 6, note 8 for more on insurance).

inextricably in large social, political, and historical contexts.

Subsequent to Journey, Auden's reflections on the human experience of freedom and necessity develop beyond the multiple ambiguities of XXVII's closing lines, but their development remains consistent with the sonnets of "In Time of War." He lapses into an equivocating angelism in "Morality in an Age of Change." Written, like "In Time of War" in 1938, when Auden's thinking on the freedom-necessity-choice complex was at a crisis, Auden's essay adopts the Engelsian line that "By studying the laws of physical nature, [Man] has gained a large measure of control over them and in so far as he is able to understand the laws of his own nature and of the societies in which he lives, he approaches that state where what he wills may be done. 'Freedom,' as a famous definition has it, "is consciousness of necessity" (Prose 1: 478). Even here there are signs that Auden is uncomfortable with the definition of freedom he is considering (see Mendelson Early 299-303 for an analysis of the essay's ideological deficiencies). There is the fact that he refers to Engels' definition only as "famous," and not as "correct" or "compelling." There is, for instance, the potentially nullifying qualification that only "in so far" as he can understand the laws of his own nature will Man approach the freedom Engels envisions. There is the Hitler, Stalin, and other dictators-evoking suggestion of a "state where what he wills may be done;" and there is the blasphemy implicit in applying that Deity-describing phrase to humanity.

Also in late 1938, between the explorations of XXVII and the troubles of "Morality in an Age of Change," Auden develops the issues of freedom and necessity in a talk on the nature of drama. These remarks are "a retrospective program" for Auden and Isherwood's dramatic collaborations (Mendelson Early 259), but seem as pertinent to the reflections on freedom in his just completed sonnet sequence as they are to the dramas:

there is a [. . .] justification for discussing the laws of the limitation of a medium [. . . because] in order to be free it is necessary to study those factors

and forces which limit one's freedom. [. . .] the stage is supremely conservative in the relation between man's free will and the forces which limit and frustrate that will. [. . .] drama is impossible if you believe that man's life is completely determined and he has no free will at all. If you have no free will and no possibility of making a choice, the dramatic suspense disappears at once. [. . .] if you are completely liberal and believe that man's will is absolutely uncontrolled, the stage falls to bits and does not mean anything [. . .]. The drama is the form [for] the culture which holds temperately to the belief in the free will of man.

The difference [. . .] between comedy and tragedy is that [in comedy] the characters are aware of their lack of freedom. [. . .] it is at the end of the play that they discover that they were freer than they thought, while in tragedy they continually believe that they are free until they discover that they are not as free as they thought. [. . .] lastly, politically, the struggle to avoid limitation, about which [. . .] the dramatist is much concerned, that is, the struggle between destiny and free will, now taking place very obviously and materially in the outer world. (Prose 1: 719-23)

Auden's reflections on freedom and necessity grow conspicuously paradoxical in his elegy for Yeats—"Each in the cell of himself is almost convinced of his freedom;" "In the prison of his days / Teach the free man how to praise"—and in "New Year Letter"—

How grandly would our virtues bloom
In a more conscionable dust
Where Freedom dwells because it must,
Necessity because it can,
And men confederate in Man. (Collected 240)—

and in "Anthem for St. Cecilia's Day"—"O bless the freedom that you never chose." They are stoic in an address at Smith College: "All freedom implies a necessity, that is to say, suffering" ("Romantic or free?" Prose 2: 358). Auden's reflections then turn doctrinally mysterious in For the Time Being in Gabriel's speech:

Since, Adam, being free to choose,
Chose to imagine he was free
To choose his own necessity,
Lost in his freedom, Man pursues
The shadow of his images" (Collected 360);

and especially in "The Meditation of Simeon": "for in Him we become fully conscious of Necessity as our freedom to be tempted, and of Freedom as our necessity to have faith"

(388). They become world-weary in Anxiety, another poem set in wartime “when necessity is associated with horror and freedom with boredom” (449); and didactic in “Friday’s Child,” his 1958 commemoration of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the pastor martyred by the Nazis:

He told us we were free to choose
 But, children as we were, we thought—
 “Paternal Love will only use
 Force in the last resort
 On those too bumptious to repent.”—
 Accustomed to religious dread,
 It never crossed our minds He meant
 Exactly what He said. (675)

In 1972 in “Unpredictable But Providential,” Auden meditates on the origins of life, “the first real Event,” which gave to some “Original Substance” “a new freedom, to grow, a new necessity, death” (659). There are in total about two hundred lines in Auden’s poetry where the words “freedom”, “necessity”, or “choice”, or their cognates and derivations, occur (Dowling Concordance 262-265, 626-7, 1103-5, 1975-6, 1978) often in the sorts of combinations evident in the passages just quoted. There are as well many other occurrences of this thematic complex, for instance, in the variation on the necessity versus freedom polarity in the later Auden’s opposition of “behaviour” and “deed” (Firchow 220). It is, however, chiefly subsequent to XXVII’s final summation of Journey’s exploration of the issues that the tenor of Auden’s musings on freedom and necessity become theological.

It is ironic—in terms of Auden’s position in the history of philosophical and religious thought—that 1938, “In Time of War,” and XXVII mark turning points in both Auden’s understanding of freedom and necessity and his openness to Christianity. It is ironic because, at the very time that Auden was taking up Christianity-inflected themes and a philosophical rigour on questions of freedom and necessity, much of Christianity was abandoning its centuries long preoccupation with the issue of free will.

Many Christian thinkers have let the subject [of free will and predestination]

drop, in keeping with the declaration by the World Conference on Faith and Order (1937) that theories about how the truths of God's grace and human free will might be reconciled are not part of the Christian faith. As Christians have become [. . .] more wary of logical abstraction, secular philosophers have filled the void with their own concepts of freedom and necessity, free will and determinism" (McIntree 429).

The secular aspects of the later Auden's religious thought should perhaps be as problematic for Christianizing critics as the Christian suggestions in Auden's 'secular' poetry from the 1930s have proved for some anti-clerical critics. There is something typical of Auden in his doubly contrarian persistence in pondering the theological issues which had become secondary in much modern philosophy and culture, and in studying the philosophical problems of human freedom abandoned by modern Christianity.

Auden clarifies his position on freedom and necessity in the 1962 published version of a lecture delivered in the late fifties. The authoritative opening paragraphs of the essay "The Virgin and the Dynamo" offer a concise, yet full articulation of the understanding of the relationship of freedom and necessity first presented in XXVII. Auden's intellectual development has involved a long debate with Engels and with associated Marxian materialist perspectives, but Auden's thinking in "The Virgin and the Dynamo," as the title of his essay indicates, also involves a revision of Henry Adams, and an integration of Adams and Engels into the religious philosophies of Rudolf Kassner and Kierkegaard.

Replogle explains Auden's incorporation of Engels' concerns into a Kierkegaardian perspective in terms of the shared assumptions that Engels and Kierkegaard derived from Hegelian thought and empirical epistemology. Though some were incredulous when Auden's religious conversion became apparent, for Replogle Auden's ethical concerns were not betrayed by his later religious point of view, but rather could become "parts of a larger vision" (*Poetry* 50-61). "In Time of War" announces this dialectical conversion of a secular Marxian ethical perspective into Auden's later religious vision. Such dialectical procedures

are essential to Auden's thought. Mendelson notes that with "Heidegger, as with other philosophers and poets, Auden responded to an ideological enemy by appropriating and subverting him" (Later 317), but Auden approaches friendly figures, as well as the stages of his own development, in the same way. The dialectical openness and self-conscious ironies of this procedure is characteristic of Auden's poetry and aesthetics.

The incorporation of Adams into Auden's mature perspective is a geopolitical instance of Auden's dialectical procedure. Auden read Adams soon after emigrating to United States in 1939, and Auden's argument with The Education of Henry Adams' chapter on "The Dynamo and the Virgin"—like his argument with Engels' *Anti-Dühring*—became a permanent part of Auden's thinking. Auden first makes use of Adams' symbols of the Dynamo and the Virgin in New Year Letter as part of his description of the character of secular America, that "culture that had worshipped no / Virgin before the Dynamo" (Collected 236). Auden glosses the reference in the "Notes To Letter" with an uncommented upon quotation from Adams (New Year 147). As with Engels, Auden rejects Adams' thinking (Hand 63) and revises Adams' terms into a more comprehensive view of the world. He does this by bringing together his revision of Adams and his revision of Engels' conception of freedom and necessity. In a way which is typical of Auden's reconciliation of false and dangerous oppositions and which is ideologically creative in the Cold War political context, Auden rejects and preserves the thinking of both the American Adams and the Communist-endorsed Engels.

It would seem that, for Auden, Adams and Engels erred into versions of what Auden calls the "Two Chimerical Worlds." The chimerical world inhabited by Adams is a "magical polytheistic nature created by the aesthetic illusion which would regard the world of masses as if it were a world of faces." Such an error results in an "aesthetic religion [that]

says prayers to the Dynamo.” The chimerical world inhabited by Engels is a “mechanized history created by the scientific illusion which would regard the world of faces as if it were a world of masses.” This error results in a “scientific religion [that] treats the Virgin as a statistic. Scientific politics is animism stood on its head” (62). Extreme contemporary examples of these twin chimerical worlds are, in the case of Adams’ error, Fascism or Nazism, and in that of Engels’, Communism or Stalinism. These are the same political chimeras whose presences in 1938 haunt respectively the first and second stanzas of XXVII.

In contrast to Engels’ and Adam’s chimerical worlds, Auden identifies “Two Real Worlds.” There is the “Natural World of the Dynamo, the world of masses, identical relations and recurrent events, describable, not in words but in terms of numbers, or rather, in algebraic terms. In this world, Freedom is the consciousness of Necessity and Justice the equality of all before natural law.” And there is the “Historical World of the Virgin, the world of faces, analogical relations and singular events, describable only in terms of speech. In this World, Necessity is the consciousness of Freedom and Justice the love of my neighbour as a unique and irreplaceable being” (Hand 61-62). These distinctions between two incommensurable ‘Real Worlds’ and two similar, if diametrically opposed, ‘Chimerical Worlds’ constitute a modernized religious view of human wisdom and folly that Auden articulated with ideas from Adams and Engels and from religious thinkers like Kierkegaard and Rudolf Kassner. The influence of Kierkegaard is evident in the concept of an “aesthetic religion” and of the antithesis of repetition and singularity; that of Kassner is evident in the term “chimerical” and the antitheses of masses and faces, of identity and analogy, and of speech or word and number or algebraic terms. Kassner, who remains “almost unknown in English” (Mendelson Later 366), develops ideas regarding these oppositions and regarding chimeras in several essays, notably Von den Elementen des Menschlichen Grösse (1911),

Die Chimäre. Der Aussätzige (1914), and Zahl und Gesicht (1919). Kassner's ideas concerning chimeras are relevant to many collective modern phenomena, not only but obviously including aspects of Fascism, Nazism, and Communism. As Mendelson tells us, Kassner "equates chimeras with the unclean spirits who possess the demoniac in Mark 5:2-13, and whose 'name is Legion: for we are many.' The idea that membership in any collective group is a form of demonic possession recurs throughout Auden's later work" (367). This diffidence regarding collectivities motivates in part the circumspection, ambivalence, and ambiguity with which Auden employs the plural pronoun "we" in XXVII, and throughout "In Time of War."

For our discussion of XXVII, there are two relevant details in the conception in "The Virgin and the Dynamo" of the two Real Worlds. First there is Auden's rejection of the sorts of chimerical worlds we encounter in the octave's nostalgic and utopian demonic collective mirages. Second there is Auden's conception in each of the Real Worlds of the relationships of freedom and necessity. For XXVII's conclusion that "We live in freedom by necessity" is restated in Auden's 1962 summation of his views on the issue. Thus, in the real Natural World of the Dynamo, just as Engels had argued, "Freedom is the consciousness of Necessity." In the real Historical World of the Virgin, however, just as the transforming revision of XXVII concluded in 1938, "Necessity is the consciousness of Freedom."

Auden's development in his later works and his systematic, almost semiotically diagrammatic, presentation in Hand of the varieties of the human experience of freedom and necessity are the authoritative glosses for the line "We live in freedom by necessity." In 1938, however, that mature articulation lay in the future and the pressures and limits of the contemporary ideological context must not be forgotten if we are to understand the line as it

occurs in “In Time of War.” In that context it is easy to understand why critics have misread Auden’s sequence as involving ideological wavering around problems of ‘orthodox Marxism’ or Communism for in that context it is common to mistake Marxian and socialist perspectives for an imaginary Marxist monolith. Such a monolith is in part a simplification dictated from the later perspective of the Cold War, and in part a mirage found in contemporary 1930s polemics and propaganda, whether pro-Soviet and pro-Communist or anti-Communist and anti-Soviet. “In Time of War” cannot be comprehended, though, except in terms of a contrast to the idea of a simplistic Marxist orthodoxy or to a single Communist Party line. Much more cogent to “In Time of War” are various sorts of thinking then emerging along Marxian lines, including critical thinking on Marxism itself, and urgent contemporary thinking on such quintessentially twentieth-century issues as the “freedom-necessity-choice complex.”

One thinks of Sartre and the influential existential philosophy he developed in L’Être et le Néant. Like Auden, Sartre first explored his concern with such issues in his literary works, principally La Nausée (a work published in March 1938 while Auden and Isherwood were in China). Sartre subsequently developed the themes of La Nausée more explicitly in the discursive modes of philosophy and criticism. Freedom, necessity, choice, anguish, bad faith, the body, the situation, all these celebrated concepts of Sartre’s are immediately pertinent to an understanding of the sonnets of “In Time of War” and of Journey as a whole: “On insistera [. . .] sur l’armature conceptuelle et philosophique de l’ensemble, avec la notion de l’aliénation et l’opposition entre l’être et l’existence. L’homme est conscience, liberté et pour-soi; à l’inverse des animaux pleins d’eux même: condamné à être libre, l’homme de ‘In Time of War’ est un héros sartrien avant la lettre” (Aquié 102).

A second contemporary thinker whose work helps us read “In Time of War” is Erich Fromm. Grosvenor notes the interest Auden shared with Fromm and other Freudian-Marxists in combining Marxism and psychoanalysis, but observes that “Auden never synthesized the two into a coherent system of thought” (Izzo Legacy 267). McLeod, however, sees parallels between Auden and Fromm’s perspectives on Marx and on freedom. For McLeod, Fromm is “the only author contemporary with Auden” whose reading of Marx resembles Auden’s appropriation of Marx in “In Time of War” (59). For Fromm, Marxism, rather than being opposed to Biblical religion, is an expression of the tradition of emancipatory Judeo-Christian Messianism and humanism (McLeod 44; Fromm Marx 64-9, 261-3). The synthesis of Marxian and Christian themes in “In Time of War” is not a sign of ideological self-contradiction, but derives instead from the profound affiliation of Marxism and Christianity that in Auden permits them to enhance one another. McLeod correctly perceives the affinity of Auden and Fromm’s work, but errs in calling Fromm the only contemporary author who saw the complementarity of Marxism and Christianity. Patrick Deane includes Auden in a secular and religious British tradition emphasizing precisely that complementarity (24-31). The conflation of socialist and Christian discourse is possible in that tradition because Marxism derives from Judeo-Christianity with which it shares a “steady concentration on the Millennium” and because Marxism and Christianity have a common teleological orientation (30). Deane argues that the idea of the complementarity of Marxism and Christianity was “one of the principal—and most readily consumed—productions of middle-class intellectual culture in Britain during the thirties” (30).

Still, the affinity of Auden and Fromm is striking. McLeod demonstrates that Auden’s treatment of the theme of freedom in “In Time of War,” and especially XXVII,

anticipates the reflections on freedom in Fromm's widely-read Escape from Freedom. Fromm and Auden present similar Marx-influenced histories of the development of humanity toward freedom (McLeod 58); both postulate an inherent human freedom and a relative fluidity in human nature (68); both recognize the problematic tension between a negative "freedom from" and a positive "freedom to" (69); both reflect on the anxious unhappiness that flows from freedom and our consequent desire to ignore or escape from freedom, and to regress into nostalgic or utopian fantasies (89 ; 110). So compelling are the parallels between Fromm and Auden that McLeod wonders whether the ideas in Escape from Freedom, which appeared two years after "In Time of War," were somehow available to Auden in 1938. A simpler explanation is that in the case of Fromm, as in the case of many other thinkers, Auden's sometimes controversial, usually unforeseen, development foreshadows later, more broadly adhered to philosophical and literary trends.³

Fromm, Sartre, or any other particular thinker aside, the themes of freedom and necessity have been central to the articulation of Western culture at least since Exodus and the Iliad (our *ur-*'journey to a war') and central to modern philosophy and civilization generally, and often tragically so. Auden's timely, explicit, and sustained development of

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In addition to McLeod and Grosvenor's view that Auden anticipates Fromm and Aquien's view that the Man of "In Time of War" anticipates the Sartrean hero, Jacobs argues that Auden "is in a significant sense [Alasdair] Macintyre's predecessor in considering the conflicts among and within traditions" (xviii); and that "the position Auden is working through in The Prolific bears a striking resemblance to the [later] moral philosophy of Iris Murdoch" (12). Gottlieb notes that Auden's thought anticipates Hannah Arendt's in The Human Condition (7). Boly sees Auden as a precursor of modern semiotics (v. "Literary Evolutionist") and Auden's critical practice as proto-deconstructionist (Reading 71) and proto-structuralist (67). Stan Smith identifies analogues in Auden of Lacan's psychoanalytic theories (Cambridge 12). For their parts, Bozorth, Emig, and Mendelson see Auden respectively as foreshadowing themes in queer theory, postmodernism, and Derridean deconstruction. Auden also embraces Bakhtin's analyses of the Carnival a decade before the academic vogue for Bakhtin's work. There is too Auden's early coordination of Freud and Marx in the 1930s. If Brodsky's opinion that Auden was "the greatest mind of the twentieth century" (One 357) has merit, it is partly because of Auden's *avant-gardist* anticipation of developments in the work of so many diverse thinkers.

these themes provide a crucial argument for the permanent relevance of Auden's work to modern experience. It is perhaps the very obviousness and universality of this relevance and centrality which has made it difficult for some critics to read clearly this overarching thematic of necessity and freedom in Auden's work, just as the history of twentieth-century politics and ideological controversy has made it difficult for critics to read XXVII without distortion. Jacobs suggests that the failure of critics to articulate a balanced view of Auden's ongoing attempt to negotiate between the forces of personal will and the forces of fate or of the determined may be related to the respective incapacities of adherents of existentialist, structuralist, post-structuralist, and, I would add, Marxian, critical schools to come to terms with the very freedom-necessity-choice complex that Auden explores so persistently. However difficult it is to deal with Auden's view of that complex, it is easy to agree with Jacobs that "Auden consistently avoided, almost from the beginning of his career and certainly to its end, the twin temptations of Pelagius and Calvin: radical voluntarism and radical determinism" (117). Certainly, the dialectic of freedom and necessity that weaves through Auden's work from beginning to end is one of the principal sources of coherence in a body of work whose diversity and contradictions some commentators have been too quick to criticize and whose unity and coherence have too often remained unperceived or insufficiently acknowledged. Nowhere does Auden more succinctly encompass all the meanings that dialectic has in his work than in the pivotal XXVII with its penultimate line "We live in freedom by necessity."

POETICS...POLITICS...CHRISTIANITY...HOMOSEXUALITY

XXVII concentrates in one poem the principal concerns of Auden's development of the themes of freedom and necessity. A masterpiece of concision, the poem unfolds a vision of a complex ideological crisis of enormous breadth. XXVII articulates both

Auden's generational turn away from Communism and his permanent incorporation of Marxian thought into an ongoing ideological project. The poem coincides too with a turning point in modern Christian thought about freedom and necessity. XXVII illustrates the complex intelligence motivating Auden's handling of poetic form, and crystallizes the process of the much-debated transformation of the early into the later Auden and marks the emergence of what Mendelson identifies as the characteristic pattern of Auden's mature rhetoric. The poem's articulation of a radical view of homosexual Eros coincides moreover with major crises in both Chinese and Western understandings of homosexuality. All these aspects of XXVII develop, moreover, with topical reference to the political crisis of 1938 and of an encounter with China during its anti-Japanese war.

All such aspects of XXVII recur throughout Journey, though the many ideological burdens which XXVII carries so lightly are borne less elegantly by the book as a whole. XXVII's deft manipulation of the terms of its crises, including the very temptations that undermine one's capacity to deal with those crises, helps us understand Journey's struggle with its shifting and unwieldy burdens. The book's thematic complexities are reflected in an aesthetic uncertainty which drives the book's composition, just as compositional features of XXVII such as its turn, its infinite regresses, and its anticlosural closure are directly related to the poem's themes. A defining feature of Journey is its periodic presentation of provisional resolutions of its ongoing thematic and aesthetic uncertainties. Understanding the relationship between thematic and compositional issues elsewhere in Journey is crucial to comprehending the book. XXVII, which presents a vista of almost the entire range of Journey's thematic and ideological problems, also provides the book's most poetically and aesthetically masterful resolution of those problems. In XXVII's ideological and compositional *tour de force* we can find a heuristics through which we can interpret Journey

as an expression of a multifaceted ideological crisis and through which we can evaluate Journey's other attempts to shape an aesthetic resolution to its ideological difficulties.

We have seen that XXVII's line "We live in freedom by necessity" ultimately leads into the realms of Biblical myth and Christian thought. Whereas in his earlier work, these religious contexts are evoked obliquely, reticently, and even in an occulted fashion, subsequent to XXVII, such traditions become explicitly evident in Auden's work. The latent religious dimension of "In Time of War" has puzzled critics, encouraging those of neo-testamentary bent, and aggravating those who wish to see Auden's early work as strongly secular. Commentators duly note that Biblical myths of the Creation and the Fall inform the two opening sonnets and that the myth of a modest, anonymous, Messiah informs the tenth. Elements of these myths, as well as echoes of the "Lord's Prayer," are at work in XXVII. In such contexts, XXVII's second last line directs us to the Judeo-Christian mysteries of our need to recognize and exercise a God-given free will, and the line insists on the impossibility of returning to an Eden where choice will not be anguished and our responsibilities not so perilous. This congruity of XXVII with Biblical and Christian themes anticipates developments Hynes dates to 1940 when "What [Auden] found in Christianity was a system of beliefs that could contain his new conclusions: the ethic of loneliness; the aesthetic of imperfection; the paradox of necessary freedom" ("Voice" 44).

Few commentators have been comfortable reconciling the Christian aspects of "In Time of War" with its reviews of secular history and its Marxian historical analyses. Smith and Beach deny the pertinence of a Judeo-Christian reading of the sequence, arguing instead for its predominant secularism, and even the illusion of its 'orthodox Marxism' (Smith 117-8). In contrast, Replogle, though he calls the creation myth "completely secular" and reads the sequence through a Marxist prism (Poetry 42-44), finds the sequence's Christianity

more than incidental and decorative. Auden's recourse to Biblical themes in "In Time of War" (along with some ambiguous comments about the date of his return to Christianity in Auden's essay in Modern Canterbury Pilgrims (ed. Pike)) leads Replogle to mistakenly conclude that Auden must have "first read Kierkegaard sometime in late 1937 or early 1938" (55), that is just before he went to China and wrote "In Time of War." In fact, Auden had not read Kierkegaard before the fall of 1940 (Mendelson Prose 2: xix). One need not presume that Auden was already familiar with Kierkegaard in order to speculate on the Judeo-Christian implications of the sequence. Beach considers such speculations illegitimate: "present-day readers of 'In Time of War' who are not closely attentive to the text may very well take this whole work to be an anticipation of the most orthodox Christian views" (7); but Hynes, reflecting on the sequence's mix of Marx with Christian themes "treated rather eccentrically," observes that "You couldn't call it a Christian poem, exactly, but you could say that its argument is consistent with Christian faith, and is not consistent with Marxism" (Generation 345). Spears too notes that, though XXVII's "surface reference" may be contemporary politics, the poem "is very close to Auden's later Christian" themes (142). Callan's further conclusion that the sequence reveals Auden as philosophically "a would-be Christian" (135) is simply a more reasonable reading of its Judeo-Christian dimensions than those of critics whose resistance to Christianity weakens their readings of "In Time of War."

The coexistence of the religious and the secular in the sequence might be explained away by describing "In Time of War" as a transitional work from "a critical moment" in Auden's intellectual development between early 1937 and late 1939 (Callan 135) during which he was passing from a 'Marxist' phase to his mature Christianity. This description, however, omits the Christian aspects of Auden's work prior to 1937 and the permanence of

Marxian concerns in his later work. Such a description omits the affiliation of “In Time of War” with Christian socialism in Britain and the sequence’s anticipations of Biblical interpretations of Marx (McLeod 5-6, 8 ; Fromm Marx 261-3). Categorizing “In Time of War” as transitional can diminish the imaginative originality and breadth of a vision of humanity that makes the sequence “Auden’s supreme achievement of the 1930s” (Davenport-Hines in Smith Cambridge 19).

For Auden’s achievement in speaking of human history and human nature in the supposedly incompatible terms of Marxian historical materialism and of Christian myth and morality represents a remarkable poetic solution to one of the crucial ideological dilemmas of the twentieth-century. In its institutional expression in the 1930s, this dilemma defined for T.S. Eliot the possibilities of modern drama and literary community: “There are only two causes now of sufficient seriousness [to create a new audience around a common cause], and they are mutually exclusive: the Church and Communism” (“Religious Drama” 4-5). This dualistic ideological dilemma oriented partisan bias in the case of the Spanish Civil War, that regional prelude to catastrophic global schism. Auden, however, overcomes the ideological binarism dividing his contemporaries by taking from the conservative religious right its moral imperatives and its insistence on human imperfection and from the materialist left its historical analytics and emancipatory horizons. Auden’s politically precarious wedding of the Christian and Marxian in “In Time of War” constitutes Auden’s imaginative response to the shock of the anti-ecclesiastical destruction he witnessed during the Spanish Civil War and contrasts to the desolate image of loyalist George Orwell searching for a resting place: “I came upon the ruins of a church that had been gutted and burnt in the revolution. It was a mere shell, four roofless walls surrounding piles of rubble. In the half-darkness, I poked about and found a kind of hollow where I could lie down”

(175 Homage). Anticipating Hugh's fantasy of being at once "Hero of the Soviet Republic, and the True Church" (240) in Malcolm Lowry's retrospective look at 1938 in Under the Volcano, Auden's Christian-Marxian marriage remains a counter-example to the incomprehension dividing secular left and religious right in political cultures today.

In fusing Christian and Marxian perspectives, Auden eschews the narrowness and authoritarianism to which each is susceptible, when operating solely on its own terms and in diametrical opposition to the other. Considering the human potential wasted when people allow themselves to be polarized irreconcilably, and considering the destruction then being wrought by partisans of Left and Right, and the inestimable apocalyptic destruction about to be wrought in the Second World War, one wants to say of Auden's vision of humanity in "In Time of War," what Frye said in the 1930s of William Blake: "Read Blake or go to Hell: that's my message to the modern world" (Ayre 114). The world, though, does not work that way. "For poetry makes nothing happen," as Auden had realized by 1939 and subsequently spent much of his literary energy and some of his immediate reputation reminding us. In any case, the modern world simply would not have had enough time by March 1939 to read "In Time of War" before it found itself in a hellish holocaust of its own making.

Most commentators have been compelled to note the sequence's apparently problematic, but in fact far-seeing, marriage of Marxism and Christianity. No one, though, seems to have remarked on the tensions between the sequence's erotic inflections, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, both its political dimensions and its Judeo-Christian resonances. The political, erotic, and religious thematic clusters are all essential to the sonnets of "In Time of War," and the sequence is misrepresented if any of them are ignored or suppressed. One of Auden's achievements in "In Time of War" is his presentation of a comprehensive view of humanity which is rooted in the historical experience of 1938 and

which apprehends that experience's religious and political dimensions as part of a single, simultaneous, lived reality. A more unexpected achievement is the acuteness with which Auden presents the continuity of those religious and political dimensions with the erotic dimensions of human experience.

The Bakhtinian idea of a text as an arena for the reproduction of differing discourses illuminates the interaction of the erotic, the political, and the religious in XXVII and reveals a range of discourses at play in XXVII: prayerful Anglicanism, campy sexual slang, classicism, the late Romantic poetry of Baudelaire, the abstractions of materialist philosophy, legalese, the jargon of political pamphlets, the lexemes of Auden's allegorical landscapes and of Isherwood's thematics in his unfinished epic The Lost, the grand narratives of the Bible, Communism, Fascism, secularization, and democracy. The intertwining of erotic, political, and religious language in XXVII and "In Time of War" involves, though, more than a formal invocation of differing and sometimes contradictory discursive elements. The coincidence of such diverse themes suggests an apprehension of the ontological, social, psychological, biological, and spiritual interconnectedness of human existence. Some such existential apprehension informs Auden's poetics in XXVII and elsewhere, as he moves within multiple discursive and human contexts simultaneously. "Few writers have ever managed to inhabit so many levels of life," Gopnik observes of Auden (91), though a bit misleadingly—for we recognize this kind of breadth, depth, complexity, and wholeness as qualities of great literary authenticity. "In Time of War" and Journey as a whole presents the truths and crises of the erotic, the political, and the religious as realities which do not occur in isolation the one from the others, but which overlap such that the search for the truths of each remains part of a single searching. In Journey, none of these realities can be rendered inessential by being subordinated to the claims of another;

none can assume total explanatory power for human existence or exclusive predominance over the others.

Though the coexistence of religious and political perspectives in “In Time of War” has occasioned some debate, the obliquely presented, yet pervasive erotic aspects have received almost no attention. Even as recently as 2002, Kerr misses the sequence’s erotic quality entirely (Izzo Legacy 275-296). Yet the sequence’s treatment of eroticism and homosexuality and its linking of these issues to the politics and theology of freedom are as original as both its political and historical explorations and its conflation of mythical religious themes and engagé political concerns. It would be a mistake to insist on the erotic and homosexual at the expense of the sequence’s Christian and political-historical dimensions, except as a corrective to prior neglect of the erotic. Still from today’s perspective, when Judeo-Christian religious authority no longer imposes itself the way it once did, when many of the egalitarian ideals of modern Christianity and Marxism have achieved a putative ideological dominance, when Cold War paranoia about Marxism has faded, and when sexual emancipation is being trivialized through commercialization, the sonnets’ difficult holistic vision of sexuality is an especially instructive aspect of “In Time of War.”

Not only does Auden present (homosexual) Eros in a broad coherent vision of human experience, but he makes it, not accidental or incidental, but essential to both the sequence’s political and religious content. In XXVII the vision of a voluntarist homosexuality and a concomitant vision of the enhanced and problematic freedom of the homosexual coincide with a turning away from the calls of the false nostalgia of Fascism and of Communism’s false totalitarian vision of historical necessity. These visions coincide too with a renunciation of nostalgia for lost sexual paradises and a renunciation of the

fantasy of innocent sexual enjoyment of the erotic offerings of the exotic—renunciations which Isherwood also dramatizes in “Travel-Diary.” These visions of homosexuality coincide too with a rejection of a certain version of human freedom offered by Engels and contemporary Marxist thinkers. The recognition of the difficult truth and experience of erotic freedom becomes in the sonnets inseparable from the recognition of political freedom and unfreedom. Similarly, the final philosophico-religious epiphany in XXVII concerning the inescapable condition of human freedom is concomitant with the epiphany regarding political freedom, but it is also a consequence of the sequence’s reflection on the nature of homosexual identity and the nature of erotic and personal freedom.

Auden’s homosexuality complicates the simplistic moral stories mocked by Smith wherein the committed but naive young political radical matures into the wise Christian traditionalist, or alternatively the committed political visionary recoils from the hard truths of politics and retreats into obscurantist Christian conservatism (Smith 1-2). Auden’s homosexuality complicates those fables since Auden turns away from 1930s leftist politics not just because of his commitments to democratic socialism and liberalism, not just because of his reemergent Christianity, but because his inadmissible sexuality is incompatible with 1938 Leftism. Auden’s sexuality complicates those simplistic fables since it is also in conflict with the Biblical and Christian morality towards which he turns. By the same token, Auden’s political and religious circumspection are partly responsible for the resistance in gay liberationist studies and queer theory to the incorporation of Auden’s work into their particular historical canon, though he is surely as strong a precursor to those cultural developments as is the considerably less challenging Isherwood.

This question of the relationships of the homosexual to Christianity and Marxism troubles the unique fusion of the erotic, the political, and the religious in “In Time of War”

as well. It is not only because neither Christianity nor Communism or proto-Communism can accommodate the ideological and moral aspects of Auden's homosexuality that the story of the transformation of the early Auden into the later Auden is so complicated. Auden's transformation is also complicated by the fact that the freedom-necessity-choice complex, which is central to the development of Auden's thinking and which Replogle argues is the focus through 1937-38 of a Marxism-influenced ideological crisis that comes to a close with XXVII, had actually animated Auden's work for almost a decade, from well before the general rise in Marxian enthusiasm in the mid and late 1930s. The story of Auden's transformation is further complicated because Auden's meditations on freedom, necessity, and choice have involved homosexuality from the beginning.

Aspects of the freedom-necessity-choice complex are articulated as early as the poem "1929" which speaks of how "choice seem[s] a necessary error," a line entirely compatible with themes elaborated in "In Time of War." Other early poems also bring together thematic and lexical elements of the freedom-necessity-choice triad. "'There is a free one,' many say, but err" ventures one poem that portrays a closeted homosexual who seeks like the restless 'we' of XXVII the comfort of the "intrinsic peace" of love (see Bozorth on the figure's ostensible heterosexuality and homosexual subterfuge (75-6)). Like "In Time of War," "A Free One" alludes to a freedom and anxiety that are peculiar to the homosexual. Just as "In Time of War" dwells on the paradoxes of the necessity of choices, so the poem "Family Ghosts" links desire and possible erotic fulfillment with a "choice" that is paradoxically predetermined by inheritance: "ghost's approval of the choice" suggesting, for Bozorth, that "far from a liberating violation of the authority of the past," homosexual desire "is *always* enslaved to the past" (72-3). The torments of choice as a necessary error, of the unfree / free homosexual, and of an erotic choice which is from the

beginning not wholly one's own help explain the aggressive morbidity of lines from "1929" where "death" is the "necessary condition of the season's putting forth." Those torments explain the ominousness of lines where Auden's young voice sounds "like the slogans of a psychiatric dictator" (Isherwood Kind 2) who promises to abolish the difficulties of freedom once and for all: "It is time," that voice in 1929 proclaims, "for the destruction of error." To this 1938's anti-utopian XXVII answers, "But we are articed to error."

The resounding rhetoric of 1929 is ultimately hollow, and in 1933 in The Orators Auden is worrying again over the contradiction between his Airman's apparent autonomy and the fact that this autonomy has not been chosen, but instead has been imposed by historical or psychological necessity (Mendelson Early 102). Auden's most impressive attempt to deal with the freedom-necessity-choice complex prior to "In Time of War" is "Spain 1937." There Auden again explores the problem of the relationship of choice and necessity and freedom, but in a less satisfactory manner—for the Auden who later suppressed the poem—than that of "In Time of War." "Spain" develops a "manifest argument [which] asserts that all human actions are chosen by the will" and a "metaphoric argument [which] maintains that some special actions in the political realm [. . .] are the product not of will but of something very much like unconscious instinctive nature" (Mendelson Early 319). For Mendelson, the infamous line "The conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder" is paradoxical, "the one line in the poem in which the manifest argument about choice directly confronts the metaphoric argument about necessity. [. . .] The poet chooses to accept guilt in this murder, but the act itself is a necessary step taken by others toward History's inevitable fulfillment" (322). This contemptible (as Mendelson rightly calls it) but all too recognizable idea is answered by the following year's ironic line in XXVII about "the harmless ways" of the plans the disciplined heart follows. For his part, Mendelson

contrasts the moral dilemma of “Spain 1937” regarding necessity and choice in “the conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder” to a verse letter from the previous year’s Iceland.

Though a less effective poem than “Spain,” the letter to Richard Crossman in Iceland “strikingly anticipates Auden’s thinking in the 1940s and after” (Mendelson 312n). Whereas the problems of homosexuality are at play in Auden’s earliest thematizations of freedom, necessity, and choice, we can see Christian motifs in the Crossman poem’s treatment of the same thematic complex prior to the ‘would-be Christianity’ of “In Time of War.” Perhaps it was the Jesus Christ-evoking surname ‘Crossman’ which prompted pagan-surnamed Auden to the poem’s Christian meditations, his musings that

however far we’ve wandered
 Into our provinces of persecution
 Where our regrets accuse, we keep returning
 Back to the common faith from which we’ve all dissented,
 Back to the hands, the feet, the faces? (Prose 1: 241)

The letter to Crossman (who later co-edited The God That Failed, the well-known mid-fifties disavowal of Communism) adumbrates Hand’s distinctions between Two Real Worlds and Two Imaginary Worlds and “contrasts two realms: the real world of unique particulars and the imaginary world of abstract historical forces” (Mendelson 311). “To recognize uniqueness, [the poem’s] argument runs, is to recognize one’s personal responsibility for the world’s disorder; to escape into abstractions like History is to blame the world for one’s own sufferings” (312). This is analogous to XXVII’s argument that we must recognize the inescapability of our perilous freedom and not pursue false ideas of a reassuring Necessity. As in XXVII, we wander into territories created by our choices and regrets. As with “In Time of War,” the Crossman poem contrasts uncertain humans to animals “who never will grow up to question / The justice of their permanent discipline”

(Prose 1: 241). The Crossman poem shares with “In Time of War” its emphases on the body, on error, on our capacity to commit ourselves to abstractions at the expense of flawed human reality, on the law, on pagan antiquity, on necessity, and on choice.

The anticipation in 1936’s letter to Crossman of Auden’s thinking from the 1940s onward reinforces the notion that when the ‘preconversion’ (or pre-reconversion) XXVII moves toward a Christian perspective on freedom, necessity, erotic paganism, and human unhappiness and imperfection, it points forward to Auden’s maturity. Replogle too sees in XXVII an articulation of Auden’s later religious position. Like Mendelson, Replogle finds anticipations of Auden’s mature religious thinking earlier than XXVII or even the Crossman poem. For Replogle, the 1933 poem “Here on the cropped grass of the narrow ridge I stand,” later entitled “The Malverns,” though written well before Auden’s Kierkegaardian years, expresses “a conception of human nature” much like his Kierkegaard-influenced philosophy in the 1940s and after (35).

“The Malverns” is relevant to Journey, not just because it anticipates XXVII, but because Auden incorporates passages from it into the “Commentary” which immediately follows XXVII as the book’s conclusion. Auden’s lifelong interest in the relationships of freedom and necessity is at play when “The Malverns” has the voice of the First World War’s dead explain the origins of the war as in part the result of people’s “Denying the liberty we knew quite well to be our destiny” (English 144)—a line which plays with the same paradox as “We live in freedom by necessity.” That and other lines in the 1933 poem, as well as the fact that the poem’s moral meditation occurs in a mountain setting, correspond to themes in XXVII. The analogies and echoes between “The Malverns,” a poem looking back analytically at the catastrophic Great War, and Journey’s XXVII, make more perilous the situation of the latter’s deluded, erotically-confused, freedom-evading

nostalgics and utopians as they wander into a new military disaster. Replogle argues that in “The Malverns” Auden begins moving away from an optimistic position regarding the recoverability of an innate human goodness toward a perspective, shared by Marx and Kierkegaard and more clearly articulated in XXVII, from which humanity is seen neither as possessing an instinctive goodness, nor as capable of regaining an unspoiled spontaneity (35).

Where Replogle and Mendelson identify early occurrences of themes and ideas usually associated with the later religious Auden, Hyde discerns in Auden’s “nominally secular” early period not only what are essentially Christian themes and intuitions, but the unconscious workings of an essentially divine law (446-463). That so many critics find important foreshadowings of Auden’s later Christianity in poetry from his secular or, as some have thought, even Marxist days in the 1930s, and find in particular foreshadowings of his Christian view of freedom, necessity, and choice, will seem problematic only to those with strong biases regarding the mutual irrelevance of the religious and the Marxian. However many readers have resisted reading Auden’s early work in religious terms, the anticipations of Christian themes in the early poetry are as significant as the original and permanent involvement of Eros and homosexuality in Auden’s work, and the Biblical and the homosexual are both crucial to Auden’s meditations on freedom, necessity, and choice. Homosexuality and Christianity are essential contexts within which one must think of Auden’s work at every point of his career. The diary Auden kept in Berlin in 1929 confirms that from the beginning homosexuality and Christianity are consistent concerns for Auden: that journal, besides dwelling on sexual matters, opens with Auden taking the visiting Isherwood to homosexual activist Magnus Hirschfeld’s *Institut für Sexual-Wissenschaft*, and closes with jottings on the varying conditions of Christ in the face of different modes of sinfulness.

When we look backward from XXVII through Auden's earlier work or look forward from it through the later work, we see that XXVII's treatment of the freedom-necessity-choice trilemma and its relationship to XXVII's treatment of homosexual, Christian, and political motifs are inscribed within an ongoing exploration of these themes which is a defining characteristic of Auden's work. XXVII, however, is not just one more item in a series of meditations on these themes. Rather, it represents, if not the most complete articulation of this thematic complex, the most crucial moment in Auden's lifelong development of these interrelated themes. XXVII is, to adapt an idea from Dällenbach (89-90), a 'retrospective pivot'—it represents a turning point which both sums up Auden's previous explorations and prefigures the teachings that Auden will henceforth try to articulate. The idea that XXVII enacts a pivotal moment finds support in Replogle's argument that with this poem Auden's engagement with Marxism changes dramatically. It finds further support in Beach's complementary argument that in the chronology of Auden's work an illegitimate redefinition of the Auden canon begins with the Christianizing revision of *Journey's* "Commentary" (Beach 5-10)—that is with second half of "In Time of War" that immediately follows the quasi-Judeo-Christian conclusion of XXVII. Like XXVII's own turns at line nine and ten, the turn that XXVII as a whole enacts within Auden's *oeuvre* is manifold. Between them Replogle and Beach emphasize two complementary aspects of XXVII's pivotal significance: Replogle more or less approvingly drawing attention to XXVII as a 'final summation' of Auden's engagement with Marxism through what is actually a 'transforming revision' of Engels; Beach strongly disapproving of XXVII's anticipations of the Christianity and the Kierkegaardian philosophy of the later Auden. The idea of XXVII as a pivot also finds support in the fact that the last major work discussed in Mendelson's *Early* is "In Time of War" and that his comments on XXVII in that concluding

discussion are so apposite to the description in the introduction of his Later of the characteristic pattern of Auden's poetry after 1939. XXVII could almost be said to be the hinge that links Mendelson's Early to his Later, just as it is the pivotal moment in which we can see the early Auden giving way to the later Auden.

On the very first page of his introduction to Later, Mendelson describes XXVII's vision of humanity's historical freedom as a definitive statement of one of two opposing basic beliefs that are in tension throughout Auden's career; the other belief being related to his notion that life is "ruled by mysterious forces" (xiii). The tensions between these beliefs constitute the "inner debate" (xiv) of Auden's work: are the various events in a human life "better understood as the product of involuntary necessity or of free choice"? (xiv). For Mendelson, this debate at the core of Auden's work also defines the basic principles of his poetics in a way that, like the characteristic rhetorical and imaginative pattern of the post-1939 poems, is fundamental to comprehending how Auden's poetry works. Mendelson describes a crucial analogy at the heart of Auden's poetics such that the relationship between traditional and innovative verse forms is seen as analogous to the relationship of necessity and freedom in human experience:

Traditional forms and meters were among the means by which he evoked an order that existed prior to any personal intervention: physical laws, bodily instincts, social conventions, beliefs and habits inherited from a family or a culture. Irregular metres, newly invented or modified forms, prose poetry, and forms and metres that had not yet been naturalized into English verse—all these were used in his work to evoke voluntary, unpredictable acts, newly found accommodations between, on one hand, the world of nature and the instinctive body and, on the other, the world of history and the individual face. But the metrical form of Auden's poems typically presented only one side of his poem's arguments with themselves. The most conventional-seeming form [. . .] could mask the most unstable and innovatory content; the most unconventional form [. . .] could contain uncompromising statements of psychological and ethical necessity. (xiv)

The idea that Auden's interest in freedom and necessity guide his handling of poetic form

illuminates what is going on in XXVII and in the use of the sonnet in “In Time of War.”

In the context of literary tradition, the use of the sonnets in “In Time of War” is convention-confounding enough to be considered paradoxical. For Auden chooses the sonnet’s constricting form to present a vast and fluid subject, and achieves “monumental dignity and strength” where one might expect “a garland of miniatures” (Mendelson Early 348). Rather than expressing the sonnet’s usual subjective, highly individualized lyric themes with their deep associations with unblushing Petrarchan heterosexuality, Auden reviews the entire epic of human historical development by focussing on anonymous first person plural or third person figures, and in the course of doing so hints at the surreptitious condition of homosexual love.

In XXVII, as Mendelson’s description of Auden’s poetics would lead us to expect, Auden exploits the fixed form and predictable features of the sonnet to present an ineluctable necessity in human life, namely, our ‘necessary freedom,’ and present the accompanying moral danger that we will try to flee rather than admit that freedom. Auden does these two things by showing us first the need to reject the false visions of the absolute and necessary that are reviewed in the two quatrains and by displaying our freedom’s competing social, erotic, personal, political, historical dimensions. XXVII suggests that our obligation not to deny but to recognize the ineluctability of our imperfect freedom will inevitably appear as a categorical and perhaps religious obligation.

The sonnet with its two-fold structure—the before of the octave and the after of the sestet—is eminently suited to enacting the temporality of this recognition and to representing the double bind of necessary freedom. Accordingly, in the octave of XXVII, we are shown how we misuse our freedom of choice when we try to choose false necessities; while subsequently in the sestet, we are told of the inevitable necessity of

recognizing our imperfect freedom. In Auden's analogy-based, paradoxical poetics, the rule-bound form of the sonnet conveys a statement about open-ended human freedom. Furthermore, XXVII presents that radical human freedom in a way which is consistent with the authority of Auden's culturally inherited Judeo-Christian beliefs, but which turns away from the Marxist or Fascist options that in 1938 appeared to many as innovative and radically modern, and as promising liberation from unnecessary restrictions.

For Auden, all literature, is ultimately conditioned by the sorts of paradoxes of freedom and necessity with which XXVII is riven. The essay "Squares and Oblongs" is perhaps his clearest statement of how issues of freedom and necessity bear upon literature:

[Man's] ego seeks constantly to assert its autonomy by doing something of which the requiredness is not given, [. . .] something which is completely arbitrary, a pure act of choice. [. . .] there are no doubt natural causes [. . .] behind the wish to write verses, but the chief satisfaction in the creative act is the feeling that it is quite gratuitous. [. . .] Games are *actes gratuites* in which necessity is obeyed because the necessity here consists of rules chosen by the players. (Prose 2 : 341)

The ideas of freedom and necessity are thus at the centre of Auden's understanding of poetics and the ethical significance of literature—just as we have seen that in "In Time of War" the themes of freedom and necessity are at the heart of Auden's understandings of modern politics, of the condition of homosexuality, and of Judeo-Christian religious myth.

The series of suggestive commonalities between the realms of Biblical myth, (homo)sexuality, politics, and poetics which Auden develops through the opposed terms of freedom and necessity, and which are all operative in XXVII, constitute one of the consistent and defining features of Auden's work. Auden's propensity for seeing the pertinence of the crucial issues of freedom and necessity to such diverse realms of experience and reality is an important factor in his capacity to encompass his characteristically broad and even contradictory range of enthusiasms, influences, and poetic

forms. The constancy of his attention to the issues of freedom and necessity stabilizes the diversity and eclecticism of his other interests. Auden can, for instance, promiscuously adopt any and all poetic forms, as he moves through successive ideological perspectives, from Freud to Marx to Paul, because for him form relates directly to his conceptual and thematic interests in freedom and necessity.

This recurrent interest unifies Auden's work, but does not do so unproblematically. The quasi-analogies Auden perceives between diverse realms of experience in so far as these realms can each be ordered in terms of the concepts of freedom and necessity allow him to move from one human context to another, from sexuality to poetry to religion to politics. Productive as those analogies are for Auden, they remain imperfect. That is why in each of the realms of poetics, sexuality, politics, and religion, Auden's thinking can become paradoxical and counter-intuitive; why what begins as simplicity can end up as unresolvable complexity; why at some moments Auden's insistent interest in freedom and necessity can involve a blurring of heteronomous human realities. These problems derive from the very nature of analogy as a means of argument and comprehension. Outside of mathematics, the similarities suggested by analogy are never absolute, and analogies frequently draw attention to similarities between diverse realities even as they draw attention away from differences which render the analogy misleading. Auden was a self-critical enough poet to recognize the radical limitations of his analogical habits, noting in an agnostic moment that "Since the analogies are rot / Our senses based belief upon, / We have no means of learning what / Is really going on" (Collected 676). Still, the crucial opposition of freedom and necessity defines a set of analogies in a body of work for which analogy is a core organizing principle. As Gottlieb observes, "the distinction between analogy, which operates on a principle of proportion, and imitation, which operates on the

principle of identity, stands at the basis of [. . .] Auden's poetry and poetology" (8). At its best the opposition of freedom and necessity in Auden's work functions as a key mediating term—to adopt a concept from the Hegelian tradition—between different orders of experience. Jameson describes mediation “as the invention of a set of terms, the strategic choice of a particular code or language, such that the same terminology can be used to analyze and articulate two distinct types of objects or “texts”, or two very different structural levels of reality” (*Political* 40). Such a mediating term allows us to perceive that “social life is in its fundamental reality one and indivisible, a seamless web, a single inconceivable and transindividual process” in which different levels are “never really separate from one another.” As such a mediating term, the freedom / necessity opposition enables Auden to order his various understandings of religious myth and morality, of sexuality, of politics, and of poetics around one of the crucial issues of the twentieth century and of human life and civilization generally. Auden establishes a series of analogies that enable him to encompass different areas of human experience and to play our understandings of those areas and experiences off one another.

The multiple fields of simultaneous meaning available to Auden through analogy recall Dante's four levels of interpretation. Auden's achievement is that he can encompass so much, not in the forms of the epic, the drama, or the novel, but from within the smaller forms and scope of lyric poetry. In contrast to Dante's hierarchy of complementary levels, though, the different realms of meaning in a poem like XXVII exist in a dialectical, ironic, even contradictory tension. As with Auden's multi-faceted apprehension of our existential situation in “In Time of War,” “the contradictions in Auden's thought require not resolution but navigation” (Grosvenor 267). “Auden's poems”, agrees Emig, “transform themselves into a writing of negotiation, openness, compromise, and dialogue” (204). Arguing for the

postmodernism of Auden's work, Emig observes that Auden's "writing turns into a chorus of distinct voices and positions, yet without homogenizing or forcefully harmonising their concerns. The contradictions that emerge from this pluralistic and dialogic approach must therefore not be read as logical flaws, but as the consequence of a different kind of logic" (206). With this different kind of logic, Auden's "poetry continually pushes forward into territory that becomes too unstable for traditional concepts of thought" (204). For Emig "Auden's poetic thought [. . .] arrives at a new relation to existence," in which it is capable of overcoming the limitations of restricted or inherited concepts while still acknowledging its reliance on them. So it is that a pre-modern concept of analogy, with roots in medieval Christian philosophy, is adapted to Auden's exploration of the postmodern condition. Certainly Auden's openness to the holism of the political, the religious, the erotic, and the poetic in "In Time of War" seems, in spite of the coordinating role of Auden's freedom / necessity analogy, dynamically conflicted and dialectically provocative rather than ordered or hierarchical. A much later haiku of Auden's confirms the fluidity of the relationships between different dimensions of meaning and reality: "His thoughts potted / from verses to sex to God / without punctuation" (Collected 599). Of this haiku, Bozorth remarks "To punctuate Auden's pottings would be to seek conceptual order at the cost of obscuring the subtle, oblique ways that his views of homosexual love and desire inform his religious poetry" (223). Neglecting to remind us that Auden's views of God inform his homosexual and erotic poetry, Bozorth also does not note that this haiku omits Auden's political and ethical musings as essential dimensions of his *ars poetica* and his perception of reality. Still Bozorth's emphasis on the open, unordered qualities of Auden's on-going meditation on poetry, sex, God, and politics are as pertinent to our reading of Journey as is the analogical proportionality with which the freedom / necessity opposition can structure

Auden's work. An analogical order and a dialogical openness, both self-conscious to an exceptional degree, exist as complementary tendencies in Auden's work.

The conceptual and poetic ramifications of Auden's mediation and analogy making around the freedom / necessity binarism are especially evident in a poem like XXVII, and pervade Auden's work, particularly after 1939. When Seamus Heaney writes of a diminution of uncanniness and wildness of Auden's language as partly a regrettable effect of an art that conscientiously "seeks the heraldic shape beneath the rippling skin" (Government 126), he might have specified that the "heraldic shape" that Auden seeks beneath his subjects' surfaces repeatedly displays proportions conforming to Auden's notions of the opposed concepts of freedom and necessity. Though the persistence of the idea of a falling off in Auden's work after 1939 is tiresome—for any diminution of uncanniness and wildness in Auden's poetry after 1939 is more than offset by Auden's poetic mastery, his prolific inventiveness, his philosophical rigour, and his cultural and imaginative breadth—we can allow that there are some noteworthy qualitative differences between Auden's work from the thirties and his subsequent work; and so allow the pertinence of Philip Larkin's question 'What became of Wystan?' The answer is not, as Larkin thinks, that after Auden left England for the U.S. in 1939, he lost his subject matter and fell out of touch with his public (Required 125). What really happened is that Auden by the end of 1938, having passed through wartime China, had found a permanent understanding of what would remain his subject matter and recognized the crucial issue that he would seek to represent in his work, namely, to quote XXVII one last time, that "We live in freedom by necessity."

Whether the effects of Auden's effort to organize his poetry and thought around the issues of freedom and necessity are as deleterious as Heaney and Larkin suggest, whether all

instances of the mediations and analogies involving freedom and necessity in Auden's work seem valid, are less interesting questions for us in our exploration of Journey than the question of the origin of Auden's habitual reliance on such analogies and mediations. For Auden's "invention" or "strategic choice" of the freedom / necessity opposition as a unifying code is not arbitrary. Rather, as XXVII reveals, the "invention" of this "code" emerges from the crucibles of Auden's experiences of the moral and erotic conditions of his own youthful homosexuality, of the political crises of the 1930s, of his inherited Christianity, and of writing a self-consciously modernist poetry. All of these areas of human expression—sexuality, politics, Christianity, and literature—passed through crises of transformation during the 1930s, and Auden's multi-faceted accommodation of those wrenching transformations is particularly comprehensive, coherent, and conscientious. There is something historically specific then to Auden's solving the problem of how to encompass these various wracking realities through analogies constructed on the freedom / necessity opposition. Just as it is in Journey that we can see the emergence of Auden's mature rhetorical pattern, so it is in the course of 1938's Journey that a definitive analogical solution really emerges for Auden. That is why in XXVII Auden is able so succinctly to encompass all these realms of experiences, each fundamental to his work, and to display the unifying function of the concepts of freedom and necessity in his comprehension and representation of these diverse realms of experience. The 1930s remain for many the definitive decade for Auden's work in the sense that many celebrate his poetry from that decade more than his later work. The 1930s are also definitive in the sense that it is the personal, sexual, political, cultural, and creative crises of that time and the lessons Auden had drawn from those crises by decade's end that defined the contours of the mature Audenesque and the nature of the poetics, themes, and poetry that Auden would devote

himself to subsequently.

XXVII is then a pivotal poem with fundamental relevance to several definitive features of Auden's work, notably his mature rhetorical pattern; his approach to poetic form; his postmodern openness, dialogical pluralism, and analogical vision; and his complex simultaneous development of religious, political, and erotic themes. As an encapsulation of Journey, XXVII's pivotal significance suggests as well the importance that Journey has within Auden's, and Isherwood's, work. Like XXVII and "In Time of War," the neglected Journey is indeed a pivotal work as will be made clear in the chapters to come. Also significant for our reading of Journey is the emergence of the poem's succinct assuredness at a pivotal moment within Journey. Not only is XXVII a narrative, thematic, and poetic *mise en abyme* for Journey, but the poem occurs at a retrospective juncture in the book such that XXVII reviews the explorations of Journey to that point, notably in Isherwood's "Travel-Diary," and announces the worldview about to be elaborated in "Commentary." The assured centrality of XXVII stands in the same relation to the apparently uncertain discontinuities of Journey as the conclusive line "We live in freedom by necessity" stands to the shifting troubles of XXVII. Thematically, XXVII's heterogeneous bundle of political, religious, and erotic preoccupations run throughout Journey and at times threaten to render it the uncentred, incoherent book some have taken it to be. Aesthetically, XXVII's neat analogical and ideological solutions contrast to Journey's sectional discontinuities and narrative and discursive ranginess and to the less obviously elegant formal structures with which the book as a whole contains its thematic and structural problems. As a key moment in Journey, XXVII not only encapsulates the book's thematic and ideological concerns; XXVII's poetic elegance throws into relief Journey's other less succinct formal resolutions of those concerns.

CHAPTER 3

THE CONSTRUCTION OF JOURNEY TO A WAR AS A WHOLE

My inquiry is purely historical; no lightning flashes any longer from the long since vanished thunderclouds, and so I may venture to seek for an explanation of the system of piecemeal construction which goes further than the one that contented people then. The limits which my capacity for thought imposes upon me are narrow enough, but the province to be traversed here is infinite.

Franz Kafka, "On the Construction of the Chinese Wall;" Translated by Willa and Edwin Muir as "The Great Wall of China".

PARTS OF A WHOLE: REFLECTIONS ON REFLECTIONS

Claiming that XXVII constitutes a *mise en abyme*, an embedded image of the whole story of Journey, and its structural centre, implies that the book is a meaningfully unified whole. This idea stands in contrast to the discontinuous heterogeneity of the book's sections; it also goes against most commentary on the book. Graves disparages Iceland and Journey as "informal travel scrapbooks, written partly in light verse, partly in light prose, but all in saleable journalese" (435). Cunningham sees the book as just another floppy, randomly structured, 1930s travel book, but one that is floppier than most: "lots of the youthful Baedekers are filled with [. . .] obvious devices for filling the page, for fulfilling the contract with the publisher any old how. *Letters from Iceland* [. . . and] *Journey to a War* are opportunistic rag-bags. The '30s travel book had ousted the novel as writing's loosest, baggiest, most monstrously capacious form" (391). Even commentators who unlike Cunningham have written of Journey as if it were worth considering its wholeness and unity have not developed their points extensively enough to counter complaints about the book's incoherence and discontinuities. Be that as it may, Auden and Isherwood themselves must have given some thought to the composition of Journey and in some way resolved for themselves the question of its unity and form.

The history of Western poetics, argues Morson, is a history of "a succession of types of unity and unifying principles" (287). Critics' complaints about the incoherence of Journey derive from a perennial concern to discover in an artwork a "unity that rules out the merely contingent" (287). The unifying structural and thematic principles that make Journey a coherent work of art require an unusual degree of attention precisely because of the book's discontinuous hybridness. Critics formulate the problems of Journey's apparent disunity and incoherence in different ways: some having to do principally with its dual

authorship, others having to do with the book's division into radically distinct sections, yet others having to do with the special problem of the book's ending or endings. Each of these concerns must be addressed if we are to establish that approaching Journey as a text with a kind of unity and coherence significantly enhances the interest of the entire text.

Evelyn Waugh's hostility to Auden led him to overstate an idea found in most criticism of the book: "it is impossible," writes Waugh, "to treat this publication as a single work; it is two books which for the purposes of commercial convenience have been issued as one [Isherwood's marketable travelogue will help sell, Waugh opines, Auden's dull verses]" (Haffenden 289). Whoever wrote the comments on the fly-leaf of Journey's first edition agrees with Waugh about the separateness of Isherwood's and Auden's contributions and describes the book as "not so much a collaboration, as an attempt to give a picture of the Chinese war from two different and individual angles." Finney suggests one "could argue that the collaboration succeeds primarily because there is so little collaboration" (168), and critics tend to endorse this position by effectively pronouncing "either Auden's sonnet sequence or Isherwood's diary, the book's 'primary' text" (Bryant 130) or by dealing exclusively with the contribution of whichever author happens to interest them.

Bryant tries to correct this critical imbalance when she reads "the poems, diary, photographs and captions against one another to show that none of the books parts can claim central status" (131), but she too proceeds from a critical bias that emphasizes the discontinuities within and between the different parts of the book. Noteworthy as such discontinuities are, they hardly need emphasis, and Bryant's more original contribution to our understanding of Journey is her incompletely developed "holistic approach" (135) to its interpretation. Reflecting on the ternary relations between Auden's poems, Isherwood's diary, and the photographs (again principally Auden's), Bryant analyses how occasionally

“images from the Picture Commentary, Travel-Diary, and the poems will align themselves into an unsteady triptych” (133). Besides providing the first meaningful discussion of Auden’s photos and establishing an innovative view of the relationships between the various representations in verse, prose, and photographs, Bryant underscores the importance of reading different parts of Journey in relation to one another. We have seen important compositional and thematic connections between different sections when we noted that the last line of XXVII returns, not only to the sonnet’s own beginning, but to the beginnings of “The Voyage” and of the “Travel-Diary”; and noted that the beginning of “Commentary” revisits the beginning of the sonnet sequence.

Hynes, who describes the book as a “discontinuous collection of parts in different forms” (Generation 342) before noting that “the link between the two parts, the prose and the poetry, is in fact clear enough” (343), also approaches Journey holistically, as does Kerr. Hynes’ and Kerr’s different approaches to the question of the wholeness of the text are not incompatible with Bryant’s. Rather, by drawing attention to different aspects of the book’s wholeness, Bryant, Hynes, and Kerr together suggest the complex richness of that whole. Where Bryant focuses on ternary relations between genres and media within Journey, Hynes and Kerr emphasize the binary relationships between the different texts of Isherwood and Auden. For Hynes, Isherwood’s subject is the “local” and “particular” war (343), while Auden’s is a war that is “universal” (344) and “general” (347). Kerr develops the opposition of Auden and Isherwood in more detail: Auden is globally, epically oriented; Isherwood, disoriented and ironic (278). Auden is assured (292), “authoritatively historicist” (286), and omniscient (294); Isherwood, bewildered (283), ignorant (281), provisional (292), and without authority (293) or underauthoritative (294).

Broadly speaking, critics who note the authorial complementarity, as opposed to the

authorial inconsistency, see Isherwood as developing a subjective perspective, and Auden, an objective one. Isherwood and Auden's contrasting texts complement one another because, much like the yin and the yang, they represent antithetical but inseparable parts of a whole. In the way, though, of yin and yang or of an Engelsian interpenetration of opposites, we will see that Isherwood's subjectivity involves its own necessary objectivity, just as we have seen in the objectivity in the sonnets of "In Time of War" recurrent flashes of Auden's subjective experience is paradoxically acknowledged in XXIII through the objective pronoun "me." It is discernible as well in his care to implicitly include his own concern with homosexual love in the sequence's development of the theme of Eros in human history. Finally, Auden's conscientiousness throughout the sequence about what and who are involved in any first person plural subjectivity is another sign of his attention to the problem of subjectivity—he is trying neither to deny subjectivity, nor to project his own subjectivity on everything and everyone, but rather to be objective about the possibilities of the subjective. We find the same conceptual and perspectival play in Auden's "Picture Commentary" when it presents a photo of Auden or includes in photos of the "Eastern observed" evidence of the radically different condition of Auden as "Western observer" (Bryant 163-7)—thereby objectivizing the subjectivity behind all the other pictures.

Isherwood's subjectivity is partly a matter of his narcissistic preoccupation with his own personality and partly a matter of critical attention to his own feelings and reactions. Here too, however, questions of the relativity of the subjective and the objective soon arise. For Isherwood's approach to his subjectivity resembles the putatively objective attitude of 1930s documentary. He both seems to be considering his peculiar subjectivity as objectively as possible, and, as in *Goodbye*'s famous "I am a camera" metaphor, seems at times to be trying to reduce his subjectivity to an impersonal ideal of purely objective seeing and

recording. In the latter respect, Isherwood is approaching the ideal of the sort of objectivity that flows from an epistemological “faith in the primacy of perception” (Wilde Isherwood 14). Furthermore, we will find when we examine the end of “Travel-Diary” that Isherwood, by focusing utterly on what are purportedly objective facts, enters into a process of excising his subjectivity altogether—only to end with a sudden reassertion of himself as idiosyncratic subject.

This play of objectivity and subjectivity is an organizing principle in Journey. Epistemologically, this subjective / objective dynamic is possible, even necessary, because no matter who the author is, what the medium is, or what the fictional premise is, neither objectivity nor subjectivity can ever be perfectly established. The subjective and objective always remain entangled so that rigid conceptions of their antithesis soon collapse. In comprehending the relationship of Auden’s and Isherwood’s texts in Journey, ideas tending to absolute dichotomies between the one’s objectivity and the other’s subjectivity are misleading—not only because each author composes his section with the contrast to his collaborator’s section in mind, but because each has a significant role in the composition of the other’s texts. Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary” is based on journal entries made alternately by himself and Auden in the course of their Chinese journey, while Isherwood’s editorial authority had long been an aspect of Auden’s creative process (Isherwood Exhumations 19). The play of the subjective and the objective is then an organizing conceptual motif internal to both Auden and Isherwood’s separate texts, as well as being an important aspect of the overarching complementarity of the two texts in relation to one another. In this doubly enfolded manner the subjective / objective opposition serves as both structural and thematic principle in Journey.

Just as the relations of the subjective and the objective in Journey’s dual authorship

structure Journey in a meaningful way, so the binary relations that Hynes and Kerr see and the ternary relations that Bryant sees between the book's distinct sections suggest that each section depends on the others to illuminate or complete it. Such complex interrelations and complementarity compels us to interpret Journey not as a collection of separate parts, but as a single work with a substantial integrity of its own.

An essential unifying feature of Journey related to the dialectic of subjective and objective is a poetics of infinite reflexivity. Bryant describes Journey as a "self-reflective" text (14, 141, 154), a "self-scrutinizing" text (15, 139), and a "self-conscious" text (129, 169). Her reading focuses on its "moments of disconcerting self-reflectiveness" (166). We have seen that the reflexive relationship in a sonnet of the after of the sestet to the before of the octave is particularly acute in "In Time of War." This conventional aspect of sonnet form is one of several binary structures that set in motion Journey's reflexive dynamic. The opposition of Isherwood's prose and Auden's verse is a more conspicuous example of the binarism that structures Journey. By manipulating a series of such interlocking dual structures Auden and Isherwood create a hyper-reflexivity that is one of Journey's most noteworthy qualities. The opposing objective and subjective tendencies just described develop the reflexivity inherent in the book's structural dualities. The recurrent figure of the *mise en abyme* also contributes to the hyper-reflexivity of Journey, as does the irony that ramifies through the book. Journey's irony is, as we shall see, both an example and an effect of its structural dualism. Before considering those other forms of reflexive duality, let us consider how the opposition of prose and verse generates a reflexivity through contrast that emphasizes, not only the dialectical relationship of Auden and Isherwood's different perspectives, but also sustained aesthetic, poetic, and epistemological concerns of Journey.

VERSE IS TO PROSE AS ORDER TO EXCREMENT

We had come to where the pathway, narrower grown,
 Crosses the second ridge, whereof the rock
 Is buttress to another arch of stone.
 Here in the other chasm whining of folk
 We heard, that puffed and snorted as they rolled,
 While with their palms upon themselves they knock.
 The banks were crusted over with a mould
 Thickening upon them from the mounting fume
 Which eyes and nose assaulted and befouled.
 The bottom was so deep that through the gloom
 We could see nought, until we found a road
 To the cliff's summit and upon it clomb.
 Thereon we stood, and in the hollow showed
 Down there a people dipt in excrement
 As if from human privies it had flowed.

Binyon *Dante's Inferno* XVIII

The contrast of prose and verse is a prominent feature of Journey, but the meaning of their opposition needs clarification. No absolute criteria oppose poetry and prose in Journey, yet the relationship between the very different uses Auden and Isherwood make of verse and prose have a particular conceptual significance. Throughout the book, the objective bias of Auden's poetry is matched by a drive toward elaborate form and order, while Isherwood's subjectivity conveys a sense of overwhelming disorder and formlessness. The opposition of verse and prose that Auden and Isherwood develop is evident in the role the versified sections play in the book's construction. Auden selects and arranges poetic forms so that almost mechanically, by fiat of sheer poetic formalism, they seem intended to provide the book with a much needed containing structure. This overarching formal structure is itself a further sign that the book has been conceived, not as a series of distinct parts, but as a unified whole.

The formal architectonic Auden's verses provide can be seen if one disregards Isherwood's "Travel-Diary" and the "Picture Commentary" and looks at the sections in

verse only. The principal poetic form in Journey is the sonnet with its two quatrains and two tercets distinctly set off by line spaces. The only poems not written in sonnet form are the book's opening poem in quatrains ("The Voyage") and its closing poem in tercets ("Commentary"). Yet with those introductory and concluding poems Auden magnifies the form of the sonnet in order to structure the opening and closing of Journey. As with a sonnet, the book begins with quatrains and closes with tercets; as with many sonnets, the opening quatrains of "The Voyage" pose questions, present initial situations, and raise problems while the tercets of "Commentary" offer responses, resolve problems, and effect closure. Isolating the sections in verse, one sees that the sonnets of the opening sequence and of "In Time Of War" are framed within the oversized and lop-sided, but enclosing sonnet-like structure suggested by "The Voyage" and "Commentary." If one then inserts the "Travel-Diary" and the "Picture Commentary" into their respective places, one finds that the same oversized sonnet-like structure encompasses everything: the opening sequence, Isherwood's travelogue, the photographs, the sonnet sequence, and the verse commentary. In the sort of mirroring typical of *mise en abyme*, the sonnet's stanzaic structure recurs on the scale of the entire book so that the structure of the sonnet is emblematic of the structure of Journey as a whole. While, however, the quatrains that open a sonnet are typically more expansive than the narrower tercets which must bring the sonnet to a close, the relationship of "The Voyage" to "Commentary" is inverted. The book's closing response to the enigmatic, question-posing opening quatrains of "The Voyage" cannot be contained within a neat and tidy sestet, but sprawls into the encyclopaedic ninety-three tercets of "Commentary." The latter ultimately closes not with the graceful gesture of a tercet, but with the blocky solidity of an arbitrary concluding quatrain. Together, the final quatrain of "Commentary" and the opening quatrains of "The Voyage" constitute a minimal

frame consisting of a pair of initial and terminal brackets for the sections of Journey.

The arbitrary flimsiness of those brackets compared to the scope of what they contain is all too evident. Yet the large-scale sonnet-like structure organizing the sections in verse and the entire “unruly” book (Bryant 129) seems deliberately imposed. The deliberateness of Auden’s contrivance is confirmed in a second organizing magnification of the sonnet structure. For the arithmetic ratio of the numbers of lines in the two parts of “In Time of War” is equivalent to that of the numbers of lines in the two parts of a sonnet. Expressed numerically, the ratio of the eight lines of a sonnet’s octave to the six lines of its sestet is 1.3. This is the same ratio as that between the numbers of lines in the two parts of “In Time of War”: the sonnet sequence has $(27 \times 14 =) 378$ lines and “Commentary” has $((93 \times 3) + 4 =) 283$ lines, with the ratio $378 / 283$ being equal to 1.3. Gerald Manley Hopkins calls his abbreviated—six lines followed by four and a half lines ($6 / 4.5 = 1.3$)—but isomorphic version of a sonnet a “curtal sonnet,” and we might describe the sonnet-like proportions that structure both of “In Time of War” and Journey as those of an “epic,” “cosmic,” or “encyclopaedic” sonnet. It is as if Auden wants to project the sonnet’s structure onto a sweeping horizon so that its microcosm attains macrocosmic dimensions.

When Auden writes “With what precision was each strophe planned” of the decadent poet in VII, he is also self-consciously referring to his own deliberate formal contrivances in Journey. The formal structures of Auden’s verse in Journey are both aesthetically arbitrary and essential to Auden’s ethical and epistemological vision. Congruent as they are with ethical and epistemological dimensions of the mature before and after pattern of rhetoric in Auden’s poetry, these sonnet-like formal structures look arbitrary when opposed to the book’s overwhelming, sublimely uncontainable subject matter. The arbitrariness of the organizing poetic structure in Journey and its incapacity to impose a

convincing order on the book becomes an important part of the meaning of that structure and a demonstration of the artificiality of all artfulness. In the exaggerated contrast between the magnified stanzaic constructions of Auden's sections and the oft-noted problem of shapelessness in Journey, we see the emergence of a further aspect of Auden's mature poetics. This is Auden's insistence on the disjunction between the intractability of the real and the artificiality of art. Whereas we want art to "present to us [. . .] always the perfectly tidiable case of disorder" (Auden Collected 426), Auden later insists on the chasm separating Ariel's "will to compose, to form at all costs a felicitous pattern" and the incorrigible disorderly grossness of Caliban, "the only child of [. . .] the unrectored chaos" (429). As with the articulation of Auden's mature rhetorical pattern in the sonnets of "In Time of War," so Journey with its contrast of felicitous formal organization to the disorder of the Real proves pivotal in the definition of Auden's mature aesthetic theory, a work that defines his core ethical and epistemological preoccupations. In Journey, the aesthetic, ethical, and epistemological dimensions of the contrast of order and disorder are developed through the contrast of Auden's poetry and Isherwood's prose.

Kerr observes of the relationship of the Auden and Isherwood texts within Journey that while "Auden or 'Auden' from his hesitant beginnings becomes more authoritatively vatic as the book progresses, Isherwood ('Isherwood') chooses to flounder ever deeper in the viscous particularity of China" (293). Where Auden constructs an overall formal order by the end of the book, the poetics of Isherwood's text do not emphasize the supposition of an order in his subject or the imperative of imposing a formal construction. Rather, Isherwood repeatedly acknowledges his inability to perceive an intelligible order in his Chinese experience. Either there is no order in what he observes or he cannot comprehend it. His description of a Chinese meal early in the "Travel-Diary" reveals an epistemological

problem troubling his entire diary:

One's first sight of a table prepared for a Chinese meal hardly suggests the idea of eating, at all. It looks rather as if you were sitting down to a competition in water-colour painting [. . .] You begin the meal by wiping hands and face with hot moistened towels [. . .] Then comes the food. It is served in no recognizable order of progression—fish does not necessarily follow soup, nor meat fish. Nor can the length of the meal be foreseen by the guest. His favourite dish may well appear at the end, when he is too bloated to taste it. (506-7)

The disorientation caused by things arriving “in no recognizable order of progression”

recurs in more serious contexts. There is the “general confusion” of the

operating-theatre [which] was a scene of lively rough-and-ready activity. The work of six surgeons had to be done by three—and quickly; there was no time for professional niceties. People strolled in with telegrams or parcels, and remained to help, to the best of their ability; there was something for everybody to hold: a leg, a towel, or a bucket. In the general confusion, while Ayre's back was turned for an instant, one of the operating-tables upset. The patient's head hit the floor with a resounding crack. (530)

Later this sort of confusion is linked to the disorders of war, which is after all the book's principal subject matter, when Isherwood presents the mental constructs of General Headquarters as inadequate representations of the realities of war-engendered confusion:

Producing a pencil, postulating our interest as a matter of course, he drew highroads, shaded in towns, arrowed troop movements; lecturing us like the brilliant sixth-form boy who takes the juniors in history while the headmaster is away [Isherwood is surely thinking of the account in *Lions* of his self-sabotaged career as a history student at Cambridge]. Everything was lucid and tidy and false—the flanks like neat little cubes, the pincer-movements working with mathematical precision, the reinforcements never failing to arrive punctual to the minute. But war, as Auden said later, is not like that. War is bombing an already disused arsenal, missing it, and killing a few old women. War is lying in a stable with a gangrenous leg. War is drinking hot water in a barn and worrying about one's wife. War is a handful of lost and terrified men in the mountains, shooting at something moving in the undergrowth. War is waiting for days with nothing to do; shouting down a dead telephone; going without sleep, or sex, or a wash. War is untidy, inefficient, obscure, and largely a matter of chance. (603-4)

This incongruity of military maps and the actual disorder of wartime is simply the most

acute instance of a general epistemological problem in Isherwood's Chinese experience.

Not only is there no match between the war and the representations of the war, more generally there is no match between language and the objects it is supposed to refer to. There may be a surfeit of names in *Journey*, but, as in Isherwood's Berlin books (*Wilde Horizons* 93), names keep getting distorted: thus Isherwood, who is "Issyvoo" in *Goodbye*, becomes in China "Y Hsiao Wu" (509), or "Mr Y" (579), or "Isherman" (613), and Fleming becomes "Frame-Up" (614) or "Framing" (613). Like the Chinese who stumble over English names, Isherwood has to contend with the foreignness of Chinese names and throughout *Journey* is made aware of the mutual incomprehensibility and mutual untranslatability of different semantic systems. Names and language are problems for Auden too—whose own name as we shall see undergoes a memorable distortion—who raises the puzzles of naming and of having a name in "The Traveller," in "Hongkong," in III, XVIII, XXIV, XXVI, and in "Commentary" (686); and who in III, a poem originally entitled "Language," provides a history of the creation of language and names, and an analysis of the inimical consequences of the disjunction of signifier and signified. For Isherwood, not only do familiar names become unstable, but personal identities do too. Just as the succession of human types and situations in Auden's sonnet sequence reveals the fluidity of human nature, so for Isherwood the identities of individuals alter with their changing circumstances. "Does a man become a different person in a different place?" (557), asks an Isherwood who repeatedly foregrounds the arbitrary performative and circumstantial aspects of personal identity, including his own (Bryant 143-55), and who manifestly considers the question worth asking. If neither objects nor their names stay put, there is little hope that any kind of reliable fit is possible between them; the very possibility of the intelligibility of things or of writing anything meaningful becomes unlikely.

Towards the end of the book, Isherwood returns to the incomprehensibility of Chinese cuisine: “they were cooking bamboo in all its forms—including the strips used for making chairs. That, I thought, is so typical of this country. Nothing is specifically either eatable or uneatable. You could begin munching a hat, or bite a mouthful out of a wall; equally, you could build a hut with the food provided at lunch. Everything is everything” (621). Everything is everything: there is no order, no propriety; things happen “without apparent object” (532). Isherwood can only report his “chaotic impressions” (623) or his “surrealistic mood” (592). Rhetorically, Isherwood expresses the difficulty of ordering his impressions through his frequent reliance on the random list. A non-hierarchical way of integrating or simply acknowledging the items of one’s experience, such a list is a form that accommodates incongruous and surreal juxtaposition, and is one of the characteristic rhetorical forms of Isherwood’s prose in “Travel-Diary.” There are lists of the phenomena of war (603-4), of Charleton’s inconsequent conversation (590), of the details of Wenchow’s picturesque scenery (623), of commodities and distractions in Shanghai (625), of sleep-disturbing noises (621), of the keywords of Anglo-Chinese *rapprochement* (575), of Christian denominations (537), and (as in almost all the passages cited above and the passage below) countless mini-lists of adjectives and things:

amidst the booths and shops, were shallow dug-outs, barely a yard deep and no larger than a dog-kennel, roofed over roughly with planks, earth, and straw. In my jaundiced, sleepy mood, everything I noticed seemed miserable and corrupt. Every third person in the crowd appeared to be suffering from trachoma, or goitre, or hereditary syphilis. And the foodstuffs they were buying and selling looked hateful beyond belief—the filthiest parts of the oldest and most diseased animals; stodgy excrement-puddings; vile, stagnant soups and poisonous roots. (529)

Here the incomprehensible formlessness of China, of war, and of the experiences of the journey does indeed, as Kerr suggests, tend towards something like viscousness.

Formless, unformable, viscous, things keep returning Isherwood to the issue of the

ubiquity of excrement: the excremental pudding above; the “warnings against dysentery” that will come from eating fruit (511); the “people [. . .] squatting on bare haunches, to manure the earth” (527); “the averted, snot-smearing, animal faces of the very humble” (512); the “unappetizing relish” with which the Chinese “hawked and spat without restraint” and made use of the spittoons “placed just behind our respective chairs” in the dining car (527); the “naked buttocks [of the very young children], pushing out through the divided breeches [divided so that in diaper-eschewing China, children can squat to relieve themselves directly on the ground] [. . .] smeared with dirt from the road” (508); the “foreign devils screaming with laughter at mysterious jokes, singing in high falsetto or mock operatic voices, swaying backwards and forwards on [our] seats [. . . in] an exercise which we had invented, in a vain effort to ward off constipation” (511); the fact that “constipated though we were we could still eat” (557); the “night soil” manuring the wheat, “each single plant” (532); the “after-effects of an attack of dysentery” (593). There is too the case of “Chin-dung” whose comic narcissism contrasts with the nauseating suggestion in his name (555). Even the bathhouses are “filthy and smel[l] heartily of urine” (539); even when fantasizing about a life in Shangri-la, Isherwood conscientiously remembers they would have to learn to “clean the thunder-boxes” (591). Not for nothing does “Au Dung” (the transliterated Chinese version of Auden’s name which Isherwood tells us appeared on Auden’s Chinese visiting card (509) and which fortuitously describes the monumentally dirty dandy that Auden was) have the progressive culture of the West voyaging to “the septic East” (497). Not for nothing does Auden later dedicate “The Geography of the House,” a poem about going to the toilet, to the copro-obsessive Isherwood.

The issue of excrement, and shit in particular, cannot be removed from Isherwood’s experience of China; it runs through it from the beginning to the end.

the immediate effects of China [. . .] became immediately apparent on both of them. Auden had dysentery throughout much of the trip. Christopher had colds, sore throats and then internal spasms. In Shanghai, I remember how he lay on the floor grunting with pain and opening and shutting like a jackknife. Later, in the Enganad [sic], after an analysis of the contents of his colon, the doctor delighted him by saying that [sic] he had found at least twenty different species of intestinal parasite. (Unused chapters. Ch. 14 173)

he recalls in a draft of Kind. In “Arriving in Japan,” the draft of a travelogue incorporated into Journey and “Meeting the Japanese” (Prose 2: 448-50), Isherwood sketches a bureaucratic analogue to the aesthetic contrast in Journey between war-torn China’s formlessness, epitomized in the disgustingness of shit, and the artificial hyper-formalism of the stanza-like structures Auden manipulates to organize the book:

When we left Shanghai, the cholera epidemic was spreading rapidly, and our day at sea was enlivened by preparations for the visit of the Japanese quarantine authorities. Each passenger was provided with a small circular glass box and a pair of miniature chopsticks [as with the excremental puddings, there is here a hint of coprophagism]. All boxes, we were warned, must be filled by the evening and handed over to the purser in signed and numbered envelopes. It was inconceivable that more than a dozen of these hundreds of unsavoury [yet again a coprophagic whiff] samples could be tested before we berthed—very likely, none of them would ever be examined at all. But the Japanese live rigidly by the letter of the law : no excrement, no landing-permit. So we filled our little boxes as best we could. Some of us [including, no doubt, the chronically constipated Isherwood] were reduced to tipping the ever-obliging Chinese stewards.

In addition to this satirical opposition of bureaucratic management and excrement, Journey’s contrast between disgusting formlessness and formal artifice has a contemporary literary analogue in Sartre’s La Nausée.

No less than La Nausée, Journey “represents [. . .] a kind of crisis in the relation between fiction and reality, the tension or dissonance between paradigmatic form and contingent reality” (Kermode 133). On the one hand, like Sartre in La Nausée, Isherwood in his “Travel-Diary” needs to give a representation of “the horror of contingency” as “nauseous and viscous” (Kermode 136). On the other hand, “there is an irreducible

minimum of geometry—of humanly needed shape or structure—which finally limits our ability to accept the mimesis of pure contingency” (132). Kermode cites Murdoch’s contrast of “what she calls ‘crystalline form’ with narrative of the shapeless, quasi-documentary kind” (130). In the face of the shapelessness of pure contingency, “form is a matter of *recherche*” (132). In *Journey*, the ultimate expressions of the need for geometry and the search for form are the exaggeratedly crystalline and inorganic strophic shape of Auden’s containing structures. Since we judge a literary work in part according to “its transfiguration of the contingent” (Kermode 136), it is worth noting that though the pure formalism of Auden’s sonnet-like macro-structures can be seen as fulfilling the human requirement for form, the effect of those structure is ambiguous. While they do answer to our need for geometry, their superimposed quality reveal and problematize our desire for such formal completion and fulfilment. Though there are more convincing formal ‘transfigurations’ of contingency in *Journey*, such as the essential Audenesque pattern of mythic enchantment and parabolic disenchantment in the sonnet sequence, which structure from within the book’s individual sections, the stanza-like sonnet-mirroring structures provided by the book’s opening and closing and by the numerical relationship of the two parts of “In Time of War” are too inconspicuous and arbitrarily mechanical to be convincing. What that first structure brackets cannot so easily be contained and continues to spill onwards in the closing bracket of “Commentary” for almost three hundred lines so that the organizing structure’s potential formal elegance is undone by its final disproportionate dimensions.

Also problematic is the ‘contingency’ Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary” presents as disgusting and excremental. Kermode suggests that the contingency which is “nauseous and viscous” in Sartre may be “ultimately sexual” in nature: “This is unformed matter,

materia matrix; [in Sartre's novel] Roquentin's is ultimately the form giving male role" (136). We can object immediately that in the relationship of form and formlessness, formlessness is not necessarily female and the form-giving role is not necessarily male, but in Journey the long column of Auden's "Commentary" does have something phallic about it. Whether the muckier aspects of buggery explain Isherwood's transformation of nauseating and formless matter, which Kermode represents as sexually feminine, into faeces is a question better left unasked. Certainly, though, the feculent quality of nauseating contingency in "Travel-Diary" is linked to the fact the Isherwood encounters it in China.

Isherwood's preoccupation with human waste in Journey is a reflection of an essential dimension of the experience of twentieth-century modernity and of China's relationship to Western and Japanese power. Rogaski recalls that "By the late nineteenth century the functioning of sewers, the salubrity of water, the banishment of odors [. . .] were hailed as hallmarks of urban modernity" in the West (Rogaski in Esherick 31), and that these virtues were recognized as ideals to be aspired to elsewhere. Government administered hygiene became a "central emblem of modernity" and was thought of as "an essential quality of Western civilization, an elemental characteristic that distinguished West from East" (31). The ideal of "hygenic modernity" and China's failure to embody it became for Chinese and foreigners alike "a marker of Chinese inadequacy, if not inferiority" (40) and "an essential 'skill'" (30) "which China lacked in its quest for modern civilization" (46). In China to be 'modern' has more than anything else meant to be "civilized" and "clean" (30), and foreign and native confidence in Chinese cleanliness has seldom been very high. The warning "Never [to] mix with a Chinese crowd, or you'll get typhus" that Isherwood and Auden hear during their sojourn in Hong Kong (Prose 1: 499) sums up the contemporary position of international medical officialdom. In an article published early in

the twentieth century in a German medical journal, “Tsuzuki bluntly concluded ‘*Der Prophylaxis sind die Chinese unzugänglich*’ (the Chinese are incapable of enacting [sanitary] prevention), and warned that in terms of public health, foreigners must be exceedingly suspicious of the Chinese city and the people in it. [. . . Tsuzuki] sternly warned foreign residents to limit direct contact with Chinese people if they wished to avoid contracting disease” (Rogaski 37). In an effort to become modern and clean the Chinese tried to develop new norms of behaviour: “City residents who practiced [hygienic modernity did] not excrete or expectorate in public places” (30); “intimate functions such as excretion were also regulated. Working-class residents and out-of-town travelers who had previously used the convenience of open fields were forced at gunpoint to defecate in public toilets” (40); “Even merchants and degree holders who lapsed in their observation of hygienic modernity were forced to carry pails of sewage for the bureau under the watchful eye of armed Sikh guards” (40).

In spite of such policies, “the persistence of shit” (42) and of pre-modern Chinese approaches to its management (31, 42) remained problematic for Chinese and foreign authorities. By the 1930s, it was Generalissimo Chiang’s turn to tackle the problems of human waste and Chinese immundicity and to promote the ideals of hygienic modernity by launching the New Life Movement in 1934. The very hygienically modern Mme. Chiang outlines the principles of New Life during Auden and Isherwood’s interview with her in Wuchang. Though Isherwood endorses Mme. Chiang (and the Generalissimo)’s leadership of China, he prefers to present the Movement as motivated by political cynicism, and is suspicious of “reformist extravagance, police bullying, and the compulsory scrubbing of teeth” (Prose 1: 522-5). In any case, he doubts New Life will prove effective: “On the way back to Hankow [after the interview with Mme. Chiang] we discussed the Movement and

the Chiang régime. Could China ever be cleaned up? Auden, himself a veteran enemy of compulsory hygiene, was sceptical” (524). Even the person of Mme. Chiang might not be entirely free of China’s filth. When Isherwood remarks that “Strangely enough, I have never heard anybody comment on her perfume. It is the most delicious either of us has ever smelt” (Prose 1: 522), he might not realize how close he is to associating her with shit—that is if we accept psychoanalyst Dominique Laporte’s assertion that “Perfume, *pare-fumier*, has always countered manure. By proposing itself as the counteragent of shit, perfume only ensures its persistence; denial only makes the proof more positive—shit is there” (86). That shit may be present etymologically, sociologically, or psychoanalytically within “perfume” enables us to read Isherwood’s description of Mme. Chiang’s perfume as ‘delicious’ in the context of his recurrent coprophagic fears in Journey.

For Isherwood, the permanent dirtiness of China cannot be ignored or explained away; rather China is the country which Auden called “The Bad Earth” where a place can be “set down, without apparent object [. . .] in the midst of an immense mud plain” (532). Isherwood’s China is definitely not Pearl Buck’s Good Earth (the film version of Buck’s 1931 novel had been released in 1937, and Buck was awarded the Nobel Prize for her depictions of Chinese peasants while Auden and Isherwood were piecing together their own ‘China book’). In Journey, however, the Earth is Bad not as a result of China’s poverty, or its muddiness and shittiness; rather the Bad Earth is a product of war:

From here we looked down on War as a bird might—seeing only a kind of sinister agriculture or anti-agriculture. Immediately below us peasants were digging in the fertile, productive plain. Further on there would be more peasants, in uniform, also digging—the unproductive, sterile trench. Beyond them, to the north, still more peasants; and, once again, the fertile fields. This is how war must seem to the neutral, unjudging bird—merely the Bad Earth, the tiny, dead patch in the immense flowering field of luxuriant China. (547)

More than the persistence of mere shit, it is the consequences of war that nauseate: “In one

hut [of a military hospital] the sweet stench of gas-gangrene was so violent that I had to step outside to avoid vomiting” (539); “we stood beside one old woman, whose brains were soaking obscenely through a little towel, I saw the blood-caked mouth open and shut” (587).

In contrast, then, to Kermode’s Sartre-derived emphasis on the strictly nauseous quality of formless contingency, it is specifically war-inflicted human suffering that Isherwood presents as sickening. As for shit, it is sickening in *Journey* really only when it is mixed with ideas of coprophagism; otherwise, shit is either simply a matter of fact or an occasion for humour. References, whether humorous or horrified, to shit and shitting while *en voyage* are part of any properly glamorous travel book¹, but, in the face of the nauseating grotesqueness of the physical suffering of the war wounded, such humour can only seem inappropriate. The incompatibility of humour and atrocity may be one reason why such scenes of human suffering are so rare in Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary.” Another reason is that Isherwood and Auden actually witnessed little fighting and consequently saw few war wounded—travelling as they were in the lull between the Fall of Nanking and the Battle of Wuhan. Still it can seem at times that Isherwood is, if not avoiding real suffering, then not giving it the emphasis it deserves. As a consequence, the comic qualities of Isherwood’s travelogue have posed a problem for critics: Clayton remarks on Isherwood’s incapacity to reach “across the barriers of language that [. . .] confound him” to the sort of “imaginative empathy” with the war wounded and war dead that Robin Hyde achieved in her rivetting account of the Sino-Japanese War (e-mail to author).

Whether Isherwood’s comedy is appropriate, the link between shit and humour is essential to Isherwood’s aesthetics, and clearly the comedy is important to Isherwood. Just

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[v.] There is no Toilet Paper on the Road Less Travelled: The Best of Travel Humor and Misadventure. Ed. Doug Lansky. San Francisco: Travelers’ Tales, 1998.

as Isherwood, by repeatedly acknowledging the lack of perceptible or intelligible order, provides a self-reflective justification for the procedures and aesthetics of "Travel-Diary," so Isherwood shows repeatedly how often in China humour is actually the appropriate human response to war-torn life:

The Mayor [of Canton]'s smooth round face was split permanently, it seemed, by an immense grin [. . .] It was hardly necessary for us to interview him: he interviewed himself, laughing all the time. [. . .] We both like Mr Tsang. If this was typical of China's attitude towards the Japanese, it was certainly an example to the West—with its dreary hymns of hate, and screams of "Baby-killer", "Hun", "sub-human fiends." This scornful, good-natured amusement was, we agreed, exactly the note which a cultured, pacific country should strike in its propaganda against a brutal, upstart enemy. Mr Tsang's kind of humour, if properly exploited, should win China many friends abroad. (504)

Isherwood's hopeful speculations regarding the undreariness of Chinese propaganda and China's cultured pacificism is uninformed wishful thinking, but Auden's less ideologically complicated later reference to the Chinese as a "humorous" people (681) passes more easily, and the very sensible idea of maintaining good humour in the face of serious and unpleasant business recurs in Isherwood.

Thus, operating on the vaginal fistula mentioned earlier, Dr. McLure keeps up

a running commentary for the benefit of the amused and slightly scandalized Canadian Sister. "Let's have something to kneel on...You see, Sister, I'm more devotional than you think...Now the torch...Let your light shine...Oh boy, that's good! Sponge, Brother...More light in the north-east...Phew, I'm sweating. This is worse than two sets of tennis...Now then, Bunty pulls the strings. Which string shall you pull, Brother? If you were in a sailing-ship, you'd be sunk...Well, that's fixed the exhaust. We'll do the differential tomorrow...." (536)

"How well this honest mirth becomes their labour," Hamlet says of the gravediggers, and such seemly unseemly joking runs through "Travel-Diary." Isherwood's campiness and jokiness in *Journey* and elsewhere disconcerts more critics than it charms (Fussell 219, Wilde *Isherwood* 86, Swingler in Haffenden 291, Upward 20, Mizejewski 42, 70). In

“Travel-Diary” Isherwood’s position as an observer of Chinese suffering makes his humour and jokes especially problematic. It is possible to defend Isherwood’s comedy on the bases of his sense of the Chinese themselves as humorous, of his fantasy of humourous Chinese propaganda, and even of Auden’s observation in “Commentary” that in “clever” France “ridicule has acted a historic role” (685). Isherwood’s apology for camp is pertinent too: “You see, true High Camp always has an underlying seriousness. You can’t camp about something you don’t take seriously. You’re not making fun of it; you’re making fun out of it” (Evening 110). The camp humour and sense of absurdity in Journey is not exclusively Isherwood’s. We have already heard Auden’s comically vulgar *double entendres* involving balls and blow jobs in XXVII and the mocking of masturbation in VI; and we shall soon look at the wry irony that arises in his “Picture Commentary.” In “Commentary” Auden will offer the absurd image of the galaxy revolving “like an enormous biscuit” (680), and he allows the “Comic Muse” to dominate in “Macao” and “Hongkong.” Furthermore, the lines alluded to earlier—“It is our culture that with such calm progresses / Over the barren plains of a sea; somewhere ahead / The septic East” (496)—involve a comic pun on “culture.” Certainly, as the later revision to “Slowly our Western culture in full pomp progresses” makes even plainer (Collected 174), it is our Culture in the senses of Shakespeare, Thomas Edison, and Co. which is heading East on the “brightly lit” and “clean” ship-city of the modern West. However, for the medically minded Auden, for the traveller who in “The Voyage” is ill with fever (496), who passes the “sick ape” of the originary Egyptian Sphinx (496), who suffers from diarrhea (593), “culture” also suggests a contagious “bacterial culture.” This is the sort of culture which the modern Japanese were after in the stool samples of the passengers from cholera-ridden Shanghai, but to which, ironically, the invading Japanese are themselves compared by Isherwood and Auden (500, 525, 673).

Possession of this kind of amorphous nauseous culture may seem to differentiate the West from a “septic East,” as in the “alarming experience” Auden has “after a visit to the station lavatory at the far end of the sidings, [when] he had returned to find that Chiang and our luggage had utterly disappeared—swallowed up in a vast, amorphous mass of sleeping soldiers and refugees which had grown perpetually larger, like a nightmare fungus, and threatened gradually to cover the entire platform” (532). The ambivalence of “culture” does not, however, permit the attribution of this sort of culture solely to China or Japan. The West too has its “culture” which has carried its filth wherever it has progressed over the seas—our “kin who trousered Africa, carried our smell / to germless poles,” our kin the looters, as Auden describes them in “Whitsunday in Kirchstetten,” whose turn, now that European colonialism is ending, it may be “for latrine duty” (Collected 745).

The idea of ‘culture’ reminds us that the verse forms Auden manipulates in Journey involve more than a purely formal geometry, more than the formal replication of the stanzaic structures of the sonnet at the level of the entire book. The verse forms also have a cultural history and are the bearers of cultural and thematic associations. Here questions of the radical differences and oppositions between Chinese and Western cultures do become pertinent. For the verse forms in Journey are quintessentially Western. Unlike Ezra Pound, Victor Segalen, or Robin Hyde, Auden’s encounter with China neither prompts him to imitate Chinese forms, diction, or themes, nor leads him to write poems governed by an intense personal response to the particularities of China. Instead Auden writes an unChinese poetry that can seem to universalize a Western experience. Auden turns to verse forms central to the Western literary imagination, using the forms with an obvious awareness of their history. Thus, the hexameters of “The Voyage” and “The Ship,” the two poems in Journey most focussed on the theme of the Journey, recall the hexameters of

classical epic and the archetypal voyage of Odysseus. This specific recollection is reinforced by the parallels between “The Voyage”’s concern with false voyages and Dante’s presentation of Ulysses’ final journey in the Inferno in the Canto from which Auden has Michael Ransom read at the beginning of F6 written two years earlier than Journey.

Though unrhymed, the tercets of “Commentary” are clearly meant to evoke Dante whom Auden alludes to directly in the lines “the wish to build / A world united as that Europe was in which / The flint-faced exile wrote his three-act comedy” (687). Furthermore, the example of Dante lies behind “Commentary” in Auden’s presentation of exemplary individuals, of historical epochs, and of longish and dialectically contrasting speeches. Dante’s example also lies behind lines such as “The innocent and short whose dreams contain no children” (681) which Auden calls a “Dante periphrasis for describing children” (quoted in Fuller 242), or in the lines Auden reuses from the uncompleted “In the year of my youth” with its “Dantesque journey through the modern city, with the character Sampson (based on Gerald Heard) as Auden’s Virgil” (Fuller 128). Like the tercets with their evocation of Dante and his *terza rima*, Journey’s other principal poetic forms, the sonnet and blank verse, both originated in Italy, “that Catholic country with the shape of Cornwall,” as “Commentary” describes it, “Where Europe first became a term of pride” (Prose 1: 684).² Europe first became a term of pride in the pan-Europeanism of Dante and in

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Those lines on Italy occur in a passage where Auden is not celebrating European pride, but rejecting the totalitarianism of the three Axis powers Italy, Japan, and Germany. Auden’s recourse in the unjingoistic but clearly anti-Axis Journey to verse forms with manifestly Italian origins and to the special examples of Dante and of Rilke involves an implicit refusal to allow the menacing contemporary leadership of two of the Axis powers to appropriate to themselves the cultural heritages of their own languages and civilizations. The idea that a critical yet conciliatory response to the political crises and national rifts of twentieth century European civilization is implicit in Journey’s versification is born out in the trajectory of Auden’s later ‘Italian’ and ‘Austrian’ periods (1948-57 and 1958-71 respectively) when Auden develops this response into a major dimension of his later work. Auden’s deliberate immersion in Italian and Germanophone cultures involves an effort to subvert the national polarizations of modern Europe, to undo the untenable ideological

the Renaissance Italy that produced both the sonnet and unrhymed *versi sciotti*. It is hard to overstate the centrality in Western literature of the two principal verse forms in Journey. The blank verse, the sonnet, and the Dante-evoking tercets of Journey have all been especially significant in the literary culture of England and remain core forms in the repertoire of English-language poetry.

In Journey, then, just as in the sonnet sequence we have seen Auden working within the grand traditions of the Bible, ancient Greece, the Enlightenment, and Marxism, so he works not with any Chinese-inspired poetic exoticism, but with the utterly canonical resources of post-Renaissance European and English-language poetic traditions. Auden's use of these canonical verse forms is part and parcel of the long view of European history articulated in "Commentary": "This is the epoch of the Third Great Disappointment," he writes, as he reviews how the epoch that began with the Renaissance, and proceeded through the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and Colonialism is "today, all spent" (681-2). Precisely because, for Auden, the hopes of that epoch have been disappointed and seem, in the catastrophic 1930s, "all spent," Auden's reliance on some of that long epoch's most characteristic poetic forms involves him in the self-conscious irony of VII's description of the decadent poet deliberately planning his strophes.

The relationship between Auden's preoccupation with faltering master narratives and his reliance on canonical Western poetic forms is a significant aspect of Auden's formalism in Journey. Auden's reliance on major Western forms and his formalism in Journey are aspects of his critique of Western master narratives. Proceeding from Mendelson's description of Auden's analogy-based approach to poetic form, we can take the fact that those poetic forms issue entirely from the grandest European tradition as

isolation of both the formerly fascist or Nazi countries and of Anglo-American hegemony, and to preserve, or recreate, a more complete vision of Western civilization.

consistent with the fact that the evocation of established Western notions of law, instinct, social convention, culture, and belief is necessary to Auden's reexamination of those narratives. It may seem paradoxical and unfashionably Eurocentric that Auden is so preoccupied with the West in a travel book on a Sino-Japanese war, just as it may seem odd and disappointing that Auden's versification and poetry reveals no engagement with Chinese poetry.³ The absence of Chinese-derived poetic forms should not be taken as indicating that Auden fails to respond to China or fails to entertain new versions of established Western ideas or new accommodations between humanity and the world. Rather Auden's encounter with China is the occasion of an intense reexamination of crucial aspects of the Western heritage. Eschewing an "imperial monologues of appropriation," Auden allows the Chinese content of *Journey's* sonnets to provoke an 'Occidentalizing' deconstruction of Western subjectivity and culture (Christie 152), while similar instances of China's transformation of Western categories lead in "Commentary" to the adumbration of a sweeping and new vision of humanity and the world.

From the Renaissance through twentieth-century modernism, the sonnet has been perhaps the single most important form in Euro-American poetry, and Auden's awareness of the sonnet's history allows *Journey's* sonnets both to depart from the sonnet's past and to utterly conform to the form's most expressive features. We have seen how deliberately Auden uses the thematic expectations associated with the sonnet as a foil, by using its small lyric form for large epic purposes, by avoiding the subjective "I" in favour of the third

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Auden's only invocation of Chinese poetry occurs much later in "Mountains" when he imagines "a green croft, / Bright with flowers laid out in exquisite splodges / Like a Chinese poem." The point of the reference to Chinese poetry in "Mountains" is not imitation of or engagement with the Chinese tradition; rather Auden evokes Chinese poetry in a gesture of negative self-definition. In *Journey*, as momentarily in "Mountains", China serves as an Other which Auden is Not, in contrast to which Auden can better understand and present what he is and what the West has been and is.

person “he” or of a collective “we,” and by exploring a surreptitious homosexuality in a form usually associated with Petrarchan hetero-eroticism and with male-female love and marriage. We have also seen, adapting Mendelson, how Auden latches onto and makes permanently his own the sonnet’s most critical feature, its turn between octave and sestet. The sonnet’s turn arguably has more ethical, literary, philosophical, and psychological analogues than any other other poetic convention in modern Western poetry, and Auden’s fascination with such turns is a major part of Journey’s significance. We have seen too that Auden projects the microcosm of the sonnet onto the macrocosmic scale of Journey.

For their part, though the blank verse tercets of “Commentary” have a less illustrious history as a vehicle for memorable poetry than the sonnet does, they derive from a history of formal innovation at least as curious as that of the sonnet and perhaps as crucial in the development of English-language poetry. Auden’s use of the form in Journey is inscribed in a context of poetic tradition and formal innovation that allows us to better appreciate the significance of both the versification in “Commentary” and the structure of the entire book. As Auden’s own allusions to Dante suggest, behind the resemblance of *terza rima* and Auden’s blank verse tercets lies a genealogical connection. The tercet as a stanzaic form in Western poetry “was first developed systematically in Italian poetry,” most notably by Dante, from whom “it spread to vernacular poetries” (Preminger 1270). Though the blank verse tercets of Journey are now a widely used verse form in English, the process of formal innovation through which they entered English poetry is complex. The wedding of tercets and blank verse results from the combined efforts of post-Miltonic Romantic, Victorian, and Edwardian poets and translators to recreate Dante’s *terza rima* in English. The present status of blank verse tercets as a canonical poetic form is chiefly a result of the work of Wallace Stevens, who developed it as his major poetic form around the same time that

Auden was working with the form in “Commentary” (Preminger 1270). Where Stevens, “the poet who most eagerly embraced the romantic principles Auden rejected,” succeeds, Auden’s efforts in the form through the 1930s remain substandard, and in contrast to Stevens “for Auden the regular unrhymed triplet became a sign of falsity and imposture” in his later poetry (Mendelson Early 246). Auden’s versification in “Commentary” derives from a complex literary historical matrix and is part of a dynamic within English poetry in which poets like Stevens, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Laurence Binyon, and Louis MacNeice were struggling to respond to imaginative, ideological, and formal aspects of the Dantean heritage. In 1938, the blank verse tercet could hardly be employed without bringing into view the entire edifice of modern Western high culture. The rigour of Western order, the upliftingness of Western progressivism, and ‘that old old Miltonic-Dantean rag’ are all implicit in Journey’s verse sections, and their poetic geometry and stanzaic architectonics provide the organizing and containing structures for a book which threatens to collapse into formless disorder.

The civilizing formalism and poetic geometry of Auden’s verse develop an especially stark contrast with the disgusting excremental formlessness that Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary” keeps slipping in. Morson links Auden’s sense of the tension between shapeless contingency and artful form to a fundamental issue in the Aristotelian legacy: “The order of art and the mess of experience: this opposition underlies much Western thought [. . .] For Aristotle, and for the tradition of poetics deriving from him, the harmony of art ideally eliminates all contingency from the artwork” (287). In Journey, Auden’s verse imposes an aesthetic order and opens great historical vistas, while the prose in “Travel-Diary” is the vehicle with which Isherwood must find ways of handling the nauseating formlessness of snot, piss, shit, mud, and blood; of negotiating the incoherent impressions

of China and the disordered destruction of war; and of registering either the absurdly appropriate comic response to some of those things, or the uncomprehending disorientation they occasion.

Isherwood's fascination with shit is a permanent aspect of his work. His Single Man has a long toilet scene in which the wiping of bum-stickness becomes an issue (17-31), and a scene where the hero George "emits loud prolonged farts" as he walks across a parking lot (78); Down There records Isherwood's first act on his first morning on Ambrose's homosexual dystopia as the digging of a latrine hole (99); in Mr. Norris, the narrator's response to the proliferation of Brown Shirts in Nazifying Berlin is to imagine that "everything in the room was really a kind of brown: either green-brown, black-brown, yellow-brown, or red-brown, but all brown, unmistakably. When [he] had had breakfast and taken a purgative, [he] felt better" (166); in Meeting, Patrick observes of his Indian snapshots that "luckily [Mother] won't be able to smell the stink from the open drains and the assorted droppings!" (59).

The contrast of shit and the poetic in Journey is representative of a tension within Auden's work also, a tension developed most fully in his collaboration with Isherwood on Journey, but which remains integral to Auden's aesthetics. The Ariel-assisted Muse in "The Sea and the Mirror" fears, among possible spell-breaking violations of aesthetic decorum and artistic illusion, Caliban's perverse farting (Collected 425). "The Geography of the House," the poem dedicated to Isherwood on the toilet, articulates a fuller conception of the relation of shit and art, presenting them not as opposed, but as related analogically and psychologically—art not as a mere antithesis of shit, but as shit transfigured:

All the Arts derive from
This ur-act of making,
Private to the artist:
Makers' lives are spent

Striving in their chosen
 Medium to produce a
 De-narcissus-ized en-
 -during excrement.

The mature Auden may strain in these lines to express a central issue in his *ars poetica*, but “The Geography of the House” also comments lightly on a moral issue in Auden’s aesthetics and in his views of art and his own career:

Keep us in our station:
 When we get pound-noteish,
 When we seem about to
 Take up Higher Thought,
 Send us some deflating
 Image like the pained ex-
 -pression on a Major
 Prophet taken short.

This amusing contrast of high-mindedness and the lowliness of defecation comments retrospectively on the contrast of Auden’s status as a literary political prophet in the 1930s to the intestinal troubles he and Isherwood suffered while in China.

In Journey, the oppositions of shitting or farting to poetry in these later passages are developed as part of the complementary / contrasting opposition of Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary” and Auden’s verse. Excrement is a matter for the relative formlessness of Isherwood’s unassuming prose. In his hands, excrement may be gross, but it is best responded to with humour rather than disgust; and it is an almost omnipresent aspect of the experience of China. By contrast, Auden’s poetry is rigorously formal. The verse structures of Auden’s poetry bring into play the idea of a triumphant Western culture. Their apparent high-mindedness is undercut by but not entirely undone by the ironies and vulgarities which emerge subsequently and by Isherwood’s foregrounding of excrement.

It would be a mistake to identify with either Auden or Isherwood the aesthetics implicit in their respective sections. Rather the collusion of Auden and Isherwood produces

an aesthetico-ideological vision larger than either the “Travel-Diary” or the verse sections. As Kerr notes (*Izzo Legacy* 277), it is significant that in structural terms Isherwood’s prose diary comes enclosed within Auden’s poetry. Auden’s Western verse structures strive to shape the formlessness of immediate experience and to contain the experience of the unintelligible disorderly China that is revealed in Isherwood’s travelogue. There is an analogy here to the relationship between imperialistic Europe and semi-colonial China. *Journey* reveals the tension, during an epoch of European ascendancy and of Chinese disintegration, between Western formal imperatives and the uncontainability of China—a stark presentation of the incongruity of available Western categories and the non-European world and non-Western realities those categories cannot successfully comprehend.

Equally stark is the vulgar contrast of structuring poetic form and the formlessness of excrement. This contrast is representative of perennial aesthetic and epistemological issues, but the specific associations of excremental formlessness with Chinese realities and of formal order with Western culture is potentially offensive. However, as with the pun on “culture” which refers us simultaneously to civilization and bacteria, and reverses the significance of the image of Western culture progressing across a sea, so the apparent containment of China by the West, and of Isherwood’s Chinese diary by Auden’s verse structures, is inverted in *Journey*’s opening sequence. In “Macao,” the relationship of Portuguese Macao and China is analogous to the relationship of Auden’s versification with its implicit ideas of a Western historical order to the immense China which neither Isherwood’s prose or Auden’s poetry can convincingly contain. Macao seems “A weed from Catholic Europe, [that] took root / Between the yellow mountains and the sea, / And bore these gay stone houses like a fruit, / And grew on China imperceptibly” (498). It is the campy Western colony Macao, with its “Rococo images of Saint and Saviour” where

“nothing serious can happen,” that is dependent, even parasitic, on China, and not China that is dependent on this “Portugal-cum-China oddity” (Collected 176).

Like Macao, Auden’s poetry in Journey is a fanciful European weed growing parasitically on war-torn China. Like Macao with its childishness and playful formalism, poetry “makes nothing happen,” as Auden would write in “In Memory of W.B. Yeats” only months later. The two bits of slang for “homosexual” in the third line also remind us of Auden’s sense of the homosexual’s proneness to frivolity. War-torn China, in contrast to unserious “Macao,” and in contrast as well to the colonial comic opera in Journey’s “Hongkong,” is a very serious place indeed. Mendelson dates “Macao” to December, 1938 (Collected 176) almost a full year after Auden and Isherwood actually passed through Macao, and dates the Yeats elegy to February or March 1939 (Later 12). Just as Mendelson and Fuller find anticipations in “In Time of War” of that great elegy (Mendelson Later 7; Fuller 243), “nothing serious can happen here” in “Macao” reverberates in the elegy’s “Poetry makes nothing happen,” one of Auden’s most notorious lines. That line is rarely understood properly in its immediate context where the question of the inconsequentiality of poetry arises with reference to matters over which poetry has no influence (illness and hospitals, the death of the body, the economy, war, and looming world war). The Yeats elegy, however, also insists on a broader point that is consequent on the composition of Journey; that is, that poetry, even or especially a poetry that organizes on such a vast scale everything that Journey contains, in the end can make nothing happen.

Auden’s insistence on poetry’s ineffectuality and frivolousness is a source of chagrin for those who look to poets for political leadership, as much of the young English literary set vainly looked to Auden through the 1930s. But the point about the mature Auden’s insistence that poetry makes nothing happen must be appreciated in light of a deeply felt

concomitant realization which Auden and Isherwood articulate in the course of their Journey, composed as it was at the desperate end of the 1930s. This is the realization that, beyond the pretensions of poets and readers, beyond the good humour of Isherwood's responses to Chinese excrement, beyond the visionary formal orders of poetry, it remains tragically true that some very bad shit happens indeed. To comprehend Auden's dictum that "poetry makes nothing happen," one must read it in light of this last realization regarding the absoluteness of the reality of tragedy. In that light, it can be translated, like other philosophical and religious attitudes, into a vernacular response to the fact that Shit Happens: 'Shit happens' (Taoism); 'Confucius say, 'Shit happens' (Confucianism); 'This shit has happened before' (Hinduism); 'There's nothing like a good shit happening' (Hedonism); 'Why does this shit always happen to us?' (Judaism); 'If shit happens, you deserve it' (Catholicism); 'Shit evolves' (Secular Humanism). . . . We can now add to this list Auden's version of the attitude of the poet: 'Shit happens,' says the artist, ' but I can make something memorable out of it'.

It is the shitty experience of colonialism and war in an incomprehensible China and his efforts to contrive a formal order in which to represent that experiences that announce Auden's realization that poetry makes nothing happen. Just as Journey is a neglected book, so Auden and Isherwood's encounter with China has been seen as a brief and accidental episode with no permanent effect on the work of either. But their experience in China and the writing of Journey have a demonstrable transformative effect on both Auden's and Isherwood's work. As Christie insists, Auden's poetics are "forever" changed after his experience in China (145-6). If Auden and Isherwood's elaboration of the contrast of verse and prose is a prominent feature of Journey, Journey is also their major development of the tension between order and contingency in art. Provoking this development, their encounter

with war-torn semi-colonial China occasioned significant turns in their understandings of themselves and the effectiveness of art, and occasioned the development in Journey of an exemplary twentieth-century vision of the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of literature.

FURTHER DUAL STRUCTURES

Duality is fundamental to the construction of Journey. We have seen the importance of the contrast of verse and prose and the Auden-Isherwood collaborative duality with its conceptual and thematic opposition of subjectivity and objectivity, but duality is not only a matter of such external relationships of Isherwood's section to Auden's sections. As with the dual structure of octave and sestet within the sonnets of Auden's "In Time of War," there is a temporal duality internal to "Travel-Diary." For in "Travel-Diary" each odd-numbered chapter is written as a retrospective travelogue, and each even-numbered chapter is written in dated entries as if it represented an actual travel diary that Isherwood maintained throughout the journey. This distinction, though explicitly signalled, is easily overlooked, since stylistically there is little difference between the two sorts of chapter, and since chronologically the sequence of events in successive chapters respects the travellers' Chinese itinerary. Nonetheless temporally "Travel-Diary" is structured in terms of a deliberate alternation between late-1938 retrospection and early-1938 immediacy, and this temporal alternation between a narrative relation of then-ness and one of now-ness is an important analogy to the before and after of the sonnet's structure. A third dual temporal structure in Journey has to do with the temporal dimension of the relationship between the first and second parts of Auden's "In Time of War," that is between the sonnets which we have already considered and "Commentary" which we will consider in our concluding chapter. This temporal movement between a before and after repeats the temporal dynamics already established within the sonnet sequence itself. We will consider later the

implications of the recurrent temporal structures within Isherwood's "Travel-Diary" and between the sonnets and "Commentary." It is enough now to note that the recurrent duality of after and before is another of the binary compositional features which require us to think of Journey as an especially self-reflexive text.

To the dual temporal structures internal to "Travel-Diary," internal to the sonnets, and between the sonnets and "Commentary," and to the oppositions of verse and prose and of the Auden and Isherwood sections in general, we must add the set of oppositions that structure and complicate Journey's "Picture Commentary." The binary opposition of the textual and photographic media is comparable to but more radical than the opposition of verse to prose, and it too is a crucial element in the overall effect of the book. The occasional cases of "unsteady triptychs" which Bryant identifies as emerging out of Isherwood's prose, Auden's poetry, and Auden's photographs (133-5) constitute special instances of a ternary reflexivity within Journey, but these occasional triptychs do not diminish the more obvious contrast of photographic and textual media. The latter is an opposition in which the disjunction between photograph and text is just as important as their complementarity. For Bryant, neither the poems nor the diary "anchor" Auden's photographs. Instead the "uneasy relationships" of the book's different media "question Auden and Isherwood's ability to represent the Sino-Japanese War" and deconstruct the genre of the documentary text (135). Bryant's holistic approach to Journey involves restoring to Auden's "canon the visual texts that he produced alone (his published photographs [in Iceland and Journey]) and those he produced in collaborations with others (his documentary filmmaking)" (6). Bryant shows how persistent was Auden's questioning of the relations between visual and verbal modes of representation and knowing.

Auden's self-consciousness regarding the possibility of documentary representation

is evident in the provocative way he presents the photographs. “Auden’s use of dualistic photo pairings” make the “Picture Commentary” seem initially “the most orderly part” of the book (Bryant 131). As Bryant argues, however, the sense of the orderliness of the categories and oppositions organizing the presentation of the photos soon gives way to puzzled scepticism. For the organization of the photographs in “Picture Commentary” into opposed pairs is not the revelation of a convincing or stable structuring of reality. Instead, like the hyperformalism of Auden’s magnifications of sonnet structure, the “Picture Commentary” reveals a superficial conventionalism in the categories and the dualistic thinking behind the ordering of the photographs. For in spite of what the supposedly radical terms of their oppositions suggest, the members of each pair look far more similar than they do different; they are comparable examples of human clay and their categorizing captions seem arbitrary and irrelevant. Or they would be irrelevant, if the “Picture Commentary” did not so clearly display the brutal facts of the inequality that lies behind some categorizations of these essentially similar persons, including the inequality of the observer and the observed (Bryant 164). The asymmetrical distributions of power, privilege, and well-being between paired subjects ruin the symmetry of the pairings and deconstruct the idea of the stability of the social hierarchies involved.

Just as the confusing and brutal arbitrariness of what at first seem clear categories complicates the significance of the photographs, the incongruity of the photographic images and their ambiguous captions (Bryant 148, 165) troubles our understanding of the “Picture Commentary.” As in Iceland, “Auden’s opposition of photographs and captions disorients our vision” (90). In Journey, the photographs’ “uncertain relation to Auden’s captions” (131) is frequently ironic (165), and sometimes very darkly so. The reality of human hierarchies is spoofed in the photograph of Chiang, Auden and Isherwood’s attendant,

humbly riding a donkey. Simply identified as “Chiang,” this Chiang is a comic contrast to the exalted Generalissimo Chiang. The object of a considerable cult of personality in China and of public attention world-wide, Chiang Kai Shek had just been on the cover of Time in January 1938 as Man of the Year for 1937. The exalted Chiang would have been seated on a white horse or, as in the photo at the outset of the “Picture Commentary” accompanied by the winsome Madame Chiang, rather than a donkey. There is too the irony that the photos labelled as the actual military front present a seemingly peaceful river scape and a statue of a Buddha in a temple, while the most intensely martial-looking photos in which we see what looks like actual fighting are labelled “Stills from [the film] *Fight to the Last*.” Finally there is the ominous irony of the caption of the photo of the young soldier, which reads simply “Unknown Soldier,” which we will return to in chapter five.

The ironic critical juxtaposition of the photographs in “Picture Commentary,” their ironic relations to their incongruous captions, as well as their “oblique relations to Isherwood’s diary and Auden’s poems” (Bryant 131), lead one to conclude with Bryant that Journey’s photographs “like the larger collaborative text that contains them” are self-consciously dualistic and “riddled with contradictions” (167).

REFLEXIVITY AND *MISE EN ABYME*

A further source of reflexivity in Journey is the figure of the *mise en abyme*. The reflexivity inherent in the dual relations of caption to photograph, of one photograph to another, of text to photograph, of verse to prose, of objective to subjective, of Auden to Isherwood, and of after to before in both “Travel-Diary” and “In Time of War,” is a fundamental recurrent feature of Journey. The reflexivity of the *mise en abyme* has a special importance as a structural expression of the authors’ experience of the relative powerlessness of homosexuality and in their self-conscious sense of powerlessness before

the overwhelming political crises confronting them in 1938. *Mises en abyme* are suited to a self-reflective work like Journey since the “first identifying property” and “the common root of every *mise en abyme* is clearly the idea of reflexivity” (Dällenbach 42). Reflective *mise en abyme*-like moments occur throughout Journey, but two that are particularly crucial are the conclusion of Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary” and XXVII, the conclusion of the sonnet sequence in Auden’s “In Time of War.” The latter instance we considered at length in our opening chapter; the former we will turn to later.

Auden and Isherwood both have predilections for the figure of the *mise en abyme*. Gottlieb notes that “Auden is repeatedly drawn into reflection of images on reflection, most notably in *The Sea and the Mirror* but also in other poems and prose works, both early and late, where images of the mirror, Narcissus, and the self-reflective ego propel Auden’s text in the direction of a *mise en abyme*” (81). Similarly, Mizejewski, in a discussion of the fictional story “The English Girl” which the Isherwood narrator is asked to write within the larger story “Sally Bowles,” notes the recurrence in Isherwood’s work of the motif of embedded texts “in his self-conscious references to texts-within-texts. The titles of Prater Violet (1945), Lions and Shadows (1938), and The World in the Evening (1954), for example, are all actually titles of other fictional texts described in the works, as if the titles were in special quotation marks” (61). Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary” is another such embedded text within the larger travelogue of Journey. Only “Travel-Diary” recounts the full chronology of the authors’ Chinese journey, and like Auden’s parabolic XXVII, Isherwood’s section serves as a representation of the whole. The importance of *mise en abyme*-like reflexivity to both Auden and Isherwood, the repetition of analogous structures of reflexivity throughout Journey, and the occurrence of actual *mises en abyme* in that book demand reflection on our part. The multiple instances of binary oppositions and dualistic

reflexivity not only serve as thematic and structural principles within Journey; they are also linked to poetic, philosophical, and literary theoretical questions of the first order.

Dällenbach writes of a *mise en abyme* of the code of a work. This involves the representation within a text, not of the whole story or of the characters, but rather a representative exemplification “du propre art poétique de l’auteur” or, as Dällenbach’s translators have it, “of the author’s own aesthetic theory” (98). There are many instances of Auden and Isherwood implicitly representing and justifying the aesthetics and procedures of Journey. Isherwood’s presentations of the humour of the Mayor of Canton or Dr. McClure implicitly develop apologies for Isherwood’s comedy; the randomness of a Chinese meal or of war and examples of the slippage of signifier and signified help explain his emphases on incomprehensibility and the surreal; his perception of social role playing in the behaviour of the people he encounters illuminates the motivation for Isherwood’s heightened sense of human theatricality. The examples of human pairings in the photo essay correspond to the most fundamental such pairing in Journey, that of Auden and Isherwood. This twinning, consistent as it is with the variation of binary structures of reflexivity, is essential to the authors’ “art poétique” and aesthetic theory. In the case of XXVII, we find a *mise en abyme* that encapsulates not only the narrative of a journey of a polyvalent “we” and the book’s principal themes and situations, but in the sonnet’s two-part structure we also see the most conspicuous and forceful instance of the book’s insistent playing with a key component of the book’s “code,” namely binary reflexivity. Auden’s development of the dual temporal structure and inherent reflexivity of the sonnet in “In Time of War” becomes a defining characteristic of Journey that, as we have noted several times, persists in Auden’s poetry after 1939. Both the *mise en abyme* and the quality of self-reflexivity suggest the wholeness of a work in so far as the former represents the whole and the latter involves an implicit

centripetal tendency in which a work turns in on itself in a search for its own integrity.

In the case of an apparently incoherent text like *Journey*, such confirmations of its wholeness are particularly important. The reflexivity of *mise en abyme* is significant in other ways too. Mieke Bal speculates that the “figure distinguishes itself by an aspect emblematic of the feminine situation: the mirror” (45). Bal’s association of the *mise en abyme* with mirroring and the situation of women is pertinent to the figure’s significance in *Journey* since both are linked to the authors’ homosexuality. Twentieth-century psychosexual theories with which they were familiar linked homosexuality, the idea of the mirror, and the problem of narcissism. Psychoanalysis, for instance, posited “mirror reflection as the lamentable symptom of homosexuality” (Bruhm 3), and most such theories argued that though homosexuality might not be “the exclusive domain of narcissism,” it is “certainly the strongest case” (4). Partly because of this theoretical context, images and metaphors of the mirror run through Auden’s work. In *Journey*, “distance” itself is conceived of as a mirror in which “The Traveller” tries to see the strangeness of his own face (*Prose* 1: 497). The related issue of narcissism is also implicit in Isherwood’s focus on Isherwood-like narrators and his and their fascination with themselves. The condition of narcissism is similarly central to Auden’s poetry and to his thinking on poetry, Eros, homosexuality, and ethics.

The idea that the reflexivity of *mise en abyme* is consistent with the “feminine situation” illuminates the reflexivity in Auden and Isherwood and *Journey*. For Bal, “‘specular’ self-reflective reflection seems to be in opposition to ‘discursive’ reflection” and “suggests a powerlessness, a submission to the directions given by the text” (57). Isherwood and Auden certainly had access to the apparatus of publishing and to discursive modes of reflection. However, in 1938 social, legal, and personal constraints operated to

deny Auden and Isherwood access to discursive reflection on the crucial matter of their homosexuality. This is the conflict that homosexual writers have experienced between “being empowered to speak but unable to say” (Yingling 26). We can relate Auden and Isherwood’s fascination with ‘specular’ non-discursive self-reflection to the limitations and heightened self-consciousness of the homosexual. In spite of their class privilege and literary success, the powerlessness Bal associates with specular reflection is consistent with the sense of powerlessness against legal and social condemnation that was unavoidable in their experience of homosexuality. At least as significantly, an aspect of their political experience in 1938 was a sense of powerlessness in the face of the war in China and the European crises that their individual and collaborative works had been attempting to report engage with. The “submission to the directions given by the text” that Bal proposes involves in Journey a submission to the imperatives of topicality and political engagement. For Isherwood in the “Travel-Diary,” this involves the requirement that he recount the steps of a journey and his experience of a culture and situation he has barely understood, and in the conclusion of “Travel-Diary” it will involve Isherwood’s exceptional submission to the third-party expertise of Rewi Alley. With Auden, we see instead a submission in “In Time of War” to the imperatives of objectivity, of seeing his subjectivity objectively, and of placing his subjective perspective in the encompassing impersonal contexts of human history, war, international politics, and compromising but ‘actually existing’ political partisanship. The relative powerlessness of Auden and Isherwood as homosexuals and as individuals in overwhelming political crises explains in part, not only the reflexivity of Journey’s *mises en abyme*, but the varying narcissistic, ethical, and epistemological reflexivity of the entire book.

CHAPTER 4

REFLEXIVITY...IRONY...TEMPORALITY...‘AUTHENTICITY’

REFLEXIVITY...IRONY...TEMPORALITY...‘AUTHENTICITY’

In addition to Bal’s suggestions regarding the significance of *mise en abyme*, Paul de Man’s discussion of reflexivity, irony, and temporality develops a further perspective for the evaluation of the significance not just of the reflexivity of *mise en abyme*, but of the reflexivity and the structuring role of all the various binary oppositions in Journey. In multiplying instances of such reflexivity, Auden and Isherwood circle around conceptual aporia that are part and parcel of the essence of literature. These aporia have to do with the nature of irony, and with the relationship of irony and literature to being in the world, to action, and to self-consciousness. De Man writes of “the notion of *dédoublement* as the characteristic that sets apart a reflective activity [. . .] from the activity of the ordinary self” (Blindness 212). For de Man, the notion of *dédoublement* as “self-duplication” or “self-multiplication” (212) is “essential for an understanding of irony” (212). Appreciating both irony and the doubling of the self is essential to understanding Journey, a book whose hyper-reflexivity generates a small encyclopaedia of ironic modes and species.

The doubled self of irony involves “a relationship within consciousness, between two selves,” writes de Man, “yet it is not an intersubjective relationship” (212). This idea of a relationship within consciousness between two selves and de Man’s further association of the doubled self of irony with a permanently self-consciousness narrator (218) call to mind Isherwood’s paradoxical practices of, on the one hand, developing fictional narrators who resemble him and even bear his name, but who are not to be identified with him, while, on the other hand, employing in his autobiographical work the third-person singular to refer to his historical self. Isherwood’s narrative practice in both his fiction and his autobiography would seem to confirm de Man’s point that the moment the difference “between the persona

of the author and the persona of the fictional narrator [. . .] is asserted is precisely the moment when the author does not return to the world [. . . and] discovers instead that there is no way back from his fictional self to his actual self” (219). For Isherwood even the idea of his actual self tends to irrelevance as he insists increasingly on the fictional nature of “Christopher Isherwood.” As we will see, in *Journey* at least as clearly as in any of his other works, Isherwood represents—by means of the deliberate contrast between the temporal situations of alternating chapters—the problems of the difficulty of finding a way back to the world and of the disjunction between his text’s ironic narrative self and his actual self.

A second major aspect of *Journey* is illuminated by de Man’s discussion of the doubling of the self within consciousness that occurs in irony. For though Isherwood’s narrative practices confirm the idea that self-duplication involves a relationship within consciousness between an empirical and a fictional self, *Journey* also involves the ironies of the intersubjective and intertextual relationships between Auden and Isherwood. For de Man, neither Isherwood’s ‘Aristotelian’ self-mocking irony (Cunningham calls Isherwood “a perpetually jokey self-denigrator” (295)), nor Isherwood’s intersubjective irony in his presentation of the Auden-Isherwood relationship, is of much interest. Humorous intersubjective irony is less interesting than the “comique absolu” of the intrasubjective irony of the divided self (213). “Within the realm of intersubjectivity one would speak”, writes de Man, “of difference in terms of the superiority of one subject over another, with all the implications of will to power, of violence and possession which come into play when a person is laughing at someone else—including the will to educate and to improve” (212).

The intersubjective / intertextual relationship of Auden and Isherwood involves these sorts of comic irony when Isherwood refers to Auden as “Au Dung” and when he

presents their relationship as rivalrous and riven by incompatibilities. Indeed, Journey has a special interest as the only of their jointly-authored texts in which the relationship of Auden and Isherwood is overtly represented and explicitly at issue. In the “Travel-Diary,” Isherwood uses Auden as a foil against which to explore his own responses to their Chinese journey, with the apparent strength of Auden serving to heighten Isherwood’s obvious weaknesses in a parodic version of his opposition of the Truly Strong Man and the Truly Weak Man. Of the two friends, Isherwood is more sensitive to the rivalrous aspect of their relationship, later recounting how in China “I sometimes found myself really hating him—hating his pedantic insistence on ‘objectivity,’ which was really a reaction from my own woolly-mindedness. I was meanly jealous of him, too. Jealous of his share of the limelight; jealous because he’d no longer play the role of dependent, admiring younger brother. Indeed, I got such a *physical* dislike of him that I deliberately willed him to get ill; which he did” (Kind 304). These intersubjective ironies in the Auden-Isherwood relationship in Journey deserve more consideration than de Man’s dismissal of such modes of irony would suggest.

For instance, the complex play of objectivity and subjectivity allows the respective contributions of the two authors to cancel the premises, to complement the omissions of the other, and to force reconsiderations of what being either objective or subjective can possibly mean. Isherwood’s contrast of his “woolly-mindedness” with Auden’s “pedantic objectivity” (305) corresponds not just to temperamental differences, but to deliberately differing tendencies of their contributions to Journey. It is important to recognize the methodicalness of their agreement to differ in their Chinese book. Their other collaborations also proceed according to a deliberate division of intellectual and poetic labour, but the assigned tasks are not always the same. Journey’s division is a reversal of

that which characterized the writing of F6 when “it was understood, throughout, that Wystan’s speciality was to be the ‘woozy’ and mine the ‘straight’ bits” (Kind 241), and recalls the “deep stylistic division” in Dog between the “fairy-tale quest” and “the focus in the choral poems” on reality (Rowe in Bold 194). Neither Isherwood nor Auden himself is actually exclusively subjective or exclusively objective, or exclusively straight or exclusively woozy. Rather they seem to have decided that each would principally exploit one or the other of such paired contrasting attitudes in the writing of collaborative texts, that each would focus on exploring one term of opposed potentialities, both terms of which actually exist within every human subject. What looks initially like an intersubjective dimension of the relationships between different parts or aspects of an Auden-Isherwood text, such as the verse and prose sections or the objectivity / subjectivity opposition in Journey, turns out to involve an important intrasubjective analogy. The objective / subjective tension corresponds to a self-division within human consciousness that approaches the condition of doubleness de Man sees in the self-duplication in irony. Together Auden and Isherwood through the fiction of their intersubjective textual oppositions represent what the contrasting tendencies of the self-divided human subject might look like. Taken as parts of a whole those tendencies suggest what an ideal ‘authentic’ human self would be if its partial aspects were fully developed.

The selves de Man describes as the inauthentic empirical self and the self-aware self of language coexist simultaneously, but their relationship tends to be represented as the relationship of a first moment of inauthentic consciousness to a second moment of reflective self-consciousness on that original inauthenticity. Irony can thus be represented as a temporal sequence involving “two stages of consciousness” (224). Through his analysis of the two-stage temporality of irony, de Man rejects literature’s capacity to lose

itself in a delusional or mystified pursuit of idealized notions of direct mimesis of reality or an immediate symbolic meaningfulness and rejects the self's desire to identify with a nonhuman reality outside of itself. De Man argues instead for literature's capacity to represent an authentic self-divided human experience of temporality (Mileur 330). De Man draws an analogy between allegory and irony, with its temporal experience of an inauthentic before and a self-conscious after, in so far as both involve a constitutive reference to a temporally anterior moment from which they draw their meaning. Like irony, allegory necessarily admits "the existence of a temporality that [. . .] relates to its source only in terms of distance and difference [. . .] Allegory and irony are thus linked in their common discovery of a truly temporal predicament" (de Man 222). De Man's association of the idea of a two-fold temporal structure inherent in allegory and irony with the idea of ironic self-duplication illuminates the poetics of Journey.

We have already noted the comparable temporal structures that characterize Isherwood's "Travel-Diary" and Auden's "In Time of War." The recurrent movement from a mystified first moment to a disenchanting second moment in Auden's poetry (a complex example of which we saw in Chapter One's discussion of XXVII's two-step turn from desire-engendered mystification to envy to law-governed disenchantment) involves the sort of temporal structure de Man ascribes to irony. De Man's discussion of irony also illuminates the two basic temporal situations developed in the alternating chapters of Isherwood's "Travel-Diary." The alternation between the immediate recording of the journey as experienced in early 1938 and the retrospective writing up of the record of the journey in late 1938 is an example of a pattern as characteristic of Isherwood's work as the mystification-disenchantment pattern is of Auden's. Retrospection is one of the defining motifs and motivations of Isherwood's *oeuvre*. This retrospective orientation is evident in

the autobiographical Lions, Kind, and Kathleen. Retrospection is also an important dimension of Isherwood's motivation and technique in Conspirators and The Memorial which look back at the effects of the Great War on Isherwood's generation, and also in Goodbye, Prater Violet, Down There, and Meeting. Isherwood typically either organizes his books so that the relationship of a later moment to the past is a prominent feature of their structures, or sets his stories in a period of his life to which he looks back from a secure temporal distance. A complex technical development of the narrative possibilities of retrospective temporal distance emerges as early as The Memorial with the temporal, causal, and narrative interrelations among its sequence of 'books' dated 1928, 1920, 1925, 1929. The crisis of the 1928-29 cusp being delayed by the retrospective interludes of 1920 and 1925.

When Fryer observes that "There is always a time delay in Isherwood's career between his experiencing a phenomenon, and his writing it out" (Isherwood 350), he sees the importance in Isherwood's work of the temporal distance between the occurrence of an event or experience and its autobiographization or fictionalization. This delay affords Isherwood the time to reflect on the past, to see a shape in events, and to correct himself, before he must present what he thinks should be understood as the true significance of his experience of events. As a writer Isherwood drew especially directly on his personal experience and on actuality for his material, but a period of reflection was an equally essential feature of his working method. Isherwood himself comments on this dimension of his work. "Toward the end of my stay in Germany, I became much more conscious of the political situation," recalls Isherwood. "The Berlin books were written with a good deal of political hindsight. I couldn't resist posing as someone who had been deeply concerned with the fate of Germany right from the day of my arrival. That simply wasn't true. To

begin with, I was both indifferent and ignorant. And even as late as 1932, I find that I [. . .] spelt Hitler's name wrong!" (Conversations 101). The political perspicacity of Goodbye, which is set in 1930-33, the period when Isherwood was living in Germany, but which was written after Isherwood had left Germany and not published until 1939, is in large part an effect of Isherwood's retrospective revision of his experience. This pursuit of retrospective understanding became for Isherwood a central objective not just of his writing but of his religious education. A diary entry from the forties records Isherwood's hope as he begins to live as a Vedantic monk: "I am not going to the Center to forget such places. No—if this training succeeds, I shall be able to return to [. . . any] scene of the past, with the kind of understanding which sees what they are really about" (Guru 99). Isherwood's habit of deferring comment on events and experience enabled him to render them in ways impossible in the open-ended historical uncertainty of their initial immediacy, and enabled him to present his considered and edited versions of their significance and of his own implication in them. In the case of Journey, Isherwood found himself in the uncongenial situation of having to pronounce upon matters which were not only foreign to him and towards which he was temperamentally still "both indifferent and ignorant," but matters whose ultimate significance the rapidly changing course of world events had not yet made clear. The sense of uncertainty in 1938 was indeed acute: through the months Isherwood was writing up his "Travel-Diary," heroic Kuomintang resistance dragged out the cataclysmic Battle of Wuhan, while in Spain Republican fighters held back the Nationalist advance, and Europe's whole fate hung in the balance during the Munich Crisis. When considering how developments in late 1938 bear on Isherwood's presentation of his early 1938 journey, it is important to emphasize the uncertainty of the global situation and of a situation in which Isherwood found himself trying uncharacteristically to understand his

China material without the benefits of hindsight.

The difficult immediacy of his Chinese experience, along with its confused mixes of gravity and superficiality, of the recognizable and the strange, has much to do with why Isherwood's narrative can seem tonally uneven, self-conscious, and unfocussed. Through the different temporal situations of alternating chapters Isherwood gains some perspective on his material by writing into the structure of "Travel-Diary" the necessary time delay between the experience and its representation. The temporal gap between the retrospective odd-numbered chapters one through nine, and the dated journalesque immediacy of the even-numbered chapters two through ten is an effect of Isherwood's search for the comfort of his customary time delay and a structural expression of the problematic nature of the whole project of writing Journey. The temporal contrast between the retrospective chapters and the diary-like chapters is a fictional conceit which dramatizes the temporal, existential, and epistemological situation of Isherwood and Auden as they wrote their book. This contrast does not reflect a difference in the conditions in which Isherwood composed the two sorts of chapters. For the even numbered diary-like chapters no less than the retrospective odd numbered chapters are the result of Isherwood's rewriting of the original diary Auden and he kept in China. As such both are equally removed from the immediacy of the China experience and of the original diary. Both are informed by the imperfect hindsight possible at a remove of a few months. The temporal alternation in the text is a fiction which relates not just to Isherwood's problems and proclivities as a writer, but which emphasizes the uncertain relationship between the immediate context of early 1938 and the minimally retrospective context of late 1938, and should remind readers of the acutely experienced political crisis out of which both Auden and Isherwood composed Journey.

The problems of the minimally retrospective qualities of his situation and of the

fictional status of the book's alternating temporal structure come to the fore in the beginning and ending of Journey. Isherwood begins chapter one paradoxically with the more settled point of view of retrospection, and ends the journey in chapter ten not with an achieved retrospective assuredness, but with a diary-like entry in the present tense with the final emphases on the uncertainty of events and on the moral demands of existential immediacy. Where de Man seeks to show the unsurpassability of the time- and language-constituted ironic second self, Isherwood leaves us in the end, not with the retrospective secondary self of fiction, but with a representation of an empirical self that—like Auden's wanderers at the end of XXVII—has not moved beyond its initial and immediate dilemmas and has no reliable way of getting beyond them. Like that of XXVII, the ending of "Travel-Diary" is crucial to Journey and leaves us having to decide what to make of that empirical self and with little idea of how the real Christopher Isherwood will proceed.

Journey's non-temporal binary structures of caption / photo, photo / photo, photo / text, verse / prose, order / disorder, objective / subjective, and Auden / Isherwood also exhibit qualities de Man ascribes to the doubling of the self in irony. These multiple ironic dualities reinforce one another. Each such dual structure and all such structures taken together set up a semantic dynamic in which there is no resting place. None of the representations in the book possesses immediate or complete truthfulness. There is always another representation presenting an alternative experience, mode of intellection, or point of view. Although each representation is legitimate and none is ever entirely rendered superfluous, none can stand on its own or convey anything final. Instead we are perpetually referred to an alternative moment or mode of representation for a new perspective that comments on or differs from the other. Together the different moments and modes might be said to complete one another, but there is no ultimate completion—just an unfinished

process of moving between partial representations and partial responses. The unending quality of this dynamic recalls the infinite regress at the end of XXVII. It is consistent too with de Man's conception of the dynamics of irony: "Irony engenders a temporal sequence of acts of consciousness which is endless [. . .] irony is not temporary [. . .] but repetitive, the recurrence of a self-escalating act of consciousness" (220). For de Man, irony involves a permanent self-consciousness (218) and a temporality "that allows for no end, no totality" (222).

De Man is describing the modern ironic species known as Romantic Irony. This is an irony which, like Journey's ceaseless binary dynamics, involves a "gesture of infinite self-reflection" (Simpson 14). The idea of Romantic or "novelistic" irony is obviously apposite to Journey: "Vacillating in this way between prophetic self-assertion and empathetic self-effacement, the romantic poet is necessarily an ironist, flickering like Hamlet between the imperial scope of the mind and its comic condemnation to the prison of the body.' The 'terminal gods' in this 'double plot' [. . .] are Ariel and Caliban" (Enright 13n). This dualistic characterization applies directly to Journey. There the prophetic tone, the imperial scope of mind, Ariel's capacity for artistic invention, are all Auden's; while the self-diminishment, the comedy of the body, and Caliban's grossness are Isherwood's. This is complicated by the questions of whether Auden's capacity for impersonal objectivity should be called self-effacement or whether it is a sign of the assertive self-confidence of the prophetic pole of irony; and conversely complicated by the questions of whether Isherwood's egocentricism should be seen as a kind of self-assertion, or whether his self-deprecating preoccupation with his own responses is best described as a kind of self-effacement. In Journey, the vacillation of irony occurs within a four-poled matrix defined by Isherwoodian and Audenesque varieties of both self-assertion and self-effacement.

If de Man's conception of the endless self-consciousness of irony and the infinite instability of Romantic irony are remarkably consonant with Journey, the book's system of irony-generating polarities can also be described using Booth's classifications of irony. In so far as its "ironic undercuttings are [. . .] innumerable" (Booth 250), Journey involves "infinite irony." In Booth's terms, the real question is whether the open-ended ironies of Journey are instances of an "infinite unstable irony" in which there are no stable propositions or positions at all (240) and the irony is "infinite in the negation of meanings" (250); or whether those ironies are rather instances of "infinite stable irony" in which the 'infinite' underminings of irony are conducted in a genuine universe [where] value and commitments need not finally be absurd" (268).

Without cleaving to this Boothean dichotomy, it seems clear that in Journey, we are presented with something like the infinite stable irony that Booth describes. De Man warns against the error of "seeing irony as a preliminary movement toward a recovered unity, as a reconciliation of the self with the world by means of art" or as "the prefiguration of a future recovery" (219). Indeed, there would seem to be no completion, no final restful moment of reconciliation and harmonization involved in Journey's overlapping sets of binary dynamics. In so far, however, as de Man argues that the ironic self must have priority over the inauthentic empirical self and must refrain from trying to move "toward a recovered unity," in so far as the de Manian ironist must refrain from making "the leap out of language, the domain of the ironic, into faith" (Mileur 334), there the ironists Auden and Isherwood and their ironical Journey begin to diverge from de Man's ideal of an infinitely ironic subject, and move instead towards a problem which recalls Booth's "stable-infinite" irony.

Where de Man promotes an ideal of ironic self-consciousness and its associated

two-stage temporal manifestations within which ironic temporality, the mind appears as “infinitely agile” (Mileur 333), Auden and Isherwood in Journey reveal the problem of the tensions between, on the one hand, recognitions of ironic self-consciousness and of complex temporality, on the other, and authentic desires for an impossible authenticity and for a recovered unity (334). Contra de Man, Mileur insists on the self’s desires “to move beyond and outside itself” (334) to achieve some sort of oneness or in-touchness with the world as essential to authentic irony. Journey moves toward both a revelation of the *necessity* of the self moving beyond and outside itself, and a revelation in “Commentary” of the reconciliation of the self and the world. Mileur argues that de Man “does not seem to take into account” that any choice of irony and its temporality over such desires and requirements will remain haunted “by the sense of inauthenticity arising from repressed desire” (330). Mileur argues further that authentic temporality and authentic desire “are deeply at odds and any choice between them, however qualified, is plagued by a sense of incompleteness” (330). In contrast to de Man, Auden and Isherwood’s turn to irony in Journey does not cause them to forget that the desire from which irony draws its parasitical strength is precisely a desire for “a reconciliation of the self with the world” (de Man 219). Like Mileur, they recognize that authentic desire means that the ironist feels the need “to make the leap out of language, the domain of the ironic, into faith.” At the crucial moments that are the endings of XXVII and of the “Travel-Diary,” Journey exposes the unreal identifications that such a desire is tempted by, while simultaneously acknowledging the unironic reality of desire. Although Mileur’s de Manian description of “the infinite play of signifiers, the perpetual deferral of meaning, the ironizing of ironies of irony” (336) is suggestive of the interactions of the multiple levels and instances of irony in Journey, Mileur’s recognition that “irony returns us to the self’s predicament as unhappy

consciousness, striving to move beyond and outside itself” (334) describes just as well the ironists’ predicament in Journey. Auden and Isherwood, even after their elaborations of the infinite truths of ironic consciousness, return at the end of XXVII and of the “Travel-Diary” to our desire-driven and anxious present where ‘we *live* in freedom by necessity.’ Without the concern at those moments with the authenticity of the desire to move beyond and outside ourselves, without its concern with the necessity of our moving beyond our text-based infinitely ironic fictive selves, Journey’s representations of our authentic complex temporal predicament would itself be inauthentic. Without the book’s problematization of that desire, the “perpetual deferral of meaning, the ironizing of ironies of irony” in Journey would constitute, as Mileur comments, “a perpetual flight” that simply reveals the persistence of our desire to move beyond ourselves, to know the world we live in, and in some way coincide with it (336). Beyond the negative revelations of our authentic and unrealizable desires at the end of XXVII and “Travel-Diary,” it is in Auden’s “Commentary” that Auden attempts to come to conclusive positive reconciliations of the self and the world, and of authentic human desire with the infinitude and temporality of irony.

Modern philosophers of irony have from the beginning recognized this tension between an awareness of the infinite quality of Romantic irony and the inevitability of our need to reconcile ourselves with the world. Fichte “differentiates himself from [. . .] what was popularly recognized as irony, which he regarded simply as an elaborate self-protection and an avoidance of *action*, one of the most important obligations of enlightenment. Self-reflection is absolutely necessary [. . .] but it should never remain merely speculative.” From a Fichtean perspective, the play of irony with its “unsettled hovering between ‘authority and mere emptiness’ is [. . .] a necessary step” that “impels us toward determinate

knowledge. (Simpson 71-2). In this view, self-reflection through the infinite play of irony must be engaged with the moral seriousness of “action” and “determinate knowledge,” those linked “obligations of enlightenment.” Similarly the infinite ironies of Journey, rather than arbitrary play, are a function of real moral concerns that are multivalent and overlapping. There are the pressing problems of how one should respond to the war between Japan and China and to the issue of War in general; how one should respond when confronted with the victims of war and with the poorest of the world’s poor; how one should regard the contradictory international alliances and enmities engendered by the war, those critical, but ideologically-unlikely coalitions, on the one hand, of Imperial England and the British sphere of influence, Nationalist China, the Soviet Union, and the USA, and on the other hand, of Imperial Japan, Nazi Germany, and Fascist Italy. Other ethical issues are familiar to us from our discussion of XXVII. These involve the problems of comprehending a homosexual experience in the terms of a heterosexual conceptual order and of weighing in the balance the respective philosophical claims of religion and contemporary politics. For Auden Journey represents a turning point in both political and religious orientation, as he turns away from a 1930s Marxist inflected perspective to a more explicitly Christian point of view, and a turning point in so far as he presents a bold voluntarist view of sexuality. As we shall see in our discussion of his “Travel-Diary” similar turns are occurring in Journey for Isherwood. These ethical turns in Auden and Isherwood’s thinking anticipate their emigration to the United States; their adoption of a electoral republicanism in politics; and their respective religious conversions, Auden’s leap into Christian faith, and Isherwood’s retreat into monkish Vedantism with his concomitant espousal of pacificism during the Second World War. Auden and Isherwood’s ethical turn in Journey also anticipate the adoption of a more openly confessional and liberationist

attitude towards homosexuality, with Isherwood posing the political problem of his gayness and Auden working through the problem in the sonnets of "In Time of War."

It is no accident that Mileur echoes Kierkegaard in speaking of the need to "leap out of language, the domain of the ironic, into faith." Auden himself, shortly after the publication of Journey, would begin to study Kierkegaard on both irony and faith and begin to adopt crucial Kierkegaardian metaphors and concepts such as that of "the leap of faith." Auden's biographical movement from 1938 through 1941, from Journey to his renewed faith, is an enactment of problems at the heart of Kierkegaard's existential philosophy and Christianity and of problems at the heart of Mileur's revision of de Man. It is in the context of these existential ethical issues that one must understand Journey's infinite ironies. The confusion and complexity of the ethical demands made upon Auden and Isherwood in China at the end of the 1930s drive the two authors to heighten the degree of the irony of their book. The hyper-reflexivity and the self-conscious literariness of Journey are directly proportional to the intensity of the ethical and political expectations regarding the two authors' ability to instruct readers about how to act with respect to the crises of the late-1930s and the Sino-Japanese war. Auden and Isherwood's fame as leaders of a literary generation and the 1930s ideal of the engaged artist combined to create activist expectations that were positively Byronic. To such expectations, Auden and Isherwood responded idiosyncratically with the comedy and skepticism of "Travel-Diary," the detachment of the sonnet sequence, and the abstruseness of "Commentary." In these respects, the literariness of Journey contrasts strongly with Agnes Smedley's intentions in her own account of the Sino-Japanese War in China Fights Back: "I beg of you to help me [edit my manuscript]," she wrote a friend, "just don't make it 'literary'" (xvii). Journey's endless ironizing and complex literariness have been seen as evasive, but they are symptoms of the real

seriousness of the choices and problems which Auden and Isherwood are confronting. We can see in Journey an enactment of an infinitely ironic consciousness faced with the need to take a leap of faith in one's engagement with the world. The critical controversies provoked by the exaggerated 'speculative hovering' of Journey's irony are inseparable from the controversies provoked by the actual ideological and biographical choices which Journey announces in Auden and Isherwood's lives and by the associated reorientations in their respective literary vocations.

There are paradoxes in the ways Auden and Isherwood attempt to solve the problems they faced. If the endless textual ironies of Journey can seem evasive, then the real world choice of both authors to move to the United States, rather than looking bold and decisive, soon ended up itself looking, once the Second World War broke out, like an illegitimate evasion of their patriotic, literary, and moral obligations. Similarly, their ideological choices and religious leaps ended up, not so much returning them to the world, as sending them into the sacred textual traditions of their respective religious faiths and into an art that was less directly engaged with actuality—the mystic Isherwood of Prater, the Audenesque Isherwood of his translation of the Bhagavad- Gita; the aesthetic, the theological, the psychological Audens of The Sea and the Mirror, Time Being, and Anxiety. One could say of Auden's religious faith that the crucifixion becomes for Auden the one event and theme by which he returns inevitably to the truth of the world, that the nails of the crucifixion become, as it were, what fixes the otherwise infinitely ironic self to the actual empirical world. The crucifixion, however, remains also a 'crucifiction,' not in so far as it may not have happened, but in so far as, like other beliefs, the crucifixion, which returns Auden to the reality of the world, is also made present by texts, with all the ironic self-conscious infinities that textuality opens up.

At the end of 1938 and the beginning of 1939, the playing out of such paradoxes and ironico-existential-ethical problems lay in Auden and Isherwood's futures. In any case, at the end of the 1930s, it was probably not principally a theoretical urgency to turn from irony to the world that was driving Auden and Isherwood away from literary secularism into religious faith. Rather, it was the finally unavoidable recognition, which Auden and Isherwood shared with other mid-twentieth-century religious converts, that uncontainable, unprecedented evil was abroad in the world and the concomitant recognition that ideologically only hoary old religious doctrines seemed to address adequately the "persistent problem of evil" (Cunningham 466).

The recognition of the ethical, moral, and political seriousness of the world 'stabilizes' Journey's infinite ironies; this is not to say it simplifies them. The irony is stabilized by the recognition of the force of the desire and the ineluctability of the need to try to reconcile the self to the world, somehow. The irony is stabilized, though not diminished, by the recognition of the reality of the moral seriousness of the human crises that the world involves. The first of these stabilizing ethical recognitions is implicit in the persistence with which Auden and Isherwood return us to the problems of the relationship of the self and the world; the second derives from the nature of the subject matter which they must confront. Both recognitions are not just matters of theme and subject matter, but rather are supported by technical aspects of the text. Structural and dialogic features of Auden and Isherwood's collaboration operate to confirm such ethical recognitions and to stabilize or contain Journey's infinite irony.

The ironies of Journey may be infinite, but the ultimate implications of such an infinitely ironic text are, according to Booth, of two kinds:

There are really two sharply distinct ways in which the vision of an infinite series of ironies, every one undermined by further ironies, can be turned upon

life and the universe [. . .] We can say that all truths can be undermined with the irony of contrary truths *either* because the universe is essentially absurd and there is no such thing as coherent truth *or* because man's powers of knowing are inherently and incurably limited and partial. (267)

One or the other of these sorts of contrasting visions may be accepted as truer than the other sort, but works that articulate either of these visions of the universe will likely be equally involved in potentially untenable rhetorical, textual, and ironic convolutions. For its part, Journey certainly acknowledges the possible absurdity of man's relation to the cosmos in Auden's description of "the galaxy [as] free for ever to revolve like an enormous biscuit" (Prose 1: 680); and acknowledges the apparent meaninglessness of things in Isherwood's surreal lists and his recurrent sense of incomprehensible formlessness; and acknowledges the signs of the futility of man's various self-transformations in the sonnet sequence's catalogue of unviable human types. Signs of the absurdity of the universe and human life are certainly there, but tentative contra-indications to those absurd possibilities are there as well. The sonnet sequence does end with a lasting epiphany, however disillusioning it may be, about the nature of an actual human freedom that gives a terrible meaning to the absurdity. Isherwood does manage to find a minimal retrospective purchase from which to order his experience and does manage to raise his own version of Lenin's urgent question "What is to be done?" Auden does manage to sketch in "Commentary" an ethical program for humanity and an image of a human hermeneutic that is not absurd. Consequently, while acknowledging the possibilities that the 'universe' and human affairs can be absurd, the book also implies that it is possible after all to achieve or discover something meaningful.

Booth discerns a radical difference between the "local underminings" of irony and the unqualified cosmic assertion that the universe—not just this or that effort of man to grasp it—is absurd" (253). He argues further that "if the 'infinite' underminings of irony are conducted in a genuine universe—if value and commitments need not finally be absurd—then

differences in our interpretations make a difference; though no formulations will ever be fully adequate, some will be more nearly adequate than others, and the quest for truth and for truer interpretations will itself be meaningful” (Booth 268). The works of the writer for whom the quest for truth remains meaningful, in spite of the infinite underminings of irony, “may in some respects resemble Beckett’s” (Beckett being for Booth the ultimate example of a writer whose work seeks to reveal the absolute absurdity of the universe). As in Beckett’s work, “every proposition will be doubted as soon as uttered, then undercut by some other proposition that in turn will prove inadequate.” Unlike Beckett however, for the writer whose quest remains meaningful, “both the effort to understand and the particular approximations, inadequate as they are, will be worthwhile: the values are stable” (269). With these distinctions of Booth’s in mind, and observing Journey’s gestures toward meaningfulness, we may conclude that, in the end, Journey’s irony tends to a revelation not of the ultimate absurdity of things, but rather of human imperfection, what Booth describes as our “inherently and incurably limited and partial” powers of knowing.

Given the stability of the universe and of value, and given the limitations and partiality of human knowing, Booth holds that “the true philosopher lives in a self-corrective dialogue, in which the inadequacies of one attempt [at knowledge and understanding] lead inevitably to another one and then to yet another”(275). From a Boothian perspective, the infinite irony in Journey is an essential part of an ongoing self-corrective dialogue. In Booth’s terms, the irony, though infinite, can ultimately be seen as stable. It is not that Auden and Isherwood succeed in revealing the truth of the universe, or even the truth of their own ideological existential moment, or that humanity achieves finally a fulfilment of its nature. Rather the dialogic ironies of Journey are part of a meaningful process because they have the capacity to correct or qualify inadequate, partial

representations of the truth. This ironic, dialogic, self-corrective meaningfulness is a key structural feature of Journey. In their mutual ironic imperfection, they “are articulated to error” as XXVII’s line has it with its implicitly modest hope. Such a self-corrective meaningfulness is perhaps an inherent potential of all literary collaborations. Other collaborators may opt for a single-voiced, united-front literary production that emphasizes aesthetic oneness and ideological agreement, they may resist ironic tension and intersubjective differences, but in Journey Auden and Isherwood give much more play to the differences between their interests, perspectives, and sensibilities. Their differences are not, however, a comic or tragic demonstration of the absurd impossibility of comprehension. This emphasis on difference and dialogue contrasts markedly not only with de Man’s idea of a mistaken identification with their inauthentic empirical selves, but also with mid-twentieth century totalitarian political and philosophical predilections which tended to insist on the necessity of ideological conformity and collective submission to a single party line. Auden and Isherwood’s insistence on the dynamic and open dialogue of differences constitutes perhaps the book’s real political and philosophical position. Certainly, it is the book’s ironic intersubjective tensions that transform their collaboration into Boothean self-corrective dialogue.

A later haiku of Auden’s offers a useful gloss on the Auden-Isherwood dialogue in Journey: “When truly brothers / men don’t sing in unison / but in harmony” (Collected 885). The collaborative authorship of Journey approaches a condition of unison only momentarily and very infrequently. The collaboration might, however, be said to involve a condition of complex intersubjective harmony that is capacious enough to accommodate a high degree of counterpoint and of ironic dissonance. The idea of a brotherhood based on an ideal of harmony rather than one of unity is useful in describing the relationship of Auden and

Isherwood in Journey. That relationship needs to be characterized in several different ways. At times, as in the industrial metaphors of XXVI and in Isherwood's accounts of their joint journalistic endeavours, it appears as a productive relationship of working partners. Implicitly, in XXVI and elsewhere in Auden's sonnet sequence as well as in the intertextual, structural embrace of their respective contributions to the book, the relationship has a vague, almost unspoken, erotic dimension. The idea that their relationship is based on a condition of brotherhood which insists that their voices and perspectives are not identical is also important. This is a condition of friendship which permits the acknowledgement of differences, even of a resentful rivalry, between them, without risking a degeneration into the destructiveness of a relationship of rival brothers. The relationship of Auden and Isherwood in Journey can result in a Boothean self-corrective dialogue because the relationship is characterized by a division of labour within a shared project; characterized by erotic entanglement; and characterized by a condition of brotherhood or friendship capable of encompassing a high degree of intersubjective tension. Each of these dimensions of the relationship proceeds from the common assumption that the relationship derives from both parties and that neither party shall violate the other or betray the involvement of the other. Exemplary as the Auden-Isherwood dialogue is as a philosophical and political model it is easy to see that its openness is limited by the shared gender, class, sexual, and national identities of its two interlocutors. There is a sameness underwriting the differences that their dialogue can tolerate and promote. More jarring and difficult corrective dialogues are easy to imagine. To Auden and Isherwood's credit, they do explicitly acknowledge Others who remain excluded from Journey's meaningful productive dialogue, namely, women, excluded almost completely from Auden and Isherwood's 1930's male and homosexual perspective; and the Chinese, excluded because of the gulf of incomprehensibility between

Western and Chinese categories.

In so far as the dialogue of Auden and Isherwood is self-corrective so that limited and partial attempts at understanding become part of a meaningful quest for truth, it is because of the complex mutuality of their relationship. It is because of and within this relationship that Journey's infinite ironies, instead of being experienced as a symptom that the universe is ultimately absurd, can be experienced as a necessary dissonance within a mutually enriching dialogue. Precisely because those ironies can be seen as corrective, they have a function, beyond their more immediately obvious disruptiveness, which is truth and falsehood revealing, and which, as such, has an ethically and conceptually stabilizing effect on both the self and its perception of the world.

Booth's use of Beckett as an example of a writer whose irony tends to demonstrate that "the universe is essentially absurd" suggests a contrast to the Auden and Isherwood of Journey in the form of Godot's Vladimir and Estragon. The idea of the infinite underminings of Beckett's irony revealing the absurdity of the universe is a useful contrast to the more hopeful role of irony in the Auden-Isherwood collaborations. In contrast to the dialogue of Vladimir and Estragon, that of Auden and Isherwood in Journey is meaningfully corrective. In contrast to the absurdity of Godot, the universe and values, including the value of friendship, in Journey seem stable despite the infiniteness of ironic reflection, despite the critical destabilizing tendencies of Auden and Isherwood. In contrast to Beckett's devastated landscapes, the war-torn scenes in agricultural China seem a freakish aberration, and the sinister Europe of The Dog, F6, and Frontier remains recognizable and not yet irredeemable. The contrast is between Beckett's post-War, post-Holocaust, post-atomic bomb sense of *anomie* and Auden and Isherwood's sense prior to the war that social and political engagement were urgent and that it was possible to discover how to act

responsibly.

The infiniteness of the irony in Journey, to adopt freely Hegel's distinction, is a good infinity. It would be a bad infinity if it were only a destroyer of meaning, if all it did was shatter the coherence of all representation whatsoever and deny all possibility of a valid perspective, if it resulted only in a series of isolated, discontinuous instances of ironic negativity. But jarring, disruptive, and open-ended though it is, the infinite irony in Journey is a good infinity. Its infinite irony is dialectical, corrective, relational, and productive. It does not operate to deny individual or cultural perspectives, so much as it operates to define and question them against other perspectives. It does not operate to nullify particular representations, so much as it operates to qualify them by revealing their incompleteness and partiality. It does not operate to destroy meaningfulness, so much as it operates to reveal a larger, more comprehensive field or world of meanings. It does not operate to render obsolete the desire to know and coincide with the world, so much as it operates to acknowledge the difficult reality of that desire.

This contrast between good and bad infinities applies to both de Man and Booth's discussions of irony as well. Clearly the idea of a relational, dialectical good infinity is consistent with the notion of a text in which the ironies are infinite, but which, whether through a self-corrective dialogue or other means, also involves a reaffirmation of a stability in the universe and of values. Even de Man's conception of the infinite irony of the self-duplicated subject can be thought of as a good infinity in so far as it involves the subject in a manageable permanent processes of revelation regarding the meaning of its selfhood, or rather the potential meanings of the two selves of its duplicated self, and of revelation regarding both its state of actual inauthenticity and its fitful gestures towards a condition of impossible authenticity. Booth may be anxious about saving the stability of the world and

value; de Man may be concerned to identify a doubleness within the subject as the source of an infiniteness in irony: for both, however, irony is part of an infinite dialectic which reveals the condition of the self in the world. Positive examples of the infinite dialectic are found in the infinite regress in XXVII that reveals the original and permanent condition of human freedom; in the dynamic interpenetration of subjective and objective in the relationship of Auden and Isherwood; and as we shall see, in "Commentary" in the constructive feedback loop of a hermeneutical messianic relationships of humanity to itself.

De Man insists on the importance of the distinction between an imperfect, vulgar irony which is intersubjective and what he considers a more elevated philosophical irony which occurs intrasubjectively as a result of the splitting of the self into an inauthentic empirical self and a self constituted in language and fiction. We have seen how the complex before and after temporality of the ironic de Manian self structures the texts of both Auden and Isherwood. However, in the intersubjective relationship of Auden and Isherwood in Journey, the different emphases and roles of the respective authors complement each other so that the intersubjective outer duality of the Auden-Isherwood relationship also represents or 'writes large' the sorts of intrasubjective inner duality that de Man places at the origin of ironic infinitude.

It is clearly possible to analyze the inner structures of Auden and Isherwood's respective texts in terms of de Man's version of the temporality and duality of irony; however, as we have seen, it is possible too to read the intersubjective Auden-Isherwood relationship in Journey as analogous to the intrasubjective tension of objectivity and subjectivity, or as playing out the cognitive implications of form and formlessness. The Auden-Isherwood relationship needs to be interpreted as having both intersubjective and intrasubjective significance. Because the intersubjective relationship of Auden and

Isherwood also dramatizes crucial intrasubjective issues, de Man's disparagement of intersubjective irony as he draws attention to the rigours of intrasubjective irony seems overly hasty. A more perceptive reading of the nature of irony, in Journey at least, requires that intersubjective and intrasubjective ironies be given equal interpretative play.

Besides, de Man is mistaken, not so much in his fascinating analyses of irony, but in valuing the intrasubjective over the intersubjective. Intersubjective dialogic irony is not just potentially corrective in the epistemological sense that Booth envisions; and it is not only that in Journey the intersubjective irony can be related fairly directly to what are properly intrasubjective dualities. Rather, it is a question of intersubjective irony having the potential to reveal a subject's state of ethical and psychological inauthenticity or incompleteness to a degree that is at least as noteworthy as the intrasubjective irony of the de Manian split self. In fact, there are good reasons for thinking that in comparison to intrasubjective irony, intersubjective irony has as great a potential effectiveness as a spur to authenticity, in life and literature, and good reasons for thinking as well that intersubjective irony is as inherently infinite as de Man argues the intrasubjective irony of the empirical and fictive selves must be. Certainly the dialogical dynamic resulting from intersubjective encounters of different sensibilities, perspectives, and discourses is necessarily disruptive, corrective, and open-ended.

Journey richly illustrates de Man's presentation of the doubling and twoness, and in particular the self-duplication, that lie at the origins of irony, and illustrates his linking of this doubling to the idea of irony's infinitude and the idea of an authentically complex human temporality. However, Journey's development of dialogic, interdiscursive, intercultural, corrective, ironic intersubjectivity counters de Man's slighter estimate of the potential of intersubjective irony. The book also validates Mileur's criticism of the

incompleteness of de Man's emphasis on irony's involvement in authentic human temporality at the expense of irony's troubled relationship to authentic, if unrealizable, human desire. What de Man does not emphasize enough, and what Journey shows at several crucial points, are the causal and dialectical relationship of desire to ironic self-consciousness, and the causal and dialectical relationship of the pressure of immediacy to the complex double temporality of irony. It is authentic desire which drives irony, and though desire may turn (in)to irony in the interest of self-understanding, desire also returns itself. Similarly, though our immediacy in the world, the imperative that we coincide somehow at some point with the world we find ourselves in, seems impossible and becomes enmeshed in a matrix of complex ironico-allegorical temporality, this does not mean that the ethical problems of the immediate therefore disappear; rather they too return—just as in Journey after the ironizing and the elaboration of complex temporal structures, Auden and Isherwood return us to the present and the immediacy of the present's undeniable ethical pressures and undecidable existential choices.

In Journey, in XXVII, at the end of "Travel-Diary," and in "Commentary," the tensions of desire and irony, of action and speculation, of immediacy and complex temporality, reveal the unforgiving starkness of the moral dilemmas Auden and Isherwood face. These dialectical tensions reveal the moments of their necessary ethical leaps out of irony and into the world. It is not that irony must be left behind at the ethical moment in the world, but rather that the ethical epiphany and moment occur in contexts of infinite irony and that the infinite irony occurs in a context of ethical deliberation and decision. This tension of complex irony and immediate desire, for Auden and Isherwood, is still productive and revelatory. They can multiply ironic oppositions indefinitely, and make those forms of ironic doubleness crucial to the poetics of Journey because for them irony is

driving Journey towards the achievement of what is desired.

A DISTANT MIRROR

There is in Journey's reflexivity, with its multiplication of ironic or contradictory pairings and its demonstration that any point of view or truth claim has a counterpoint, something analogous to the relation of the West to China. Leys illuminates the cultural and epistemological dimensions of Journey's self-relexive engagement with China:

du point de vue occidental, la Chine est tout simplement *l'autre pôle de l'expérience humaine*. Toutes les autres grandes civilisations sont soit mortes (Égypte, Mésopotamie, Amérique précolombienne), ou trop proches de nous (cultures islamiques, Inde) pour pouvoir offrir un contraste aussi total, une altérité aussi complète, une originalité aussi radicale que la Chine. C'est seulement quand nous considérons la Chine que nous pouvons enfin prendre une plus exacte mesure de notre propre identité et que nous commençons à percevoir quelle part de notre héritage relève de l'humanité universelle, et quelle part ne fait que refléter de simples idiosyncrasies indo-européennes. La Chine est cet Autre fondamental sans la rencontre duquel l'Occident ne saurait devenir vraiment conscient des contours et des limites de son Moi culturel. [. . .] le voyage en Chine [est] finalement un "voyage au fond de la connaissance de soi." (60-1)

For both Isherwood and Auden this journey to self-knowledge and to the limits of their 'cultural selves' is a destination integral to their journey to China.

Critics who fault Auden and Isherwood for failing to understand China—"somehow his travel diary disappointed me badly," writes Iris Wilkinson, "He's written of China as from Clapham—the Far East delusion and the instinctive colour difference, I suppose" (Wilkinson letter to A.A. Irvine 13-4)—mistake an essential point of Journey. Isherwood, by focussing on his misconceptions and his ignorance, by focussing on the gap between actual Chinese behaviour and the behaviour he expects based on the "traditions" of "European stage-Chinese" (Prose 1: 506), by focussing on the tension between Chinese conditions and his all too English reflexes, is not engaged in the sort of sympathetic-empathetic identification with China which is so moving, as well as itself potentially

delusional, in the case of Wilkinson's pseudonymous Dragon Rampant, or, as we shall see, in the cases of Agnes Smedley and Rewi Alley. Rather, as much as Isherwood is engaged in the writing of a book about China, he is also engaged in a reflective act of self-criticism. Isherwood's subject is the incongruence, not the fusion, of himself and this other place. For Auden and Isherwood, the encounter with China is the occasion not chiefly for an understanding of China but for the understanding of oneself, of one's *Moi culturel*. There is an aesthetico-poetic analogy here, involving, on the one hand, the insistence on the difference between Isherwood's cultural self and China's cultural self, and, on the other hand, the insistence on the differences between Auden and Isherwood within their intersubjective, self-corrective dialogue. In the case of both the Isherwood-China and the Isherwood-Auden relationships, irony and comedy are two effects of the insistence on the differences between the two perspectives involved, and both signal a refusal of an unreal, delusional suppression of the differences between the two entities, a refusal of their fusion into a single voice or experience. This insistence on difference and this openness to ironic duality make possible the self-corrective dialogue which Booth calls truly philosophical and the self-reflectiveness which is such a prominent dimension of Journey. It is entirely appropriate that the reflexivity, self-consciousness, and irony of Journey unfold under a Chinese star; the book's endlessly ramifying reflexivity is an exemplary aspect of Auden and Isherwood's response to the radical cultural Other which Leibniz called the "Anti-Europe".

François Jullien's observation that "La Chine n'a pas développé sa pensée morale autour du choix, de la tentation, de la transgression, bref elle s'est passée de cette grande mise en scène du mal, fondée sur la liberté, qu'a dramatisée l'Occident" (31) reveals Auden's probing of this ethical philosophical complex in "In Time of War," along with

Isherwood's satirical engagement with the same complex in "Travel-Diary," as an expression of their attempt at cultural self-understanding against the backdrop of a radically different Chinese civilization. Their dramatization of a complex which is crucially Western (a "grand 'Occident'", remarks Jullien, encompassing Indian and Islamic versions of the Choice-Temptation-Transgression-Freedom-Evil complex) is an expression of their disorienting, self-reflective encounter with the non-Westernness of China.

In Leys' conception of the relation of China and the West, the special significance of China for the West derives from the facts that China is a living civilizational equal of the West and at a polar extreme of otherness from the West (unlike various vanished cultures or the more proximate Indian and Islamic cultures). Granting Leys this, we note that the deadness of ancient Egypt is specifically alluded to in "The Sphinx" as the travellers pass in Journey beyond the limits and origins of the Western world, and note as well that Isherwood would soon begin his spiritual migration to India. However, we also note that after their encounter with China in 1938—and in spite of Auden's avowal that "like everyone else, apparently, who has ever been there, if only for a few days, I shall be fascinated for the rest of my life by China and the Chinese" (Prose 2: 35)—the more radical human alterity of China without a knowledge of which, implies Leys, Western self-knowledge remains partial, if not impossible, seems to fall permanently off their maps. Though China itself may have fallen off the map, China is not in Journey merely a backdrop against which the dialogue of Auden and Isherwood can occur at a critical moment in their respective developments. Rather China is integral to that critical moment. The stark world-turned-upside-downness of the differences between China and the West sets in motion the reflexive dynamic in which Isherwood and Auden call into question themselves, their cultural and historical assumptions, their epistemological categories, and their understanding of the

world. If “the distance” is a mirror that allows the traveller to see his face in “The Voyage,” and if the greater the distance, the clearer the mirror, then Auden and Isherwood have chosen the mirror of all mirrors in which to regard their own Western faces. From the hyper-reflexivity of Journey Auden and Isherwood each emerge transformed, with a clearer sense, if not immediately of what the nature of his mature work should be and of what he thinks is his essential self, yet certainly with a clearer idea of what his own face really looks like and a clearer idea of the sort of person and writer he is not.

CHAPTER 5

THE SENSE OF AN ENDING

ENDINGS, TURNINGS, AND NEW BEGINNINGS

The unifying focus of my reading of Journey is that of its ending. Examining how Journey ends is a critical question for comprehending the book as a whole. The aspects of the poetics of the book sketched so far, the critical perspectives evident in the discussions which follow, the themes brought to light in our reading of XXVII, all are relevant to Auden and Isherwood's thematic and structural insistence on the problem of Journey's ending. If this single problem is the recurrent focus of my reading of the book, the formal and ideological issues foregrounded in Journey's unfolding of the problem of how it might end, and in the way it actually does end, provide the complex matter for my interpretation.

Journey is a book that keeps returning to the issue of endings. A book obsessed with its own ending, it is not a work that ends well. In this it resembles the collaborative dramas in which Auden and Isherwood display an incapacity to bring their plays to a satisfactory close. Journey's topical subject matter necessarily resists closure in so far as the outcomes of the Sino-Japanese War and the contemporary world crisis were in 1938 unknowable. Auden elevates to a general historical principle the uncertainty of their Chinese journey when he retrospectively revises the opening line of XXI from "The life of man is never quite completed" to "Our global story is not yet completed" in "Sonnets from China" (Collected 192). Historical, this radical open-endedness is also ideological and structural. What the authors seem to be saying about crucial areas of concern, like politics, sex, and religion, they find not just difficult to say, but at this point in their lives almost unsayable, and to some extent perhaps, even unthinkable. Both authors had been wrestling for the better part of a decade with the ideological and existential difficulties that animate Journey, and would wrestle with them for decades to come. Much that is implicit in the book they are able to make explicit only later. Still, Journey is a kind of culmination, a summing up of

their ideological and personal trajectories through the thirties, and an early revelation of the orientation of their work to come.

It is easier to accept Journey as an end to the thirties than as a prelude to the later work, since it marks the end of so many things: the end of the Auden and Isherwood collaborations; the end of any ambiguity regarding their relationship with Communism; for many, even now, the end of the integrity of their youthful careers and of the coherence of their overall work; the end of their hopes for peace in the world; the end of the 1930s. With a war, and very possibly global war, as a destination, it is no wonder the book's authors shy away from arriving. The title Journey to a War describes the whole dread-filled itinerary of these authors through the 1930s. The book is the last chapter in the story of its young authors' struggles with the problems of knowing that theirs is a destination they wish were otherwise, that the ultimate end of the 1930s is a war which few want and for which only the worst are ready. Theirs is a fearful destination they can predict only too well. With their childhood memories of the Great War, Eliot's "In my beginning is my end" signals for them not a completion, but the inevitable return of an unimaginable trauma.

For all those reasons, as one considers Auden and Isherwood's approach to War and their coming to the end of their wanderings through the 1930s, it has been easy to take Journey simply as a final (and weak) instalment in the progression of the British phases of their careers, after which follows a radical break occasioned by their move to the United States. It is, however, when one reads the book as a prelude to the later work that the book begins to take on a 'new life' of its own. More than just an ending, Journey points at important new beginnings in the work and lives of both writers—new beginnings in their erotic, political, and religious outlooks that were scarcely acknowledgeable within the ideological and discursive limits they had hitherto established for their work. The

perspectives implicit in Journey are usually associated with the long American-based phases of Auden and Isherwood's careers. For it was after they moved to the United States that they articulated more or less unequivocally their new religious and political points of view. As sometimes happens in sonnets, however, the crucial turns in their careers that are usually associated with their move to the U.S. actually occur somewhat earlier than they are supposed to have. Their infamous breaks with their youthful careers and their controversial new beginnings are already occurring with Journey. Auden and Isherwood's last collaborative work is a prelude that announces—by implication and by omission, obliquely, inchoately, tentatively—their imminent religious, political, and moral turns.

Journey embodies the paradox of an ending which is a new beginning. "Every end in history," Hannah Arendt notes, "necessarily contains a new beginning." In its purely temporal aspect, this paradox is obvious, but the living meaning of the paradox springs from the conditions of the endings and new beginnings in question. Pursuing the paradox further, Arendt identifies the existential and historical meaning of a work like Journey: "this [new] beginning," she writes, "is the promise, the only 'message' which the end can ever produce. Beginning, before it becomes a historical event, is the supreme capacity of man; politically, it is identical with man's freedom" (Origins of Totalitarianism 478-9). Even if Journey appears to be organized around the idea of its ending, it is in the new beginnings that Auden and Isherwood announce that we must read the message of that end. Deciphering that message, we find that Arendt's insistence on the implication of man's capacity for freedom in those new beginnings coincides with the principal concern of Auden and Isherwood's last collaborative work. For the promises and new beginnings inherent in Journey's ending are a testament to political freedom and an existential act of human freedom.

An ending which is a new beginning is not an end, but a turning point. Journey is

not only representative of major turning points in twentieth-century political ideology and history, it also marks major ideological turning points in the work and lives of both Auden and Isherwood. This idea of a turn as a new beginning is a prominent trope in Auden's work. Auden's belief in the virtue of turnings and new beginnings is an important moral motivation for the many stylistic, formal, and ideological changes that characterize his work. We have seen also the particular emphasis given to the turn in the sonnets of "In Time of War," and the way those emphatic turns register Auden's discovery of the ethical rhetorical pattern that will characterize his mature poetry. Just as Arendt associated people's capacity for new beginnings with their capacity for freedom, so Auden's discovery of the conceptual and moral significance of the turn in the sonnets of "In Time of War" occurs in a sequence whose major theme is the history of human freedom. Stan Smith notes the centrality of the trope of turning in Auden's work throughout the 1930s. Smith sees the trope of the turn in Auden as a figure for psychological, ideological, ethical, and political conversions which have 1930s analogues in Jungian psychology and Marxist revolutionism, but for which the archetype is the religious conversion of St. Paul ("Ruined" 120-7)—an archetypal conversion which is bound up with Biblical and neo-testamentary themes of liberation. Such analogues and religious archetypes of turning, the Audenesque aesthetics and architectonics of turning, and the larger twentieth-century context of historical and ideological developments provide the contexts for evaluating the significance of the turns that occur with Journey. These contexts reveal the thoroughness with which Journey, as a book of endings, turnings, and new beginnings, engages with the authors' experience of fundamental questions of their time.

THE NONSENSE OF AN ENDING

In his study of interwar British travel books, Fussell notes that "Somehow we feel a

travel book isn't wholly satisfying unless the traveller returns to his starting point: the action, as in a quest romance, must be completed" (Abroad 208). Proceeding with this criterion, Fussell finds Auden and Isherwood's book wanting. "Nothing is rounded off: Journey simply comes to a stop, for no particular reason, with the two travellers in Shanghai, baffled over what to make of it all" (220). Fussell is right when he identifies Journey's ending as problematic, but he is wrong about where the book ends. For it is only the end of the book's second section, Isherwood's "Travel-Diary," not the book in its entirety, which can be said to simply come to a baffling stop with Rewi Alley in Shanghai.

In Abroad Fussell is dismissive of Journey: the book's "unravelling and dissolving of forms [. . .] marks the decadent stage in the course of the between-the-wars travel book." For Fussell, the sonnets of "In Time Of War" are among "Auden's very worst things," while Isherwood's prose "narrative is disturbingly discontinuous, interrupted by jokiness, nervousness over what literary mode is appropriate, and self-consciousness about the *travel book* genre itself" (219-20). This judgement of Auden's sonnets is demonstrably false; that of Isherwood's prose, more interesting than Fussell allows. In the cases of both Auden's sonnets and Isherwood's "Travel-Diary," and of Journey as a whole, Fussell's impatient dismissiveness makes for inaccuracies and preclude a sympathetic consideration of the visionary originality of what Auden and Isherwood achieve in their last collaborative work.

Still Fussell does help us comprehend some of Journey's peculiarities, particularly the fraught subject of the book's ending, or endings. Outlining the characteristic features of the genre, Fussell sees in the travel book elements of the memoir and the essay; but he ultimately situates travel books in the realm of the romance (204-10). Fussell adapts Frye in suggesting that the travel book is a "displaced" romance, a modernised myth "brought down to earth" (208). Fussell invokes Joseph Campbell's description of the three part myth of the

hero: “first, the setting out, the disjunction from the familiar; second, the trials of initiation and adventure; and third, the return and the hero’s reintegration into society” (208).

Fussell’s mistaken focus on Isherwood’s disconcerting ending in Shanghai has the virtue of drawing attention to one of the most crucial moments in the entire book, but as I will demonstrate at some length, the presentation of Alley in the conclusion of Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary” needs to be judged not just *à la Fussell* in terms of the romance imperatives of the Travel Book as Quest Romance. It must be read in terms of the haphazardness of the history and the actuality into which, Fussell argues, modern travel writing displaces those romance imperatives. Furthermore, Isherwood’s baffling conclusion with Alley in Shanghai must be placed in the context of the overall structure of Journey.

Despite his low opinion of the book, Fussell articulates a perspective from which we can reevaluate the narrative trajectory of Journey. For if the travel book is a displaced romance, one which is “lowered, brought down to earth, rendered credible scientifically” (Fussell 208), then Journey in the “Travel Diary” could be thought of as having been almost irremediably displaced out of the mythic pattern into an intractable worldly reality. This reality in the world of 1938 is so problematic that Isherwood in his concluding pages seems to refuse the shaping power of myth and to allow the details of reality and the confusing and disorderly data of ‘science’ to replace the myth entirely. Instead of a sense of an ending, what we get is an inconclusive socio-political analysis of the array of crises facing the people of Shanghai and China. And how familiar these crises are: the industrial exploitation of workers and children; the makeshift living conditions of refugees; the gap between Western dominated modernity and native reality; the suffering of crippled veterans. That all these are the very stuff of the modern and post-modern world goes without saying; as does their resistance to the shaping role of mythic imperatives of return and completion.

The persistence of these sorts of human degradation, suffering, and alienation testifies to the appropriateness of Isherwood's simply coming to a stop in his presentation of them, of his refusing to find a way to get beyond such tortured earthly realities and his refusing to return to the optimistic mythic pattern from which his narrative has, for Fussell, lapsed.

Nonetheless there is more to the question of the pattern of myth and romance in Journey than Fussell perceives, and later, we will consider how the pages with Alley that conclude Isherwood's "Travel-Diary" do fit into a comprehensive mythic structure.

First, however, it is important to give some sense of just how critical the question of endings is to Journey and to clarify that Fussell is indeed mistaken about so elementary a thing as where and how the book ends. For subsequent to the terminus in Shanghai in Isherwood's "Travel-Diary," the book continues with Auden's "Picture Commentary" of sixty-three photos, his sequence of twenty-seven sonnets, and his un baffled "Commentary" of ninety-three tercets and a closing quatrain. Had Fussell looked beyond the book's conspicuous 'disturbing discontinuities' to some of its thematic and structural unities, he might have been able to imagine how "Commentary" completes the book and the reintegrative stage in the myth of the hero. Just as importantly he might have considered how the book's distinct parts end, and why the authors stage so many endings, and what the interrelationships and cumulative effect of those successive endings are.

Besides Isherwood's diary's ending in Shanghai, there are in Journey four other obvious endings. There is the concluding shot in the photo essay—a portrait of a pensive young soldier. This photo is given an emphasis not just because it is the final picture in the series, but because it is larger than all the others; and because it stands on its own, isolated as each of us is before the prospect of bodily death, while all previous photos are paired two to a page, in fairly obvious relationships of contrast or complementarity. The emphaticness

of that final photo derives also from the ominousness of the photo's caption—"Unknown Soldier"—which draws attention to the mortal peril this anonymous soldier may at any time face. The conclusion of this photo commentary, the caption implies, is not the end of the subject of the final photo's story, and as for the probable brutal sad end of that story and of all that the photo essay has born witness to, it is too well-known already, not least from all those memorials dedicated in the authors' youth to the Unknown Soldiers of The Great War. The caption imbues the photo essay's conclusion with instability and a horribly ironic openendedness, and in so doing the caption transforms the soldier's handsome pensiveness into twentieth-century tragedy. The photograph itself, with its evident capacity to record, but its caption's underscoring of the photographer's and the viewer's inability to protect the subject of the photo from impending death, becomes an aspect of the tragedy. Both in its capacity to bear witness to the unknown soldier's life and in the bitter irony of its incapacity to prevent the soldier's tragedy, the photograph exemplifies *Journey's* efforts to bear witness to war and tragedies it too cannot undo.

A further concluding moment in the book occurs with the last poem in the sonnet sequence. This ending too is hardly satisfactory, if a neat closure, like a comforting romance of return, is what one desires. Instead, "we"—and, as already discussed in detail, several different first person subjective pluralities are possible here—are returned in an infinite regress to "the mountains of our choice," lost where we began, and where we must live "articled to error," envying "streams and houses that are sure." Imperfect, "we" are, and always will be, compelled to accept an anxious freedom which brings little comfort and which must remain, for us in our varying individual and collective identities, forever open-ended.

Even before the programmatically inconclusive endings of XXVII and of "Picture

Commentary,” and the myth-baffling end of “Travel-Diary,” there has already been another unexpected, disorienting end to the beginning of the book, *Journey*’s opening sequence of poems. These six poems chart the traveller’s progress from English departure to Chinese destination. “The Voyage,” “The Sphinx,” “The Ship,” “The Traveller,” “Macao,” “Hong Kong”—the titles promise an allegorical account of the European’s journey out to meet the Exotic Oriental Other. But, it is the familiar the authors meet when they arrive in the Far East: a chintzy “Catholic Europe” in Portuguese Macao, and their privileged British selves in colonial Hong Kong. It is not just the mythic return and sense of re-integration that an ending should bring which can seem absent in *Journey*. With this initial sequence, the “setting out,” Campbell’s “disjunction from the familiar,” which should set the whole romance myth in motion, is deferred and made paradoxical by the colonial realities which the authors encounter as they arrive in China. Indeed, throughout *Journey* the authors raise the issue of beginning more often, if less elaborately, than they do that of the book’s ending.

The most conspicuous such moment occurs at the very end of Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary,” which concludes with Isherwood saying that “One doesn’t know where to start” and Alley replying emphatically that “I know where *I* should start” (634). Isherwood, however, has been playing with the idea of beginning since the very beginning. “Now it’s going to start,” says Auden as they steam into the estuary of the Pearl River; “Now *it*—whatever it was—was going to start,” repeats Isherwood (500). A quasi-Heideggerian “being-about-to-start” (538) describes a basic existential condition that Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary” never overcomes, just as Auden and Isherwood never satisfactorily arrive at the front that is supposed to be the destination of their journey. Auden and Isherwood insist on the difficulties of perceiving just when and where their journey begins, but it is the problem of conceiving of an ending, an existential having-to-come-to-an-end, that really dominates

Journey, to the point that the entire book is structured around a series of endings.

In the endings of the opening section, the photo commentary, and the sonnet sequence, Auden diminishes or undoes any incipient sense of an ending, just as Fussell complains Isherwood's "Travel-Diary" does. With the opening sequence, Auden brings us face to face not with the disjunctive Chineseness of his destination, but with his imperial European origin. With the final caption of the "Picture Commentary," he points us beyond the Unknown Soldier's immediate photogenic present to his unknown and unknowable future. With XXVII at the end of the sonnet sequence, he simultaneously returns us to XXVII's opening situation; to the original unresolvable cosmic and moral dilemmas of "In Time Of War;" and to the openings both of Isherwood's "Travel Diary" and of Journey as a whole. As with the ending of Isherwood's "Travel Diary," the first three endings Auden is responsible for frustrate rather than assuage our desire to see things rounded off.

The problem of endings is a central thematic and formal preoccupation in Auden and Isherwood. Of the multiple revisions to the ending of F6, Auden eventually admitted "we never did get that ending right" (cited in Carpenter 217), and Mendelson details the persistence of their difficulties devising endings for their plays (for The Dog see Plays 554, 573-597; for F6, 632-652; for Frontier, 655), but their problems with endings are not signs of mere incompetence. In their collaborations, and especially in Journey, there is a simultaneous rehearsal and refusal of everything that the idea of an ending implies. McDiarmid observes that "Auden and Isherwood's resistance to giving final endorsement to any particular resolution indicates a greater confidence in disestablishing than in establishing (or asserting) authority" and observes further that to "create some form of closure would be to affirm a fixed set of ideas" ("Liberating" 139). McDiarmid proposes that the "only discernible ideology is subversion." For McDiarmid, such an ideology of

subversion explains “the authors’ reluctance to assume authority” and explains why to Auden and Isherwood the “notion of a completed, stabilized script seems to have been anathema” (138). Journey’s problematization of the idea of an ending is consistent with their work elsewhere. Isherwood makes the endings of Mr. Norris and Goodbye stark moments of ethical discomfiture. In Anxiety, Auden reprises Journey’s technique of multiple endings, giving the poem four contrasting endings, the respective Jewish and Christian meditations of Rosetta and Malin, the narrator’s closing lines, and the omitted “Anthem” (v. Gottlieb 128-9, 130). The issue of Journey’s endings is directly relevant to the infinite ironic restlessness that we observed in the structure of Journey and to Auden and Isherwood’s ideology of subversion and their resistance to closure. Their resistance to authority, closure, and ideological stability also involves a constant self-criticism, so that their moments of subversion are entangled with the contradiction of them enjoying their own considerable authority to disestablish authority, and especially in Journey, of their betraying their class ideology while enjoying the very class and national privileges which afford them the necessary security from which to plot their betrayal. The infinite regress of XXVII’s closure, Journey’s systematically reflective irony, its authors’ dwelling on the issue of endings and beginnings, all are deliberate explorations of what an ideology of subversion entails; all are part of a conscientious questioning of ideological and cultural givens; and all involve the authors’ representative self-consciousness.

In spite of the recurrent frustration of the desire for closure, Auden and Isherwood reserve for themselves—*contra* McDiarmid’s idea of anti-ideological open-endedness and *contra* Fussell’s idea of mythic failure—a last chance to redeem themselves, our desires, and the book’s multiple earlier endings, in a way that fulfills the imperatives of the hero’s reintegration. For the ending that should really count, the ending to put an end to all these

unfinished endings, is the concluding two-hundred and eighty-three line “Commentary.” “Commentary” needs to be seen ideologically and aesthetically as an attempt to provide the book with an appropriate dénouement to Auden and Isherwood’s journey and their self-consciousness about endings. In “Commentary” Auden finally begins to display the authority required to create closure for a book whose program has been irony, ignorance, uncertainty, disorientation, the fluidity of human nature, and infinitude.

Before, however, we can explore the ending “Commentary” provides for Journey and for the entire series of Auden-Isherwood collaborations, we have much to learn from the details of the dissatisfying premature ending of Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary.” Once again, though, we have to speak in the plural of endings. For “Travel-Diary,” like the book as a whole, has multiple endings. In chapter ten, there is the inconclusive conclusion in Shanghai, which Fussell incorrectly represents as the end of the book. Prior to that there are the last few pages of chapter nine, when Auden and Isherwood leave the Republican Chinese port of Wenchow for foreign controlled Shanghai; and even earlier than that there is the Journey’s End episode of chapter seven. In the latter two ‘endings,’ Isherwood entertains and then deliberately rejects untenable ideas with which he might bring Auden and Isherwood’s journey to a close. Significantly, the Wenchow ending and Journey’s End endings occur in retrospective late-1938 chapters in which those untenable final ideas are already relegated to the past, while the present tense early-1938 ending with Rewi Alley in Shanghai emphasizes the openness of the present moment of decision. In all three endings—much as Auden in his mature poetry will first invoke the tempting charm of myth only to then break it and return us to the world disenchanting—Isherwood acknowledges then actively resists the allure and comfort of ideological and mythic patterns of homecoming and reintegration.

A LATE MODERNIST, LATE COLONIAL END OF THE TRAVELLER'S DREAM

The easiest of the "Travel-Diary" endings to read, chapter nine's Wenchow passage suggests how one can place Journey in a literary historical context. For Auden and Isherwood's preoccupation with endings is an aspect not only of their ideological predilections but of their own sense of their position in literary history. "More than many literary periods," observes Peter McDonald, "the thirties in Britain is a decade defined by its conclusion" (71), and Journey's insistent foregrounding of the problem of its ending makes it a representative text of this quality of its literary historical moment. Journey performs a complicated balancing act on a late-modernist cusp. Behind it is the modern tradition of British travelogue issuing from Victorian imperial conditions and continuing through the late-colonial period between the wars. After it, and after the Second World War, will come an efflorescence of post-colonial, post-modern travel writing that has not yet run its course. Whatever the precise chronological sense of terms like modernism, late modernism, post-modernism, and post-coloniality, such theoretical notions help explain the situation of Journey. For as a literary-historical artifact, Journey embodies elements proper to all those terms and constitutes a case study of their developmental overlap and mutual inextricability.

The literary historical timeliness of Journey is most conveniently seen at the end of chapter nine where Isherwood recounts his and Auden's last few days in China on board a steamer moored in the river at Wenchow. A city which has otherwise remained off the beaten track for Western visitors to China, Wenchow by May 1938 was one of the very few Chinese ports not in Japanese hands, so that until the city fell in July 1942, travellers often entered or exited the country there. Looking out from shipboard, in that obscure, exotic, temporarily strategic port, Isherwood has himself take his leave of China:

A cabin port-hole is a picture frame. No sooner had we arrived on board than the brass-encircled view became romantic and false. The brown river in the

rain, the boatmen in their bat-wing capes, the tree-crowned pagodas on the foreshore, the mountains scarved in mist—these were no longer features of the beautiful, prosaic country we had just left behind us; they were the scenery of the travellers's dream; they were the mysterious, *l'Extrême Orient*. Memory in years to come would prefer this simple theatrical picture to all the subtle and chaotic impressions of the past months. This, I thought—despite all we have seen, heard, experienced—is how I shall finally remember China. (234)

Bryant notes the passage's standard 'Orientalising', colonial-aesthetic motifs, but she does not emphasize enough how critical of them Isherwood is (Bryant 159-160).

Isherwood is clearly aware of the pitfalls of exoticizing his picturesque last impressions, calling them "false, romantic," and "the traveller's dream." Isherwood confines his classic, kitschy fantasy to a single paragraph, and the false vision is proposed only to be turned away from. For in a grotesque, self-critical contrast, Isherwood immediately describes how he and Auden amused themselves "by dropping coins and ten-cent notes on the quayside" and watching the waifs cautiously take possession of them.¹ The sudden shift underscores the incongruity of the travelers' presence and emphasizes the contrast of the scenic daydream to the actual human degradation. Isherwood turns away from exotic picturesqueness to abject poverty, from the appeal of a timeless, traditional China to the pathos of poverty and to the world's moral, social, and political disorder. Isherwood's refusal of the exoticizing and comforting colonial-aesthetic as well as his unsentimental inability to embrace the colonized and native are characteristic of the ambivalent critical perspective on colonialism and imperialism that he develops elsewhere in his work.

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Isherwood might be interested to know that Wenchow (now spelled 'Wenzhou') is now among the most prosperous of coastal China's cities and often considered a model for the new capitalist China, a regional capital of contemporary conspicuous consumption. Of the Ou River, in whose delta Isherwood's ship was moored, the news is not so good. Though the green mountains in the distance are still mistily alluring, the Oujiang has become a toxic sewer down whose malodorous current swirl and bob an uninterrupted stream of human waste, consumerist debris, and agricultural and industrial effluent.

This concern of Isherwood's work with late-colonial and post-colonial matters is not widely enough recognized. Just as Isherwood's queer sensibility and long attentiveness to the social position of the male homosexual have been precursor and example for the gay liberation movement and for both gay studies and queer theory, so does Isherwood's work anticipate issues associated with post-colonialism. Journey is one of a series of texts in which Isherwood adumbrates late-colonial and post-colonial concerns. The first of these late-colonial texts is F6 where Auden and Isherwood satirize European colonialism by means of Sudoland, a country which is 'pseudo' in so far as it is a fictitious composite of East African and Tibetan topoi, but as "Sudo" is representative of all backward, subjugable 'southern' lands. F6's political satire on colonialism remains less developed than it should have, as it is displaced by the Freudian themes which dominate the play's ending.

Isherwood, however, returns to his interest in the problems and challenges of cultures in colonized and/or non-Western lands. Later there would be The Condor and the Cows, a neglected travel book on South America which in its themes and division of responsibilities revisits Journey's collaborative formulae and which Upward rightly ranks among Isherwood's most successful works (Notes 24). There would be too Isherwood's turn to Hinduism and Vedantic ideas. Isherwood's original engagement with the Indian religious thought which defines so much of his later work comes in the context of his experience of the civilizational crisis of the Second World War and his concomitant spiritual crisis. Isherwood's Hinduism needs to be comprehended as well in the contexts of British imperialism and of Indian and third world decolonization, and Journey and F6 are the two texts in which Auden and Isherwood first attempt to confront these issues. Though Auden would not follow Isherwood in his post-colonial Indian explorations, it is from the early Auden's revamped Anglo-Saxon diction and versification that Isherwood improbably

derived a poetic style for his rendering of the Bhagavad Gita (1944), his first major American and 'post-colonial' literary effort subsequent to Journey. Given that Britain was then losing its colonial hold on India through the combined if utterly dissimilar efforts of Gandhi and Hitler, it is ironically appropriate that Isherwood and Swami Prabhavananda should accomplish the major wartime English language translation of the classic Hindu presentation of the philosophical problem of war in the idiom of Auden, the British poet whose work through the 1930s warns prophetically of the coming European and world war. Whereas Isherwood would go on to develop his concern with reemerging post-colonial lands that he and Auden first articulate in F6 and Journey, Auden would become ever more absorbed in the Western tradition and the reexamination of Christianity and Euro-American culture. In spite of this divergence, or rather partly because of it, the works of Auden and Isherwood after their 1930s collaborations remain relevant to that of the other. Taken together, their work anticipates the related literary developments referred to as post-modernism and post-colonialism, with Auden frequently being identified as a precursor of the former (v. Emig), and Isherwood being in some ways a precursor of the latter.

Isherwood is an obvious point of reference, for instance, for V.S. Naipaul. Naipaul's work develops an Isherwoodian approach to prose style and Isherwoodian narrative techniques, such as the use of sequences of loosely related stories. He also furthers Isherwood's circumspection about the identity of his narrators, about the relationship of an author and narrator, and about the relationship of fiction and autobiography. Thematically, Naipaul and Isherwood have in common concerns with misogyny, with the outsider, with travel, and with diverse geographical and cultural settings. They have shared as well an interest in adapting Indian and Hindu perspectives in fiction and in exploring the moral relationships of the developed and developing worlds. In every respect, except the

misogyny, Naipaul surpasses Isherwood, but even Naipaul, who so often emphasizes his lack of antecedents, acknowledges the example of Isherwood and of Journey in particular.

For Fussell Journey's "self-consciousness about the *travel book* genre itself" marks "the decadent stage in the course of the between-the-wars travel book," and in the elegiac conclusion to Fussell's study, Journey is the prime example of the decline of a rich genre. Naipaul, in contrast, sees the book as pointing forward to the post-war and post-colonial transformation of the genre of the travel book in the hands of writers like Naipaul himself. Referring to a fictional author in his Way in the World, Naipaul writes

He was a man of the Thirties, very much part of the intellectual current of the time, one of the radicals waiting for the war, each man in his own way, and in the meantime going abroad on travels, not the cruise travels, not the travels of Victorian times, but travels that were helping to undermine the nineteenth-century European empires. Auden and Isherwood went to China; Orwell and others went to Spain. Graham Greene went to West Africa and then to Mexico. (81)

Journey, for Naipaul, is subversively anti-imperial and knowingly anti-colonial. The abandonment of the "colonial aesthetic" of the traveller's dream in Wenchow at the end of Isherwood's journey marks a significant aesthetic and ideological reorientation. The stark contrast that Isherwood presents between the pretty scene out the porthole and his own implication in the impoverished scene on the wharf in Wenchow signals that for Isherwood the conditions for a pleasing adventurousness which was possible in Victorian and earlier *entre deux guerres* travel has, as Fussell regrets, vanished. It signals for us also that the conditions for a post-colonial and postmodern ethical and aesthetic self-consciousness in travel writing have already come into focus for Isherwood in 1938.

The turning away in the Wenchow passage from the temptations of the picturesque is representative of this turn to the post-modern, post-colonial travel writing that Naipaul alludes to. It is representative of Isherwood's turning away throughout Journey from a

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“colonial aesthetic” to the moral and political problems of colonialism or semi-colonialism in China. This sort of writerly turning away from something easy and attractive but false, to something more difficultly ambivalent is an essential aspect, not just of the Wenchow ending, but also of the other two endings to his Chinese journey that Isherwood presents in the book’s “Travel-Diary.” Those other endings—above the Yangtze Valley at the Journey’s End inn and finally in Shanghai with Rewi Alley—involve more complex and extended instances of Isherwood turning away from aesthetic, political, and erotic temptations to discomfiting truths.

AT THE JOURNEY’S END

Before the farewell to the tourist’s dream of China that he sketches from shipboard in Wenchow, Isherwood has already bid a more ambivalent and subtle adieu to another traveler’s dream to which he himself is particularly susceptible. This is the dream of a queer Shangri-la that Isherwood unfolds in the Journey’s End episode of chapter seven. There is a burlesque lightness to the episode that masks the radical implications of this earlier farewell and has inhibited commentators from perceiving the shocking nature of the issues it puts into play. Just as the popular image of Isherwood as a photogenic gay liberationist icon can distract attention from distasteful aspects of his work such as its pervasive misogyny, and from Isherwood’s seriousness as an immoral moralist, so the campy gayness of the Journey’s End episode can barely support Isherwood’s interweaving of sexual, moral, political, and spiritual themes. Yet like the quayside waifs whose indigence gives the lie to the picturesqueness of the Wenchow landscape, Isherwood’s attention to incongruent human details troubles his fantasy of Shangri-la and reveals instead the viciousness of a space haunted by the spectre of fascism and inhabited by Satan. What

the postcard as an anthropology of colonialism?

is more, in the context of Isherwood's career, the holiday at the Journey's End in the mountains around Kuling² represents a watershed that reveals unexpected ideological horizons that lead to the permanent reorientation of Isherwood's work. We need only follow the lead of the intertextual implications of Isherwood's surprising interweaving of religious, homosexual, fascistic, and other political themes in the passage to discover the directions it is pointing.

William Plomer identifies the episode at the Journey's End inn, along with the final chapter with Rewi Alley in Shanghai, as one of two "where Mr. Isherwood gets a chance to be completely himself" (Haffenden 293). Even Evelyn Waugh, after claiming that the rest of Isherwood's "Travel-Diary" lacks originality, writes that "There is only one portrait in Mr. Isherwood's collection that does not recall a familiar type; that is the host of the Journey's End hotel, Mr. Charleton, and for the few pages of his appearance the narrative suddenly comes to life, and one is reminded that Mr. Isherwood is not only the companion of Mr. Auden [Waugh's Auden-scoring, homophobic sniff is audible here], but the creator of Mr. Norris and Miss Bowles" (Haffenden 290). Plomer, for his part, concurs with Waugh that "Mr. Isherwood was at home with Mr. Charleton."

Plomer's conventional figures of speech—"being oneself" and "being at home"—betray a misunderstanding of some key objectives of travel and travel writing. A

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Kuling or Lu Shan, to use its Chinese name, is a highly symbolic place in Chinese history. The poet Su Shi wrote of the cloud-bewrapped mountain that even when on the mountain one cannot "see the true face of Lushan." Established as a resort by late-nineteenth century Western missionaries in need of rest from the rigours of evangelical work in the steaming Yangtze plains below, Kuling (a pun on the English 'cooling') developed into a secular resort as well. Chiang Kai Shek bought Soong Meiling a villa there; the invading Japanese cleared it of missionaries and foreigners; Mao held festive conferences there complete with purges and intra-party machinations as tens of millions of Chinese starved to death during the Great Leap Forward. Isherwood's superimposition of hedonism, spirituality, and vicious politics in the "Journey's End" passage is uncannily suggestive of the true face of Kuling in modern China.

more perceptive response would speak of how Isherwood's Chinese journey undoes his sense of self and estranges him from his home. For Isherwood's "Travel-Diary" records a process of profound and permanent self-transformation, and nowhere is that transformation more acute than in the passages with Alley and Charleton. One wonders, in any case, what sort of home would suit a restless traveler like Isherwood. One wonders too whether the idea of 'being completely oneself' has any positive value in discussions of an author whose narrators' characters are often suggested only obliquely through their relationships with other fictional characters or by what the narrators leave unsaid; an author who is furthermore so fastidiously circumspect about the gaps between his fictional and real selves and between earlier and later versions of himself. Moreover, how could Isherwood ever present himself as "completely himself" when Journey's representation of Auden and Isherwood depends on the "omissions and codings" (Bryant 146) of the "necessary drag" of "concealing overt references to homosexuality while at the same time providing coded references to it" (144)? Still, thinking of Isherwood as temporarily feeling at home and being himself does help solve the riddle of the disconcerting episode at the campy Journey's End.

Both Bryant and Anne-Marie Brady note that much later in Kind, Isherwood drops the pretence of "necessary drag" when he describes his and Auden's "sampling of the delights of the bathhouse scene" in 1938 Shanghai (Brady "West Meets East" 105). "Toward the end of their visit," remembers Isherwood, "Wystan and Christopher began taking afternoon holidays from their social consciences in a bathhouse where you were erotically soaped and massaged by young men" (Kind 308). (In an earlier draft, he describes in somewhat less prudent terms these holidays from their consciences as occurring "Every afternoon" when "Auden and Christopher would visit [sic] a steam-bath within the

International Settlement where you were washed, massaged and otherwise serviced [sic] by goodlooking [sic] Chinese boys. (Kind ts CI 1029 170)). Kind continues

You could pick your attendants, and many of them were beautiful. Those who were temporarily disengaged would watch the action, with giggles, through peepholes in the walls of the bathrooms. What made the experience pleasingly exotic was that tea was served to the customer throughout; even in the midst of an embrace, the attendant would disengage one hand, pour a cupful, and raise it, tenderly but firmly, to the customer's lips. If you refused the tea at first, the attendant went on offering it until you accepted. It was like a sex fantasy in which a naked nurse makes love to the patient but still insists on giving him his medicine. (308)

The relative explicitness here contrasts to the indirection with which Isherwood allows Charleton to reveal that at *Journey's End* "each guest has a boy attached to him" and to the indirection with which Isherwood

closes his account of *Journey's End* by describing the farewell tipping of the boys, who 'giggled shamefacedly—as Europeans giggle over Sex—and asked for a little, a very little, just a trifle more.' Like Isherwood's remark about available Shanghai boys, this one linking boys, money, and sex serves as a textual wink at readers who can see through the author's drag performance" (Bryant 147).

Bryant adopts Kostenbaum's term "double talk" to argue that in *Journey* through the "textual-sexual" strategies (144) of the indirection, omissions, and codings of necessary drag, Isherwood and Auden "call into question traditional masculinity" (147).

Traditional masculinity is satirized repeatedly in *Journey*, and Bryant quite properly wonders if the underlying issue for *Journey's* detractors is the authors' failure "to measure up as real men" (142). We will consider this issue at length in our next chapter when we examine Isherwood's sudden moment of fruitiness at the end of the "Travel-Diary" with the activist Rewi Alley. Bryant identifies that moment as one of several instances in *Journey* where Isherwood "confronts the politics of gender" (147). The campiness which Isherwood himself displays so briefly after Alley's grim concluding tour of Shanghai is a vital element

elsewhere too, but nowhere is it displayed in more leisurely fashion than in the episode at the Journey's End. Here, unlike the conclusion with Alley, the fruitiness is embodied in the person of the inn-keeper Mr. Charleton.

The Charleton episode is one instalment in an extended examination of masculinity. The inn's mountain setting and the insistence on the unattempted climb up the mountain to Kuling (590-1) anticipate a section in which Auden and Isherwood finally do climb their mountain, and in which Bryant argues the questioning of traditional masculinity is crucial. This later episode is the strenuous and climactic F6-like expedition with the Etonian journalist-adventurer Peter Fleming (brother of Ian, the creator of indefatigable, lady-killing, *übermensch* James Bond). The tourist's dream at Journey's End contrasts with the Fleming passage which follows it, and with the descriptions of a deadly Japanese air raid and of Auden's meeting in Wuhan with the revolutionaries Agnes Smedley and Chou En Lai which precede it. Those contrasting framing episodes are as important to understanding the Journey's End episode as is the lively affinity that Waugh and Plomer perceive in Isherwood's handling of Charleton.

In contrast to those harsher episodes with Fleming, or Smedley and Chou, up in the Kuling Hills at the Journey's End, "all is fresh, clean, and beautiful," as Charleton's advertisements promise; and life, like the view in the next chapter from the porthole in Wenchow, is "far, far too beautiful to be real" (590). Journey's End's delicacies, picturesqueness, tranquility, cleanliness, and genial apprentice boys, appear removed from the disorder and deprivation elsewhere in China. Journey's End appears as a gently homosexual lotus land with Charleton queening it over "house-boys in khaki shorts and white shirts, prettily embroidered with the scarlet characters of their names." Charleton allows the boys to learn how to box and to swim, and obliges them—"it depends [. . .] on

my mood”—to leave their “beautiful legs” stockinged “up to the knee” or bared “down to the ankles.”

Mr Charleton’s boys were famous, it appeared, in this part of China. He trained them for three years—as servants, gardeners, carpenters, or painters—and then placed them, often in excellent jobs, with consular officials, or foreign business men. The boys all learnt a little English. They could say: ‘Good morning, sir,’ when you met them, and commanded a whole repertoire of sentences about tea, breakfast, the time you wanted to be called, the laundry, and the price of drinks. When a new boy arrived one of the third-year boys was appointed as his guardian. The first year, the boy was paid nothing; the second year, four dollars a month, the third year, ten. (589)

The discrete indiscretions of “necessary drag” make it somewhat difficult to know whether Bryant is correct in associating Charleton’s well-trained boys’ expectations of money with sex and with the bathhouse attendants of Kind, but it seems likely that she is. Certainly, other details seem calculated to allow us to infer that Charleton’s boys are intended as sex partners. Charleton himself mocks his guest Meyer’s frustration regarding Charleton’s refusal to allow him to take a particular house boy away with him: “We’ve all had that picture ‘Love Locked Out’ in our rooms!” (592).

Charleton may not be a “familiar type” for Waugh, but his gay little fiefdom is reminiscent of Mr. Norris’s fruity Baron Von Pregnitz’s boy-supplied estate and homosexual reveries of a boy-populated island—just as the “volume of French pornographic literature” with which, along with a Bible, Charleton supplies each room is reminiscent of “some very *amusing* books” that Mr. Norris has in his study. Charleton and Von Pregnitz are genteel aesthetes with sufficient means to ensure a pleasing hedonism in their boy utopias. A suggestive gloss on Charleton’s “textual-sexual” utopia is George Hogg’s contemporaneous description of the rougher living conditions of the more vigorously masculine Rewi Alley. Hogg finds Alley (whose case in Journey, as Plomer correctly suggests is complementary to that of Charleton) living in a cave:

The main distinctive feature of Rewi's cave in Shuangshipu is exactly the same as that of his former house in Shanghai—that at any time out of school hours it is filled with boys. Boys looking at picture magazines and asking millions of questions. Boys playing the gramophone and singing out of tune. Boys doing gymnastics off Rewi's shoulders or being held upside down. Boys being given enemas, or rubbing sulphur ointment into each other's scabies. Boys standing in brass wash-basins and splashing soapy water about. Boys toasting bare bottoms against the stove (the scar across Rewi's own nether portions testifies to his own indulgence in this form of amusement). Boys pulling the hairs on Rewi's legs, or fingering the generous proportions of the foreigner's nose. 'Boys are just the same anywhere,' says Rewi. (131-132)

Oddly enough, we will have occasion to return to the issue of the size of Alley's nose—for now, though, one merely asks whether the homoerotic glow of this passage and Hogg's descriptive attention to enemas, bottoms, and Alley's nether portions and hairy legs inevitably leads one to the psychoanalytical question of the size of another of Alley's anatomical protuberances. Is the seemingly earnest Hogg (his *I See A New China* appeared under the imprint of the Left Book Club) suddenly being sophomorically coy here, or is he naively displaying a lewd Freudian descriptive logic? The posthumous controversy over Alley's homosexuality (v. www.nzedge.com/heroes/alley-postscript.html) renders these questions far less amusing than they might at first seem. If Isherwood's entertaining light satires on Charleton's and Von Pregnitz's paedophilic and youth-loving utopias cast a lurid light that transforms Hogg's description of Alley and his boys into at best fruitily lewd comedy and at worst a moral inferno, Alley's compromised and contradictory case forces us to read attentively what is going on in the cases of Isherwood's Charleton and Von Pregnitz.

Whatever we make of Hogg's and Isherwood's respective presentations of Alley's and Charleton's interest in Chinese boys, we must bear in mind not the comedy of those presentations, but Alley's knowledge of the tragic circumstances of such boys' lives:

"There was a dump here," Alley said [escorting Edgar Snow through the ruins of Shanghai], "run by a bastard who bought sixty-four [boys] from an orphan's home. Nearly all the orphans' homes here are slave labour or white-slave rackets. The buzzard slept his boys on shelves over their machines; they

never got out. They worked fourteen hours a day; there were no guards on the machines. When I examined the lads' hands, I found twenty-six of them had fingers missing. There was a total of thirty-eight fingers amputated in that one dump." (Snow Scorched 86)

Alley shames Robin Hyde for criticizing "the harsh voices of the singsong girls": "Most of them," scolded Alley, "have been kidnapped, or were flood and famine children, mortgaged out to the brothels when they were eleven [. . .] They're what they have to be" (Hyde 71).

Further glosses on Journey's comic presentation of Charleton and his system of apprenticeship and on Kind's supposed frankness about bathhouses are Soulié de Morant's description in Pei Yu Boy Actress of the cruel apprentice system for training boys for prostitution and female opera roles and the discussion of Chinese pederasty in Matignon's La Chine hermétique. (Matignon, a former attaché to the French legation in Peking, was a long serving and widely travelled medical officer in China; his Chine hermétique was reissued in an illustrated sixth edition in 1936). Matignon is neither coyly titillating nor frivolously risqué on the rigorous training of boy prostitutes:

Il y a, en effet, au moins deux catégories bien distinctes à établir, parmi les représentants de la prostitution mâle. Dans la première, rentrent, seuls, les sujets qui, dès leur enfance, ont été particulièrement élevés, entraînés pour ce but, tant au point de vue physique qu'intellectuel [. . .].

Cette première catégorie de prostitués est fort intéressante, du fait de son organisation et du recrutement de son personnel. Elle est formée de sujets jeunes, vendus par leurs parents, dès l'âge de quatre ou cinq ans, et souvent volés par des industriels qui font le métier de fournisseurs pour la prostitution. Le vol des enfants, mâles et femelles, est un fait bien connu en Chine [. . .].

Les jeunes sujets sont, à partir de l'âge de cinq ans, en général, soumis à un entraînement physique et intellectuel, qui doit les rendre aptes à jouer leur rôle. Cette préparation est longue, car ce n'est guère que vers treize ou quatorze ans qu'ils sont jugés comme étant à point et mis en circulation. Inutile d'ajouter que, bien longtemps avant cette époque, leur propriétaire n'a pu résister au plaisir de leur enlever leur virginité anale.

On commence par leur faire un massage régulier de la région fessière, pour les rendre callipyges; puis, peu à peu, on habitue l'anus au passage de dilatateurs, de volume progressivement croissant. Cette dernière opération est toujours pénible, l'enfant s'y prête mal, et pour ce fait reçoit des coups. On m'a assuré que certains proxénètes, plus humains que la majorité de leurs

congénères, pour éviter les douleurs de ces débuts, faisaient prendre à leurs victimes une drogue, autre que l’opium, qui non seulement facilitait la dilatation des sphincters, mais qui en provoquait l’anesthésie.

En même temps qu’on prépare la voie inférieure, on ne néglige pas les soins de l’esprit. Les enfants reçoivent une certaine instruction, on leur apprend le chant et la musique, à dire et à faire des vers, le dessin, l’écriture des beaux mots et anciens caractères, manoeuvrent le calembour, ont le talent de servir à point quelques maximes de Confucius, ou des adages de la dynastie des Soung. Ce sont là autant de petits agréments dont les Chinois sont amateurs. (270-272)

And:

Ces établissements se trouvent à Tien-Tsin et les Européens y sont admis sans difficulté, car beaucoup, m’a-t-on affirmé, chose que j’ai hésité à croire—sont des clients assidus de ces bouges [. . .].

Dans une maison de Tien-Tsin, sur cinq enfants qui nous furent présentés, deux portaient de superbes plaques muqueuses aux commissures labiales, visibles à distance [. . .].

Dans ces établissements, les enfants sont bien nourris, mais maltraités, et par le patron et par le client. Les rapports sont souvent douloureux; le petit garçon essaie de s’y soustraire, à la grande colère du pédéraste, qui rudoie, le frappe, voulant en avoir pour son argent. (275-6)

Matignon did not want to believe that Europeans patronized such establishments, but The League of Nations’ 1933 “Commission of Enquiry into Traffic in Women and Children in the East” confirms the existence of racially separate brothels for Chinese and for Eurasians or Europeans providing “catamites (or sodomites passive)” (270). It reports too that in Hong Kong pimps could purchase boys of twelve for the purpose of prostitution for \$120. We must sigh indeed “For the taste of joy in the innocent mouth.”

Ruthless and sordid, the facts of twentieth-century Chinese poverty and juvenile prostitution turn Kind’s supposedly ground-breaking honesty about Shanghai bathhouses into deceptive self-delusion. Isherwood’s real moment of candour on the matters of bathhouses, sex tourism, and adolescent prostitution occurs not in Kind, but in his 1956 preface to Gerald Hamilton’s Mr Norris and I when Isherwood writes “What repels me about Mr Norris Changes Trains is its heartlessness” (Exhumations 86). Isherwood in the

thirties was “on the lookout for civil monsters,” but “the only genuine monster was the young foreigner who passed gaily through these scenes of desolation” (86-7). By the time of the better known Kind with its amused descriptions of “the delights” of Shanghai bathhouses, Isherwood had lapsed from the self-condemning scruples of 1956 back into mere sexual gossip and into his characteristic heartlessness. The guilty conscience evident in 1956 is, however, at work at the Journey’s End. As much as any necessary drag, or any questioning of traditional masculinity, the “sexual-textual” strategies of the humorous vision of the Journey’s End operate to reveal a morally repellent gay heartlessness indifferent to the fates of Charleton’s Chinese boys. The ultimate point of the episode is not the celebration of prostituted homosexual delights, but the rejection of Charleton’s self-indulgent monstrous Shangri-La.³

The rejection of the Journey’s End has analogues elsewhere in Isherwood’s work. Charleton’s resort is only one of several examples of Isherwood’s attention to all male milieux, to homosociality, and to their potential for homoeroticized or homosexual utopianism. In addition to Von Pregnitz and Charleton’s boy utopias, there are the British public schools of Lions; the Nazi and Communist youth clubs in Goodbye; the climbing expedition of F6; the anarchist female-excluding Greek island that Ambrose sponsors in Down There; and the Hindu monastery of Meeting. As in those instances, at the Journey’s End the horrible world of politics soon troubles the calmness of homo lotus land. Thus, it is that the turn away from the erotic temptations of the Journey’s Ends coincides with a turn

3

The ambivalence of the Journey’s End episode illuminates a moral dimension of Auden and Isherwood’s entire journey. For Kind is misleading not just when it suggests that they “began taking afternoon holidays from their social consciences” only at the end of their stay in Shanghai, but also when compared to the the diary they kept in the course of their journey. The diary records that our internationally engaged, left-wing authors were happy to satisfy their louche curiosity about sexuality and, when possible, their taste for foreign sex workers in Cairo, Djibouti, Colombo, Saigon, Shanghai, Nagasaki, and onward to New York.

away from the contemporary political temptation of fascism.

They are, in fact, one and the same turn because the homosexual and the fascist are disturbingly and inseparably entangled at the Journey's End. If campy old Charleton "saw that you didn't want to talk he passed your chair with a simple fascist salute" (590), and it is with one "last Roman salute" that Charleton bids the young authors farewell (592). Charleton's regime shows signs of a campy fascistic rigour: the house-boys run out as "a drilled troop" (588); "Charleton exercised a more than military discipline" (589). Other details too remind us that 1938 is the year of fascist and Nazi ascendancy: the "black shirt and shorts" of those 'stupid boys' whom Charleton relegates to the kitchen; the flag, presumably swastika-emblazoned, left behind by a previous German guest. There is also the presence at Journey's End of Herr Meyer, "the most senior of all the German [i.e. Nazi] military advisers" (591). As with the tourist picturesqueness glimpsed through the porthole in Wenzhou, Isherwood presents the Journey's End as something that must be turned away from. One easily sees it would be morally fatal to remain in such a womanless, hedonistic, and aesthetically and racially ordered paradise. It is not so easy to know how to read the fascist inflection Isherwood gives to Charleton's homosexual idyll.

The glimpses of nazism and fascism in the course of the homosexual daydream of the Journey's End suggest some vague controversial vistas. For homosexuality and fascism have been associated since the early days of the Nazi and fascist movements. During the 1930s in Germany, including during the period that Isherwood was living in Berlin, the link was frequent in the popular and partisan press as well as in scholarly and literary contexts. In 1932, *Die Welt Am Abend*, the communist daily from which Isherwood later lifted the title for his World In The Evening, "flatly maintained that the Nazi party was founded on

homosexuality and hypocrisy” (Oosterhuis in Hekma et al 232),⁴ while tHitler Youth “was disparagingly referred to as Homo Youth throughout the Third Reich” (Steakley 138). According to Oosterhuis, German Social Democrats and Communists considered that homosexuality was “an essential character of the fascist system” (Male Bonding 251). Influential social theorists also believed in the association of homosexuality and fascism. In Massenpsychologie des Faschismus (1933), Reich “regarded homosexuality as an outcome as well as the breeding ground of fascism” (in Hekma et al 239). In Studien über Autorität und Familie (1936), Fromm (whose later reconciliation of Marx with Biblical messianism has, as we have seen, deep affinities with Auden’s sonnets in “In Time of War”) “used the homosexual to interpret mass support for fascism” (in Hekma et al 300). This “nexus of the homosexual and the fascist” persists in the work of Adorno and Horkheimer. Klaus Mann, a friend of Isherwood’s from 1931 on⁵, recognized and, like Isherwood, objected to the fact that in anti-fascist and socialist circles “Man ist nicht mehr weit davon, die Homosexualität und den Faschismus miteinander zu identifizieren” (236). Isherwood’s objections to the antifascist identification of fascism and homosexuality as well as his objections to the then current left-wing condemnation of homosexuality make the coincidence of homosexual and

4

Manfred Herzer defends *Die Welt Am Abend* from the charge that the paper equated homosexuality with Nazism, and argues rather that the paper objected to the hypocrisy of Nazi homosexuals and of the Nazi Party in so far as the former were homosexuals and the latter tolerated homosexuals within its ranks and yet both promoted strongly anti-homosexual policies (Hekma et al 214-215).

5

Klaus Mann would have become Isherwood’s brother-in-law in 1935 had Isherwood accepted Erika Mann’s request for a marriage of political convenience. Isherwood demurred, but directed Mann to Auden who accepted immediately. Erika Mann had been previously married to the actor Gustaf Gründgens. Gründgens “had started out as a left-wing sympathiser, but was converted to the doctrine of National Socialism and was later made Director of the Berlin State Theatre” (Fryer 107). The homosexual Gründgens was the model for the protagonist of Klaus Mann’s Mephisto (1936), but Mann transformed his erstwhile brother-in-law Gründgens “into a heterosexual masochist” (Oosterhuis in Hekma 248), just as Isherwood had done when he turned the homosexual Gerald Hamilton into the protagonist of Mr. Norris (1935).

fascist motifs in the *Journey's End* altogether curious.

A similar conflation of the homosexual and the fascistic militarist occurs in Auden's "For The Time Being" in the case of George, who enlists in the army just in time to massacre the innocents (*Collected* 395) and who is "the only gay man explicitly represented" in the poem (Cesario 101). The introduction of the reprehensible, child-killing queer misogynist into the Gospel story is a "shocking intrusion" which, for Cesario, is not a sign of self-loathing homophobia on Auden's part, but which rather makes a point about the proper nature of the queer's uncertain allegiances to political states. In *Journey's* "Commentary" as well there is a tendentiousness to the associations of homosexuality and heterosexuality with the terms of that poem's central ethical opposition between democratic humanism and fascistic tyranny. The good humanistic side of that opposition is not only free of any hint of homosexuality, but also implicitly heterosexual (in the bathetic image of the production of knowledge—"Some took Necessity, and knew her, and she brought forth Freedom"—and in the ungendered allusion to Blake's heterosexual answer to the question of what men and women want: "For what is happiness / If not to witness joy upon the features of another?" (686)). In contrast, the bad fascistic side of the tyrants includes the political homosexuals Plato, Frederick the Great, and Chaka "the psychotic founder of the Zulu Empire" (Fuller 243) who "segregated the two sexes" (685). This curious alignment of proto-fascistic male violence and homosexual figures in "Commentary" recurs in the "Ganymede" sonnet of "In Time of War," and recalls Charleton's fascistic homosexuality at the *Journey's End*. Such glimpses in Auden's work of a homosexually-inflected fascism seem significant, but are perplexing. They clearly require careful interpretation if we are to come to terms with Auden's understanding of sexuality and fascism.

The fascist overtones of the *Journey's End* episode also call for careful consideration

of what Isherwood intends. Isherwood seems to be allowing for a specifically homosexual fascination with fascism, but he can hardly be suggesting, as Fromm and Reich or as homophobic ideologues still do (v. Igra and Lively), that homosexuality is essentially fascist, and fascism, essentially homosexual. Much later Isherwood would reflect on the controversial association of homosexuality and fascism in his own work:

I don't like that [unfavorable mention in The Berlin Stories of the German Youth Councils] and I don't know why I put it in. It strikes an insincere, rather puritanical note. I may have written like that because I felt that these people were in a fair way to becoming fascists. But that in itself has an unfair implication and a very dangerous one. I should have discussed the whole question fully or left it alone. Does homosexuality predispose you to join group movements of young men and hence, in certain historical circumstances, to become part of a totalitarian group? Maybe so. But that isn't the whole story. An awful lot of homosexuals who were conned into doing this in Germany later discovered to their cost how totalitarian regimes deal with homosexuals. (Conversations 102)

No more than in Stories, has Isherwood in Journey “discussed the whole question” of homosexuality and fascism, and the Journey's End episode like episodes in Mr. Norris and Goodbye could be taken to involve “an unfair implication and a very dangerous one” regarding a link between homosexuality and fascism.

It is one thing, though, for Goodbye to imply carelessly that homosexual individuals may be prone to join fascistic youth movements; it is quite another thing to do so in Journey. The former book is set in Germany from 1930 to 1933 before the Nazis came to power. In that period, as Isherwood's acquaintance the Jewish homosexual activist Magnus Hirschfeld lamented in 1934, there were many homosexuals “who could not praise Hitler enough for his tolerance of [the homosexual leader of the SA] Röhm and his cronies and who therefore switched to his camp in droves (cited in Hekma et al 207). Journey, however, is set in 1938—after the murderous purges of Röhm, other Nazi homosexuals, and the SA, and after the Soviet recriminalization of homosexuality, both of which occurred in

1934; after Mann's plea for an end to leftist homophobia; after Isherwood witnessed the Nazi burning of the books and papers of Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Research; after the Himmler-led Nazi campaign against German homosexuals; after Isherwood has had his own Nazi-conned homosexual Baron Von Pregnitz commit suicide as a result of being blackmailed and of betraying the Nazi government in whose service he was; and after several young British homosexuals like Auden had done so much to distinguish themselves on the anti-fascist left. Yet, despite all that, the Journey's End episode is ambiguous on the question of the link between homosexuality and fascism.

Was Isherwood in 1938 less certain than he later became that there was no such link? He weaves a fascist aesthetic and ethic into Charleton's homosexual idyll. Was he simply satirizing the coincidence "in certain historical circumstances" of homosexual homoeroticism and fascist trappings? Isherwood presents in Charleton a campy version of the "nexus of the homosexual and the fascist" as a troubling aspect of 1930s ideology and politics, but his touch is so light and ambiguous that it remains very difficult to decide what Isherwood's point is. The Journey's End episode is about more than the amusing singularity of Charleton's character. The likely moral point is that any potential homosexual and homosocial fascinations that fascism might have must be recognized so that they may be deliberately rejected. For the Journey's End episode is ultimately not a moment of being oneself or at home, but one of rejection and renunciation.

The Journey's End episode, even more than the scene in Wenchow, is about turning away from temptation. If in Wenchow Isherwood turns away from an irresponsible kitschy traveler's dream, at the Journey's End he is turning away from more elaborate and for him more morally and spiritually destructive temptations. Plomer and Waugh see the Journey's End as a place where Isherwood could feel at home and be himself, but they miss the point

of the passage. From beginning to end the episode is about turning away from a comfortable but false home, about turning away from that part of himself tempted by the “delights” of fascistic, youth-corrupting homosexuality and Charleton’s self-indulgent aesthetically pleasing, heartless queer-topia. Recognition of these sorts of temptation and of the need to resist them recurs in Isherwood’s work from Mr. Norris to A Single Man, but it is in Journey that Isherwood offers his most enigmatic representation of this resistance.

Still, more is going on in the episode than the rejections of the delights of juvenile prostitution and of fascistic eroticism. The passage is full of ethical ambivalence and muffled dissonances that derive from ideological elements beyond those of homosexuality and fascism. Along with the homo-fascist nexus, the episode presents a similarly sinister, amusing, and inconclusive satire of contemporary international politics. In an allegory for Anglo-German relations, the Brit Charleton and the “Fritz” Meyer engage in a noisy mock taunting of one another in their mutually incomprehensible native languages. Against their disputatiousness Isherwood sets the silence (no doubt inscrutable, as befits the silence of one of Confucius’s descendants) of Mr. Kung, “brother of the great banker” Dr. H.H. Kung.⁶ The trio of Charleton, Meyer, and Kung constitute a farcical East Asian political

6

Though H.H. Kung had a sister, I have found no evidence, after considerable searching, that he actually had a brother, nor that the Journey’s End and Charleton actually existed. There is no mention of the Journey’s End in the original Auden-Isherwood diary or in the typescript “From Hankow to Shanghai, Through the Back Door” that Isherwood prepared from that document. The typescript describes the journey from Hankow to Nanchang thus: “At the end of April, when we left Hankow, it was still possible to travel down the Yangtze by river-steamer, as far as Kiukiang. From Kiukiang, we took the train to Nanchang” (Ts talsa 7:2 p.1). Kuling and the Journey’s End lay just outside Kiukiang. It is odd that Auden and Isherwood do not record the interlude at the Journey’s End in either document. Could it be that the sojourn at the Journey’s End is Isherwood’s invention? Or is it that a record of such an episode did not appear suitable for the book that two politically engaged authors were expected to write? Whether the episode is a fabricated tall tale or is based on an actual brief holiday, the attention Isherwood devotes to this interlude indicates that it has a special significance within Journey. The Journey’s End episode is also as close as Isherwood gets to recording in Journey the various instances of “sex tourism” that occur during Auden and Isherwood’s trip around the world.

miniature comprising the British colonialist and the Nazi emissary, with the enigmatic Chinese establishment shrewdly evaluating them both. The charming picture of the charade of Meyer, Charleton, and Kung is incomplete, however, until the moment Isherwood reminds us that both their geopolitical farce and the peaceful idyll of the Journey's End are threatened by the spectre of international communism.

“If I make the sign of the Hammer and Sickle,” remarks Isherwood, “everything will disappear” (590). To which Auden responds: “It's the Third Temptation of the Demon.” The entanglement of political realities, paradisaal themes, sexual innuendo, and Biblical allusion in the Journey's End episode compares to the way such themes merge into one another in Auden's XXVII. Just as in XXVII, these elements combine to render the passage ambiguous and dense. Isherwood's insistence on Christian themes throughout the Journey's End episode is a surprising deviation in the context of his entire *oeuvre*, but the sexual, false paradisaal, and political aspects of the passage are quite in character.

Isherwood's proposition about the magical powers of the Hammer and Sickle is difficult to interpret. It could involve an oblique criticism of left-wing and Communist wishful thinking as compared to Journey's evocations of the global realpolitik of Nazism, imperialism, and colonialism. Its conditional “if” raises the question of why Isherwood is not invoking the Hammer and Sickle more adamantly in Journey. On this point, Fleming anticipates the observations of disappointed left-wing critics when he confesses “to a relief that we weren't hundred per cent ideologists: ‘I'd expected you two to be much more passionate’” (214). Or, perhaps remembering the homophobic threat that appeared in Pravda in 1934, ‘exterminate all homosexuals—and fascism will disappear!’ (Mann 237), Isherwood is warning readers of the ‘magical’ power of the Hammer and Sickle to do away with bourgeois epiphenomena like the Journey's End, Charleton, and homosexuality. If

Isherwood's conditional invocation of the Hammer and Sickle is ambiguous, so is Auden's allusive response. What is it that is supposed to be "the Third Temptation of the Demon"? Is it the whole homosexual / fascist / colonial idyll at the Journey's End itself? Or, alternatively, is The Third Temptation the temptation to invoke the power of the Hammer and Sickle to do away with those inconvenient realities?

There are actually two third temptations in the Gospels, one in Luke and one in Matthew. In Luke, the devil tempts Christ to jump from "the pinnacle of the Temple" to prove He is "the Sonne of God." In Matthew "the Devil taketh [Christ] up into an exceeding high mountaine" and "sheweth him all the kingdomes of the world, and the glory of them: And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall downe and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him onely shalt thou serve" (IV 8-10). Given the mountainous setting of the Journey's End, and the symbolic importance of mountains in Journey, Isherwood and Auden are probably referring to Matthew.

The third temptation in Matthew is the temptation to succumb to devil worship for the sake of the glories of the world. The secular kingdoms whose power and glories impinge on the Journey's End are those of the Hammer and Sickle, British imperialism and colonialism, fascism / Nazism, Chinese authoritarianism, and capitalism. Isherwood and Auden seem able enough to recognize and resist the temptations of those kingdoms; so rather than promising the glories of the world's kingdoms, two pages later the Demon tries a subtler tack when "Next morning the Demon began to excercise his power." Isherwood begins to see their lives as devoted to nothing more than another form of temptation anyway:

Were we, perhaps, going to stay on here for ever? The rain was so soothing....After all, why go to Nanchang? Why go anywhere? Why bother

about the Fourth Army? It could take care of itself. What was this journey? An illusion. What were America, England, London, the spring publishing season, our families, our friends, ambition, money, love? Only modes of the First Temptation of the Demon—and why should one temptation be better than another? (591)

But Isherwood is misreading the first temptation in an odd way. In the Gospels the first temptation occurs when Satan says to the hungry Jesus, “If thou be the sonne of God, command that these stones bee made bread,” and Jesus answers that “it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew IV 3-4). For Isherwood the temptations to take a reporter’s interest in the New Fourth Army, to pursue his literary career to flattering success in England and the U.S., to continue this publisher-commissioned Chinese journey are all modes of the first temptation to turn stones into bread and to live by bread alone rather than by the words of God’s mouth. While the private unpartisan Isherwood is relatively safe from Matthew’s version of the third temptation as the temptation of the glory of the kingdoms of the world, once he finds it is “no longer difficult to tear ourselves away from Journey’s End” (592), he readily resumes the literary career he has presented as a worldly mode of the first temptation.

Isherwood, however, is confused about the nature of the first temptation. There are two sorts of confusion here. One is the confusion of the first temptation with Matthew’s third temptation; the other is the confusion over the nature of the first temptation. Perhaps this dual confusion is only at the level of Isherwood the traveller who, as Isherwood the narrator tells us, is falling into the Demon’s power. Whether it is Isherwood the author carelessly misreading the Gospels, or Isherwood the traveller in a demon-befuddled state seeing the first temptation as another temptation to worldly glory and power, more or less indistinguishable from Matthew’s version of the third temptation, is too subtle a metafictional point to be decided here. The crucial points are that not all temptations are

the same and that Christ's rejection of the first temptation to turn stones into bread is not a rejection of worldly success. In Isherwood's terms, the rejection of the first temptation is not simply a rejection of the worldly literary ambitions and desire for fame that have motivated this journey and his own career. Christ's rejection is not principally a rejection of the world or even its bread. Rather, in resisting the first temptation, Jesus rejects worldliness without spirit, and affirms the demands of the spirit and of the dual poles of bread and the Word.

The turning away from the first temptation in the Journey's End passage is not identical to its rejection of sexual and political temptation, but it is noteworthy that this spiritual turning away and Isherwood's reconception of his literary career occurs with those other moral turns. Certainly this spiritual literary turn is as significant as those other turns, and in 1938 during the period of the writing of Journey and in 1939 at the time of its publication, it introduced into Isherwood's work a novel and permanent element, the appearance of which is generally dated somewhat later. In the text's erroneous presentation of the nature of the first temptation, this temptation becomes the temptation to a literary career deriving entirely from Isherwood's worldly sophistication and seeking first and foremost worldly fame. Christ's resistance of the first temptation is an affirmation of the demands of God and the spirit over a vision of human life and activity that sees only the imperatives of bread. In Isherwood's peculiar presentation of the first temptation implicitly counterpoised to the recognition of his own need to resist a literary career motivated by a sophisticated desire for acclaim is an affirmation of a literary career that must recognize the demands of the spirit.

Isherwood remembers his antipathy in 1938 to "the smugness of Wystan's Christian dogmatism," but also remembers that when "Christopher raged against religion, Wystan

would laugh and say, ‘Careful, careful, my dear—if you keep going like that, you’ll have *such* a conversion one of these days!’” (Kind 306). And indeed Isherwood would take just such a radical Paulinian religious turn after his emigration to the United States.

Isherwood’s turns to pacifist wartime activism with the Quakers; to the spiritual discipline, texts, and doctrines of Vedantism; to his Vedanta-informed later fiction with its attention to his characters’ spiritual states and relation to God; and to the (for Isherwood) unachievable ideal of a monkish renunciation of sexual desire—are all anticipated in the spiritual turns of the Journey’s End episode. For Auden too, Journey anticipates the religious turn his work was to take in the United States. Auden’s “In Time of War,” however, is a prelude not to an indefinite religious turn, but is a proto-Christian anticipation of his return to Christianity. In contrast, Isherwood in 1938 has not encountered the Hinduism that would teach him a spiritual vocabulary and discipline more congenial to him than the Christianity he found antipathetic because of its condemnation of homosexuality. In Journey, without that exotically tolerant Hindu alternative, Isherwood still has only the example and texts of Christianity. These he adopts, freely or confusedly, but for entirely negative, ironic, critical ends. Isherwood turns to the Gospels in his rendering of the holiday at Journey’s End not yet to announce his own religious conversion. Rather Isherwood uses the Gospels to signal the need to turn from corrupt heartless sexual hedonism and the erotico-aesthetic temptation of Fascism. Signaling his renunciation of those temptations, Isherwood also signals his intuition of the spiritual ends of his vocation as a writer. Like the “Travel-Diary” as a whole, the Journey’s End episode deserves to be recognized as a crucial moment in Isherwood’s lifelong record of his personal and literary development, a pivotal moment announcing the shift from the perspectives of his early work to those he would reveal in the American phases of his work.



CHAPTER 6

A GOOD PLACE TO START



THREE APPROACHES TO THE END OF “TRAVEL-DIARY”

In the actual ending of the “Travel-Diary,” Isherwood is guided through the final pages describing bombed-out industrial Shanghai by Rewi Alley. The strange construction of this conclusion makes it Journey’s most intriguing passage. It is an ending whose sense is anything but self-evident. Yet, like the Wenchow and the Journey’s End passages, this conclusion is a defining moment in Isherwood’s work. Rarely in his early work does Isherwood reveal so boldly who he is, or present such a prescient political and historical vision. As with XXVII in Auden’s work, the conclusion of the “Travel-Diary” records a pivotal moment in Isherwood’s ideological development that also reflects the ideological history of the twentieth-century. The conclusion presents a stark instance of liberalism’s seeming helplessness before catastrophic injustice, while simultaneously evoking the spectre of the liberal individual’s resistance to tyranny. As at the Journey’s End, understanding the entanglement of homosexuality and 1930s politics is essential to comprehending the passage with Alley. Here, though, rather than a case of Isherwood turning away from troubling aspects of 1930s politicized homoeroticism, we see his political insight proceeding from the queerness of his perspective. For along with the questions concerning liberalism that Isherwood raises, the conclusion with Alley presents a moment of resistance to the effacement of the homosexual individual, as well as an intimation of one of the great tyrannies of modern history.

The closing section of “Travel Diary” is complex in its ethical implications, in its relations to an extensive network of historical detail, in its uncertain ironies, and in its technical literary construction. Three ideas articulated in our discussions of the poetics of Journey help us approach the complexity of the “Travel-Diary”’s conclusion. First, this ending is another turn, another ending and new beginning, with important ideological

consequences. As with Auden's XXVII, as with Isherwood's two previous mock endings at the Journey's End and on shipboard in Wenchow, the ending of the "Travel-Diary" is a thoroughly negative moment. As in those earlier endings, we see Isherwood turning away in his conclusion from a simpler, false political vision of the world and from an inadequate version of himself to something more difficult, ambivalent, and uncertain.

Second, it is essential to read the ending of the "Travel-Diary" as a moment in the overall narrative structure of Journey. When Fussell finds fault with Journey because the book "simply comes to a stop, for no particular reason, with the two travellers in Shanghai" (220), he sees the end point of the story of their journey, but misses the structure extending beyond Isherwood's geographical breaking off point through Auden's long subsequent ideological labour to make sense of it all. For Fussell, Journey fails because its mythic structure is incomplete and lacks the moment of the return of the hero of the Quest Romance. However, the final passage of the "Travel-Diary" with Alley actually does fit into a quasi-mythic narrative structure that coherently organizes the whole of Journey. The ending of the "Travel-Diary" represents the low point in a myth of descent and ascent. For this ending is a nadir of faceless despair and confused hopelessness in the story of Auden and Isherwood's journey, and after this low point, the succeeding sections of Journey present a mythic ascent to a renewed, if diffuse, hopefulness. The "Travel-Diary's" ending is thus a turning point in this larger spiritual narrative. Immediately after the faceless statistics which dominate Alley's section come the human faces of the photo essay. Then comes the sonnet sequence's grand narrative of the difficult, discontinuous, but potentially forward moving development of the self-liberating human subject out of the immemorial past into the ethically uncertain present. Finally, will come "Commentary" with its tyranny-defying, life-affirming voices and its closing "voice of Man" praying for strength "for the

forces of the will” to build “at last a human justice” (688). Though he may miss this overarching mythic structure, Fussell’s characterization of the Travel Book as a “displaced” Romance which has been “brought down to earth” enables us to see Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary” as a thorough-going displacement of the Romance myth into the actuality of China in the Sino-Japanese War, into 1930s history and politics, and finally in its ending into the ethical-numerical alienation of socio-industrial policy.

A third perspective from which we can comprehend the technical dimensions of the end of the “Travel-Diary” proceeds from the idea of the *mise en abyme*. Dällenbach’s discussion of *mise en abyme* helps clarify Isherwood’s remarkable dependence on Rewi Alley to articulate his conclusion. Particularly useful is Dällenbach’s analysis of the poetics of what he calls the *mise en abyme* of the enunciation. An enunciative *mise en abyme* makes present the producer or receiver of a narrative and reveals the actual process of textual production or reception (75). Dällenbach argues that such “*mises en abyme* of the work involved in producing the text are found in narratives concerned with continually reflecting the adventure of their own generation” (77). We see such a concern to show the process of producing the text throughout Isherwood’s work. In Journey, this concern is evident in the attention Isherwood draws to the difference between the original diary and the retrospective composition. It is also evident in the frequency with which he includes vignettes of others who are also engaged in articulating visions of China: Agnes Smedley, Peter Fleming, various foreign and Chinese journalists, Chinese propagandists, Auden and Chinese poets, and, at the end of “Travel-Diary”, Rewi Alley. Dällenbach describes how in realistic, naturalistic texts that nonetheless artfully display the processes of the producer’s production and the receiver’s reception of the text, an author can recruit a qualified authorial substitute “from among those who specialize in, or make their living from, the

truth” such as the priest, the writer, or the fool (53), around whom to construct a reflexive *mise en abyme* of the enunciation. The efforts of such figures to interpret China and Isherwood’s reception of their interpretations are analogous to Isherwood’s efforts to interpret China for his readers and his readers’ reception of his text.

Bryant discusses the importance of the analogous, but farcically contrasting, identities of Fleming as accomplished foreign correspondent and Isherwood and Auden as amateurs writing about China. Alley, however, is also a producer of meaning about China, and Isherwood’s remarkable dependence on Alley makes the enunciative *mise en abyme* at the end of “Travel-Diary” especially significant. As political activist, Alley is the supremely qualified truth-speaking figure in engaged 1930s writing, and it is in his role of truth-speaking authorial substitute that Alley, and not Isherwood himself, solves the difficulties which both the historical *and* the textual Isherwoods have been having in coming to terms with what Isherwood’s China material ultimately means. For an authorial substitute like Alley does not just make possible the presentation of the roles of producer and receiver and of the processes of production and reception. He also makes possible a presentation of this purportedly engaged, realistic, if also self-reflective, text’s meaning when he suggests he knows the answer to Lenin’s and the Waste Land’s overwhelming question of what is to be done.

Isherwood’s text, however, complicates this scenario because, although Isherwood incorporates Alley’s truth directly into his text and in fact plagiarizes Alley’s own writing to a stunning degree, he does not allow us simply to accept Alley’s truth as the truth of Isherwood’s text. Isherwood is not just relaying Alley’s message to us. Rather, as much as Isherwood allows Alley as a figure to speak his truths in Isherwood’s conclusion, Isherwood is also compelled to show his ambivalence toward this truth. Dällenbach notes that the

effect of the enunciative *mise en abyme* “varies according to the degree of analogy between the (activity of the) author and the (activity of the) substitute” (78). In the case of Fleming, the effect of the *mise en abyme* is a function of the contrast between Isherwood and Fleming’s similarities (public-school Britishness, modest fame, their reporting on China) and their differences (professionalism, degree of competence, masculinity, sexual orientation). In the case of Alley, a comparable, but less conspicuous play of similarity and difference complicates the effect of the meaning-making analogy between Alley and Isherwood. It will become apparent as we look at Alley and Isherwood that, more than an authorial substitute, Alley is an intimate kind of double to Isherwood.

To sum up, then, we have three ideas with which to approach the ending of the “Travel-Diary:” the ending as an enunciative *mise en abyme* with Alley as authorial substitute; the ending as a low point in *Journey*’s comic narrative structure; the ending as another ethical turn comparable to those at Wenchow and the Journey’s End—with these three governing ideas in mind, we can begin to consider the literary, historical, and ideological complexity of the way Isherwood brings his section of *Journey* to a conclusion.

SAILING THROUGH SHANGHAI

From Wenchow Isherwood’s travelogue proceeds to Shanghai. This move at the end of the “Travel-Diary” corresponds to the journey from Hong Kong to Canton with which the diary opens. Wenchow and Canton, remember, are in free China; Hong Kong and Shanghai are under foreign control. In Shanghai, just as in Auden’s “Macao” and “Hong Kong,” we are not properly in China at all. We are in the twilight zones of colonialism, the international concessions, extraterritoriality, and Chinese alienation. This is why the journey to China and the journey from China both occur in two stages: going there, first from London to colonial Hong Kong, then from intermediate Hong Kong to Chinese

Canton; and returning, from Chinese Wenchow to intermediate colonial Shanghai. The narrative symmetry is emphasized through the common mode of transportation—the sea and river voyages from Europe to Hong Kong to Canton and from Wenchow to Shanghai.

Fussell objects that the ending of Isherwood's diary lacks the completion of a return from Shanghai to England. Neither Isherwood's "Travel Diary" nor *Journey* as a whole offers such a geographical return, perhaps because there is no need to, since semi-colonial Shanghai is already more than halfway to England and the West. Auden's hometown even makes an appearance of sorts in Shanghai as at a critical moment in a discussion with distinguished Japanese personages "through the dining-room window which over-looked the river, the gun-turrets of H.M.S. *Birmingham* slid into view" (629). Shanghai's colonial situation partly explains why in the last chapter, Isherwood devotes as much energy to evoking Western comforts as to exploring the Chinese city—just as Auden's photo of the "Shanghai Businessman" somewhat unexpectedly depicts a Caucasian, not a Chinese (v. Bryant 131). The colonial situation of Shanghai also partly explains why Isherwood devotes less attention to Chinese politics than to Western and Japanese mutual suspicion and their blatant political and military manoeuvring.

The mythic archetype of homecoming also tends to be rendered obsolete by the modern feasibility of taking so much of one's own world with one, as the Shanghai businessmen and diplomats have, and by the homogenizing dynamics of urban cosmopolitanism, even in multiple-identified Shanghai. It may be true that in 1938 "there was no Shanghai, just many Shanghais" (Wasserstrom in Esherick 207), but certainly not least among the various pre-1949 Shanghais was the International Settlement where the British Embassy, like the H.M.S. *Birmingham*, welcomed Isherwood and Auden home. The mythic satisfactions of a neat English homecoming would also have been ideologically and

narratologically complicated by Auden and Isherwood's stop in Japan, their detour through the imperial immensities of the Dominion of Canada and through the alluringly modern U.S.A. In fact, biographically, geopolitically, and in some respects even culturally speaking, their arrival in the U.S.A. and New York City, not their temporary return to London and England, is the ultimate destination of *Journey*.¹ In any case, rather than an English homecoming, "Commentary" finishes with a totalizing view of an interrelated global geography.

Modern cosmopolitanism and the dissolution of the mythic patterns of homecoming aside, Auden and Isherwood's eagerness to get to New York meant that their Chinese journey had for all intents and purposes ended psychologically once they reached Shanghai.

We "have now definitely finished with this Chinese war," Isherwood wrote to his mother on May 26, the day after their arrival from Wenchow², "Our plans are to stay just as long as it takes to find a ship going to U.S.A. and then set off." Indeed the two travellers took care of the arrangements required to get to the U.S.A. before they took in Shanghai, since on that same day, "they went to the U.S. Consulate to apply for a transit visa, because they wanted to visit New York on their way home" (unused chapter (ts CI 1029b). The ship they found, Canadian Pacific's luxury liner the Empress of Asia, would not sail until the evening of June 12, which gave them eighteen days to explore Shanghai.

Oddly, the collaborative journal that they kept while on their trip has only two

¹Before Auden and Isherwood received their commission for a travel book on the Far East, Auden had been planning a tour of the U.S. and a travel book on America with Stephen Spender (Carpenter 223). Auden at least and perhaps Isherwood too would decide to move to the U.S. while visiting New York on the way home from China. In August 1938 in the midst of the writing of *Journey*, Auden told his brother John that he wished "not just to return to America for a visit but to stay there and become a U.S. citizen" (242). By the time Auden and Isherwood finished the book, Isherwood had agreed to accompany Auden to the U.S.

²The text of *Journey* in Mendelson's edition of Auden's *Prose 1926-1938* erroneously dates the arrival in Shanghai from May 15 (625) rather than May 25.

entries that record their impressions of the city a well-known 1935 guidebook refers to as “Shanghai the Incomparable” (Wasserstrom in Esherick 192). One would have expected Isherwood, who cultivated his image as chronicler of urban life in Mr. Norris and Goodbye, to have been determined to impress upon readers his ability to get to the heart of a second great foreign metropolis, but this does not seem to have been the case. Isherwood’s account of his Shanghai experience suffers in comparison to Hyde’s Dragon Rampant, perhaps the book against which all Chinese travel books of the late-1930s must ultimately be measured. Isherwood’s account sometimes suggests a lack of curiosity and a general authorial negligence. Only the first Shanghai entry is in Isherwood’s hand, and it is dated June 3, already halfway through their stay; the second in Auden’s hand dated June 13 was written on shipboard bound for Japan. Auden writes that they were “both a little ill after a fortnight in [Shanghai’s] lucrative overcrowded swamp, and very glad that we didn’t go there first [. . .] Shanghai must be one of the most terrible cities on the earth.”

The paucity of diary material, however, cannot be simply a result of the distaste they felt for the city, though it is partly no doubt a consequence of the painful intestinal illness Isherwood describes in his draft of Kind (v. Chapter 3 above). A second reason for the dearth of journal material, and it is a reason which along with the security situation also helps explain the lack of direct description of Chinese Shanghai, may be that their only regular contact with Chinese people occurred during the homosexual encounters with young “attendants” (Kind 308) in bathhouses referred to in the last chapter. The fact that so much of their potential Shanghai material had to do with “a rather long diet of Asians --- those too-perfectly goldskinned somewhat remote almost Mrtian [sic] creatures” (Kind ts 178 1030i) made it unsuitable for publication in 1938, though not in 1976 when the somewhat franker Kind appeared. Through the summer and fall of 1938, however, references to

Shanghai in Isherwood's private diary do indeed recall its steam baths: "Holding my cigarette, and giving it to me occasionally to puff, he [a current English lover] reminded me of the Chinese boys in the Shanghai bathhouse" (entry for August 21).

The unpublishable nature of this Shanghai material combined with the fact that Auden and Isherwood's joint travel journal contains such an incomplete record of their time in Shanghai would have left Isherwood little to work with as he tried to bring his prose account of their journey to a close. Isherwood, however, had other difficulties when he was working on the book back in England. For one thing, he was bored: "Transcribing the travel diary kept by Wystan and himself was boring toil, but it had to be done before he could edit and rewrite the diary as a coherent narrative" (*Kind* 320). He seems to have become bored with the whole topic of China. A diary entry as early as July 30, 1938 observes that "China is, once more, 8,000 miles away: it is a lesson I have learnt, and can repeat, without remembering how or why. 'Who do you think will win, Mr. Isherwood?' 'Well...that all depends...You see, militarily speaking, the Japs can occupy any place they please. On the other hand, China...' etc, etc, etc." What is more, in the context of the growing European crisis, the undeclared Sino-Japanese war was beginning to seem irrelevant. Isherwood seems no longer to have believed in the projected book: "What's the use of all this? Who'll want to read about your faraway out-of-date war when the bombs start falling on London?" (*Kind* 320). Given the scale and dire consequences of Japan's military campaign from June through October 1938 to capture Wuhan, this Eurocentric indifference to the war in China, though understandable, is a major failure on Isherwood's part.³ Isherwood's lack of interest in the battle of Wuhan is particularly surprising since in

³After the Chinese government retreated to Wuhan when the Japanese took Nanking in December 1937, the Japanese waited for about half a year before trying to capture Wuhan. Then, "For nearly 5 months, the Battle of Wuhan raged. Several hundred major and minor combat operations were conducted, over 200,000 enemy [Japanese] troops were killed or wounded, over 100 enemy ships

Journey he describes Wuhan suggestively as being a city “at the very end of the world,” and as the city where History “has fixed her capricious interest,” the apocalyptic world-historical city where Auden and he had agreed they would rather be “than anywhere else on earth” (512-3).

In his diary from late-1938 the Munich crisis is such an all absorbing distraction that Isherwood’s remarks on his China projects invariably read as meagre afterthoughts: “Old Chamberlain is with Hitler at Godesburg today, to be told where he gets off. The one bright spot, as far as I’m concerned, is that on the 19th, I started the China book. God knows how I’m to finish it by December 1—even without interruptions” (Entry for Sept. 22, 53). “Today I got fitted for a gas mask. You can hardly breathe through them at all. Managed a little work on the Chinese book” (Sept. 27, 55).

Isherwood’s anxiety about the situation in Europe, his doubts about the book he and Auden were trying to finish, and his boredom with their material and with China were not his only difficulties. His diary all through the late summer and fall of 1938 is full of ruminations on his appearance, his health and habits, his relationships with friends, and his love life. In contrast, his work on Journey seems to have concerned him only fitfully, whenever he periodically took stock of himself and his progress. Thus, the entry for August 27, 1938, “At least I’ll go to my grave with my bowels in working order. I am in perfect health, today; and fully loaded with sex, like a gun. Finished first China article for

and craft were sunk or drowned and over 100 enemy planes were destroyed” (Hsu 245). For the out-gunned Chinese defenders, though, the losses were incalculable: “In less than a year United Front forces lost up to a million men, wounded or dead—more than their combined losses over the next seven years of war. At the level of leadership the losses were even more devastating. Eighty per cent of Chiang Kaishek’s office corps [. . .] were lost” (MacKinnon “Tragedy” 933). Isherwood only months earlier had witnessed a remarkable spirit of political cooperation in 1938 Wuhan. Though he must have had an inkling of the stakes involved for China and the world, the Battle of Wuhan, one of the most consequential battles of the battle-scarred twentieth-century, scarcely seems to have registered for an Isherwood preoccupied with Europe and himself.

“Cosmopolitan”; or the entry for September 8, “No work on China articles all day--masturbation, over-smoking, newspaper-gazing, futile idling. But I read Inez’ novel.”

Isherwood’s distracted state of mind in late 1938 is of interest because of the dual contexts for the composition of “Travel-Diary” and Journey. One context is the first half of 1938 when Auden and Isherwood were keeping their original diary as they were travelling through China. The other context is the second half of 1938 when they were back in England and Europe working their material up into Journey. As has been noted, Isherwood underscores the importance of this temporal split by structuring his “Travel-Diary” so that half of it is set immediately in the context of early 1938 and half of it looks back at that earlier context from late 1938. The difficulty Isherwood was having concentrating on his China book in late-1938, along with the meagreness of the Shanghai material Auden and he had recorded while in China, accounts no doubt to some degree for the unusual procedures he adopts in order to, at last, bring his “Travel-Diary” to its close.

REWI ALLEY, AND THE PAST AND FUTURE OF CHINESE COMMUNISM

It is the oddness of the very end of “Travel-Diary” which prompts Fussell to complain that Auden and Isherwood’s journey just comes to a baffled stop. There Isherwood—after having followed for several pages Shanghai Municipal Council factory inspector Rewi Alley as Alley surveys the manifold terrible problems evident in Shanghai, and after having described how humanity seems so “grossly” divided into the conquering haves and the conquered have-nots, and having admitted (un)comfortably to which of these halves he belongs—finally turns his attention to himself. Isherwood is “the well-meaning tourist, the liberal and humanitarian intellectual, [who] can only wring his hands over all this and exclaim: ‘Oh dear, things are so awful here—so complicated. One doesn’t know where to start.’” This wishy-washiness is immediately followed by Alley’s response, which

concludes the “Travel-Diary.” “‘I know where *I* should start,’ says Mr. Alley, with a ferocious snort. ‘They were starting quite nicely in 1927’” (634). The anticlimax and the sharply contrasting tones here, Isherwood’s futile hand wringing and the incongruous lightness of that “Oh dear,” make these final sentences *Journey*’s most provocatively puzzling moment. Fussell calls it “all just a bit Camp” (209). The Communist Ronald Swingler in his “Daily Worker” review finds it annoying (Haffenden 291). The contrast between the horrifying situations Isherwood and Alley have been describing and the spectacle of Isherwood’s “liberal and humanitarian intellectual” helplessness and inability to respond appropriately is indeed maddening. The sense of being left hanging between a requisite call for action in the face of injustice and a fussy preoccupation with what Swingler calls Isherwood’s “psychological plight” (Haffenden 291) has exasperated readers as different as Swingler⁴ and Fussell from the beginning.

Surely, though, Isherwood knows how weak, anticlimactic, even offensive, his diary’s ending will seem. His reader’s exasperation is no doubt exactly what Isherwood wants to provoke. The exasperation derives from the facile expectation that Isherwood will have a more morally bracing and effective response to the situation we have been presented with in Shanghai. Isherwood’s inappropriate ending is more ethically complex than critics have perceived. Isherwood’s incapacity involves an implicit challenge: ‘shouldn’t you, dear reader, *mon semblable, mon frère*, proceed from your dissatisfaction with my hand wringing

⁴The poet Swingler, a member of the British Communist Party from 1934 to 1952, was in 1938 editor of the *Daily Worker*’s book pages and an editor of the *Left Review*. His position is a useful point of reference when we evaluate where Auden and Isherwood stood in 1938-39, not only because his response to *Journey* is so negative, but because Swingler and Auden were closely associated on the left-wing literary scene. Britten selected texts by Swingler and Auden to commemorate Spanish Civil War International Brigades volunteers in his *Ballad of Heroes*. When *Ballad of Heroes* was first performed on April 5, 1939, just weeks after *Journey* came out, Swingler was a committed communist writer, but Auden, already in New York, was quickly disengaging himself from activist writing and politics, announcing, to the perplexity and permanent dismay of many, in his elegy for Yeats, that “poetry makes nothing happen.”

to raise the question of where and how exactly you or anyone would start to address the injustices of Shanghai?’ Isherwood’s “disparaging self-portrait” at the end of “Travel-Diary” is also, as Wilde observes, “an oblique affirmation of the need for involvement” (Isherwood 85) on his and everyone’s part. Yet, however urgent the whole disastrous situation in wartime China may be and however urgent the activist program Alley sketches may seem, Isherwood is very far from Auden’s injunction in “Birthday Poem” for Isherwood to “make action urgent and its nature clear;” and from the widespread 1930s “hopes for literature as a guide to action” (McDonald 81). Isherwood in “Travel-Diary” will not pretend to know what is to be done. Rather, at the very moment when a call to action seems most in order, Isherwood insists on his own confusion and peripheral status.

The concluding affirmation of the need for action is so oblique and negative because under the circumstances it is all Isherwood can manage. Anything more would be a lie. Unlike the activist Alley who has immersed himself in Shanghai, Isherwood does not pretend to be on top of the situation. Even more significantly, from both an ideological and an ethical perspective, Isherwood does not avow or even hint at his own unswerving commitment to China or to some partisan program for China. That this is an important source of *engagé* complaints about Journey is indicated by the sarcastic title—“On Being Uninvolved, Two Intellectuals in China”—of Swingler’s *Daily Worker* review.

Isherwood, though, is being characteristically honest about his own, and almost everyone else’s, capacities and willingness to do anything to improve the world. Something similar is found at the ends of Mr. Norris and Goodbye. In both endings the Isherwood narrators take their leaves of Berlin knowing full well that they are leaving behind friends and acquaintances that they have not helped, or not helped much, and will not be able to help survive the looming Nazi disaster. In Mr. Norris there is a sense of horror and guilt

deriving from the narrator's implication in the hard fates of his friends; in Goodbye, the guilt and horror have more to do with the narrator's awareness of the gap between their suffering and his own freedom and indifference, even happiness. This awareness of the incommensurability of the suffering in Shanghai and Isherwood's freedom is again at issue in the ending of "Travel-Diary."

The related issues of commitment and of courage and cowardice are also foregrounded in this ending. Whenever these intertwined themes come to the fore, Isherwood deals principally with the experience of ambivalence, with the difficulties of knowing what one should do, of distinguishing prudence from cowardice, and of evaluating the nature of courage itself. Throughout his work from Mr. Norris to Kind, Isherwood avoids the rhetoric of resounding but facile righteousness in favour of an unheroic telling of the disconcerting ethical truth about his own cowardice, indifference, and selfishness.⁵ At the end of the "Travel-Diary," Isherwood does not focus on the outrageousness of the atrocious situation in Shanghai and the need for a visionary activism, even though such a rousing conclusion would be rhetorically more effective and winning than the text's actual ending with its disconcerting focus on the problems of the lack of understanding and the sense of helpless uselessness.

Though Isherwood shies away from committing himself to explaining how one

⁵This point regarding people's moral indifference is a simple one, but one which is basic to Isherwood's work. He was still stuck on it forty years later: "so often we pretend to care more than we do, when mostly we don't really give a shit" (Conversations 181). Though people's moral indifference is a reality, it is not the only reality about people's responses to the suffering of others, and Isherwood is exaggerating the universality of an attitude he recognized in himself. Referring to Isherwood's own retrospective comments on Mr. Norris's moral indifference, Hynes remarks on the defining role of heartless indifference in Isherwood's work: "Isherwood, a mature writer now at the height of his powers and reputation, asserts the heartlessness of his early work, but redeems it by turning it into a theory of art. 'The heartless delight of the artist': do we accept that as a general premise about the creation of art? I don't think we do. Do we accept it as a description of Isherwood-the-artist? Yes, we must" (Norris xii-xiv). This idea of the heartlessness of Isherwood's art and moral vision deserves more discussion.

should start to rectify situations like those he has encountered in Shanghai, he does let Alley suggest that Alley at least knows where one should start—presumably, wherever things had left off “in 1927.” Isherwood refrains from elaborating on Alley’s remark which closes the “Travel-Diary” uncommented upon. Alley’s knowing archness implies that the significance of whatever was beginning to happen in 1927 went without saying, but this has not proved to be the case. Alley’s final remark may be ferocious, but its meaning is obscure enough to have led Fuller astray when he explains the reference to 1927 as an allusion “to the introduction of Chinese members on to the Council of the International Settlement in 1927. This hopeful beginning ha[d] been broken off by the actions of the Japanese” (240). Fuller, however, is mistaken to identify the introduction of Chinese into the municipal government of the Settlement as the defining event of 1927. Yet the emphasis which Isherwood throws onto Alley’s closing reference to “1927” suggests that understanding the conclusion of the “Travel-Diary” depends on understanding the significance of 1927.

If we proceed on the internal evidence of Journey, there are only three references to 1927 in the entire book. One is the implicit allusion involved in using the title La condition humaine, Malraux’s novel about the 1927 Chinese communist coup, as a caption in the “Picture Commentary.” Of this caption and photograph, Bryant writes, “Malraux was considered one of the ‘committed’ artists of his generation and an unwavering fellow traveller with communists” (166) and argues less convincingly that “Auden’s photograph may be taken to concur with Malraux by implying that Shanghai would have been better served by the communist revolutionaries” (167). There are also explicit references to 1927 in two closely related passages: “After the Communist *coup d’état* in 1927 which put Chiang Kai-shek into power, it was Du and his men who helped Chiang to turn on his former allies, and kill or drive into exile all the most dangerous radicals among them”

(584), and one of the top names on Du's "1927 black list had been that of Chou En-lai" (585). Early in 1927, Chinese labour unions in Shanghai, led by the Communist dominated left wing of the Kuomintang, had risen in a general strike and "put Chiang Kai-shek into power" (584), only to be crushed soon after when Chiang slaughtered tens of thousands of his erstwhile Communist allies, along with the left wing of his own Nationalist party. "1927 became a year of disaster for the Communists as they tried to outmanoeuvre their Nationalist allies and change the direction of the new state, only to see their movement all but crushed in the attempt" (Spence 272-3). For the future Communist-apologist Alley, who had first arrived in Shanghai in April 1927 during Chiang's 'white terror' (16 Brady Friend), the principal events of 1927 were, not the reform of the Council of the International Settlement, but the successful Communist *coup d'état*, the internecine political massacres, and the ensuing Chinese Communist nadir. Those anti-communist massacres of 1927 "had left a permanent scar on [Alley's] psyche" (Helen Snow 300).

Understanding such things about 1927 and Alley, and trying to understand who Alley might have seemed to be to Isherwood in 1938, is crucial to comprehending Isherwood's procedures in the last pages of "Travel-Diary." Alley, who would later turn himself into perhaps the most prominent of the Communist era's 'Friends of China,' was, when Auden and Isherwood met him, on the verge of becoming one of the best known foreigners in the Nationalist China of the Kuomintang (KMT). By 1938, Alley had been in Shanghai for eleven years, having first arrived from his native New Zealand looking for an opportunity to better his circumstances which had been straightened since his return from the Great War. In Shanghai he soon turned himself into a reforming factory inspector who was responsible for "supervision over all safety conditions in industrial plants" (Airey 113). Alley also worked so effectively in flood and famine relief that the League of Nations

appointed him to supervise dyke repairs for hundreds of kilometres above and below Wuhan (Chapple 58). Alley's crowning achievement was the conception and implementation of the famous system of industrial cooperatives that Isherwood has Alley sketching in the "Travel-Diary" and that became known variously as *Gung Ho*, *Indusco*, or *Chinese Industrial Cooperatives* (CIC). By the end of the thirties, through his work with the cooperative movement, Alley had become "a world figure" (Airey 11).

In 1938 the American journalist Edgar Snow was a key collaborator with Alley in the conception and promotion of *Indusco*, and Alley's friendship with Snow would be crucial to Alley's eventual celebrity. Snow became Alley's first, though not last, hagiographer when his 1941 Saturday Evening Post cover story consolidated Alley's reputation as a progressive China-loving humanitarian. Snow's celebration of Alley was exaggerated, but not without foundation. Alley's numerous impressive admirers included the ground-breaking historian of Chinese science Joseph Needham, who was also an admirer of Auden's work (Izzo Encyclopedia 246), and who would write exultingly of Alley: "I admit him unhesitatingly among my half-dozen immortals" "in whom it has been possible to see and touch what constitutes human greatness" (cited in Chapple 181).

Almost two decades after his death in 1987, Alley's life story continues to fascinate, but it has become impossible to enthuse over the idea of his greatness. The fascinations of Alley's life now derive rather from its many contradictions and from the gap between his public persona and what was hidden about both his political views and his private life.⁶ Of

⁶If by the mid-1930s Alley was already well-known for his reforming humanitarian work, and from 1938 until 1942 (before Kuomintang suspicions of Alley's closeness to the Communists led to his dismissal from *Indusco*) he was internationally celebrated for his work directing *Indusco*, after 1949 among China watchers Alley would remain prominent less as a reformer than as a China loving author and an apologist for the Communist regime. Each of his many books from the first two-decades of the People's Republic of China promotes whatever happened to be the party-line at the time. They are marked by their earnestness and a naivety of tone, but are also rationalizing and shamelessly partisan in their presentation of developments in China. The sardonic comments of

the numerous controversies regarding Alley, there are three questions which we cannot help but ask and the answers to which, could they be had, would allow us to read the nuances and possible ironies of Isherwood's presentation of Alley with more confidence than we actually can. One of these questions is 'would Alley in June 1938 have unequivocally identified himself as a Communist?' Though Brady shows that the authorized versions of the story of Alley's political development between 1927 and 1938 exaggerate his sympathy with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and must be read in light of Alley's need during the Communist era to enhance the credibility of his procommunist persona (Friend 26), she also notes that he did have "contact with left-wing forces" and "wrote for the Comintern-supported magazine *Voice of China* (Friend 28). Helen Snow remembers that in the 1930s Alley was "already committed to what he thought was 'Marxism' of the orthodox Soviet variety. None of us wanted to be called 'social democrats', which was a term of contempt" (303). The fact that Alley's two adopted Chinese sons "elected to join the Communist forces in the northwest" (Brady 31), even as Alley began the *Indusco* program under the

Marcuse on the Friends of China are unfortunately relevant to Alley's books: the Friends "tend to be solemn, and they will remain so even or especially when they wax lyrical or lapse into political babytalk. In verse or prose, they are atrocious writers" (118-119).

In retrospect one wants to condemn Alley for promoting an incompetent, oppressive Chinese Communist Party (CCP) even as it was inflicting on the Chinese its most notoriously cataclysmic policies. There is also the familiar, if more forgivable, hypocrisy of Alley as an apparently closeted homosexual who in public uncritically supported the CCP as it systematically obliterated homosexuality from Chinese life. The reflex to condemn Alley's propagandizing has become irresistible ever since the murderous crushing of the democracy movement (1989) and growing awareness of chronic human rights abuses and corruption in China have done so much to change world opinion about the CCP.

However the story of Alley's imperfect idealism, determination, kindness, and courage between 1927 and 1949 during the dangerous years of Kuomintang corruption, the Civil War, and Japanese aggression, the years when, with the endorsement of progressive sentiment worldwide and of powerful geopolitical interests, Alley travelled "the roads of wartime China like a seismograph needle" (Chapple 112), remains so admirable that one feels more sorrow than outrage over his subsequent role as a compromised hypocritical public relations flunky for the tyrannical CCP. When Anne-Marie Brady's revisionist Friend of China - The Myth of Rewi Alley appeared in 2002, it radically challenged our understanding of Alley's private and political life. A review of the responses to Brady's work is available at www.nzedge.com/heroes/alley-postscript.html.

auspices of the suspicious KMT, seems to confirm his undeclared sympathy with the Communists. The second related question of whether Isherwood identified Alley as a Communist is more difficult to settle. Nowhere does Isherwood openly associate Alley with the Communists, and in 1938 Inspector Alley would have found it professionally very awkward, in both foreign-controlled Shanghai and KMT-governed China, to reveal a strong sympathy with the Communists. Still, Alley's conspicuous snorting reference to 1927 suggests that Isherwood did regard Alley as at least a proto-Communist, and that this association of Alley with Communism is an important dimension of the treatment of Alley in "Travel-Diary." As important as the issue of Alley's politics is the question of Alley's sexual identity. Brady has convincingly, if controversially, shown that Alley was a closeted homosexual attracted to Shanghai by the Chinese tolerance of homosexuality and by young Chinese men. The issue of Alley's homosexuality leads to speculations about whether Isherwood suspected that Alley might be homosexual. No satisfactorily conclusive answer can be had to that question, but as with the question of Isherwood's assessment of Alley's political views, the question of whether Isherwood perceived Alley to be a homosexual must colour any reading of his representation of Alley with an uncertain hue of perhaps witting, perhaps unwitting, irony.

Even without ultimately knowing the answers to the above questions, it is possible to sketch a reading of the conclusion of the "Travel-Diary" that, taking those questions into account, situates the ending of the "Travel-Diary" in a complex historical and ideological context. If we knew nothing of Alley's life, we would still know that homosexuality is always central to Isherwood's work. We would also still know that Alley's brief snorting allusion to 1927 introduces crucial political issues into the conclusion of the "Travel-Diary." It turns attention to the central conflict within modern Chinese political culture, the

then barely dormant conflict of the CCP and the KMT. It forces us to ask what Isherwood's Alley wants us to think was "starting quite nicely" in 1927, and in so doing, forces us to consider the place of Communism in twentieth-century Chinese history.

Certainly Auden reread Journey in terms of the subsequent triumph of the CCP. With the benefit of hindsight, Auden writes for the 1973 edition of Journey, reissued in the midst of the Cultural Revolution, that though "for obvious reasons it is not overtly stated in our book, already in 1938 Isherwood and I had the hunch that the future of China lay with Mao and the Communists, not with Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang" (Prose 1: 830). Virtually the only support Auden could have adduced for his claim that they had seen the future this way are a few brief passages in Isherwood's "Travel Diary:"

It was interesting to notice [. . .] how the missionaries had modified their attitude since the war towards Communism and Communists in China. Two years ago, the Fathers themselves admitted, they had regarded the Communists simply as bandits—or, at best, as Robin Hoods, who robbed the rich to feed the poor. Now they were beginning to take the movement seriously, and to recognize the part it might play in determining the future development of the country. (622-3)

Other than in a small handful of such passages, Journey cannot be said to envision explicitly a Communist future for China. What Auden thought the "obvious reasons" were for not stating overtly that the future of China might be communist may have seemed clear to him at the heights of the Cold War and the Cultural Revolution, but they are not as clear in today's post-Cold War world, nor in the context of the 1930s when many people would have welcomed the exaggeration of such a hunch. For it was possible to hope openly for just such a future for China and the world, as several of Auden and Isherwood's card-carrying Communist friends did, and given the proto-communism often attributed to Auden at least, one would expect Auden and Isherwood to have devoted some energy to considering the justice of the Chinese Communist cause.

Isherwood too reread Journey in the early 1970s, and bizarrely claimed Auden and he did state overtly that China needed a communist revolution: “China, for Auden and Christopher, had been a classroom in which the economic and political facts of life had been brutally demonstrated --- oversimplified, some would say. They came away from it having learned to repeat the lesson it taught. The book which they jointly produced repeats it, word-perfect. They declared that conditions in China would only be bettered by a communist revolution” (Kind ts CI 1029 173). A more misleading characterization of Journey’s politics is hard to imagine. The Communist Swinger sees no such revolutionary lesson in Journey, and Isherwood drops this claim in the published version of Kind. Auden gets closer to the spirit of Journey’s vision of Chinese communism when he remembers that “we were fools, of course, to swallow the propaganda, so zealously spread by certain Western journalists, that Chinese communism would be different and innocuous” (Prose 1: 830), but even he is not accurately representing Journey. For the larger point is that the book in its focus on the evils of Japan’s invasion and of fascism does not say anything very critical about the KMT, the CCP, or any other aspect of Chinese political culture.

Whatever pro-Communist propaganda and whichever journalists Auden is referring to in 1973, the only Western journalists who are identified by name in Journey are Agnes Smedley and Edgar Snow. Their favourable presentations of the Chinese communists to the world were indeed influential: “For a variety of reasons (including the fact that they had been the first writers and correspondents interested in the Sino-Japanese War), the American friends of the Chinese Communists got into a position to block out contrary opinions” (Utley Story 140). However, far from foolishly swallowing Snow and Smedley’s vision of things, Isherwood seems untempted by the lures of their propaganda. He portrays “Miss Agnes Smedley”’s commitment to the Communists, not as innocuous, but as

something like a sexual pathology (519, 581). For his part, Snow, whose Red Star Over China (1936) played a major role in making Chinese communism palatable to the world, appears only in the book's acknowledgements where he is thanked with Alley for providing "information and introductions" (495). What is more, as we shall see, the only part of Journey to which Snow can be directly linked is the Alley-dominated conclusion of the "Travel-Diary," and Isherwood's handling of the conclusion with Alley reveals, not a sense of the innocuousness of the Communist cause, but an alienation and diffidence regarding it and other such causes.

If Auden and Isherwood had really had a hunch about the future importance of the CCP, or believed that Chinese Communism would be innocuous, and been inclined to say so—both doubtful propositions—they could have let it be known. The Communist movement in China, however, receives relatively little attention in Journey. This is partly a result of their having decided not to visit the "much-described" Communist Eighth Route Army in the North-West and of their failing to locate the less reported on communist New Fourth Army (Kind, ts CI 1029 page inserted between pages 165 and 166, with reference to an April 27, 1938 letter to Stephen Spender). However, an ideological reticence regarding the CCP is also at work. One obvious reason for not predicting a Communist triumph in 1938-39 probably derived from the fact that the KMT's Chiang Kai Shek, whom Time had made its Man of the Year for 1937 two weeks before Auden and Isherwood sailed for China, had become a key British ally whose leadership seemed crucial to the united Chinese cause and to a more global united front. Their reticence would also have derived from the fact that, after the ordeals of the Long March had reduced the Communists to a small remnant in Yen-an, Auden and Isherwood shared a pessimistic Agnes Smedley's doubts about "the ultimate future of the Chinese Communists when this war is over" (Prose 1:

440). In either case, the imperatives of the tacit anti-Japanese anti-fascist alliance between Britain and the KMT probably precluded any overt promotion of the CCP at the expense of the KMT.

Whatever the reasons for their reticence regarding the Chinese communists, Auden and Isherwood's book "does not score highly for prediction," writes Kerr, precisely because, contrary to Auden's 1973 claim, "it seriously underestimates Mao and the Communists" (Izzo Auden 287). Journey actually contains little explicit prognostication of any kind, and though the "Travel-Diary" in its own way may be "excellent reporting," it is "remarkable in its freedom from political speculation or interpretation. This may be because, in the state of mental confusion he has since described himself as experiencing during 1938, Isherwood simply did not know what to write" (Hoskins 181).

Despite this reticence on political matters, Isherwood's speculation in Journey that hidden in Hankow "are all the clues which would enable an expert, if he could only find them to predict the events of the next fifty years" (513) is borne out by the evidence of his own book. For though it is the emotionally off-putting ethical oddness, rather than the political far-sightedness, of the "Travel-Diary" and its conclusion that has struck commentators from Swingler to Hoskins to Fussell to Kerr, it is true that, almost by accident, through perverse intuition, Isherwood does establish a position which allows us to describe his final paragraphs as prophetically and tragically astute. Isherwood's position offers a radical perspective on political issues and developments that will be central to China and the world's destiny.

PLAGIARIZING ALLEY

As we consider the conclusion of the "Travel-Diary," it is essential to note that this part of Isherwood's text is thoroughly plagiarized. Over the course of four pages,

Isherwood draws extensively, more or less verbatim, and without acknowledgement, on a CIC booklet that Alley and Edgar and Helen Snow had written and published anonymously while Isherwood and Auden were in Shanghai (see Appendix 1 for evidence of Isherwood's plagiarism). When the older Isherwood thinks of Journey as repeating an economic and political lesson learned "word-perfect," he can only be remembering his use of Alley and the CIC pamphlet at the end of his own part of the book. The charge of plagiarism is mitigated somewhat when he puts one bit of the information he has lifted from the booklet into the mouth of Alley or refers once to the "planners" (633) and once to the "organizers" (634) of the cooperative movement, and somewhat mitigated by the fact that Journey's foreword does thank Alley and Edgar, but not Helen, Snow, grouped with nine others unrelated to the anonymous booklet, "for information." Still the plagiarism demands an explanation. Isherwood's unusual dependence on the unacknowledged anonymous text is perhaps related to his growing boredom and his general ignorance regarding the topic of China. However, the ways that Isherwood, in the course of incorporating the CIC pamphlet's original text, presents Alley and his vision reveal that more is at issue than lazy or irresponsible plagiarism. Isherwood's conclusion constitutes one of the most politically incisive moments in Isherwood's entire *oeuvre*. Isherwood's perspicacity is not so much a matter of what he draws directly from the CIC pamphlet; it springs rather from the critical personal perspective that Isherwood insinuates into the ending of "Travel-Diary."

Isherwood's reliance on Alley in the closing section of the "Travel-Diary" shows that the travellers knew whom they should listen to for an engaged, ground-level perspective on Shanghai. Isherwood's reliance on Alley and the anonymous CIC pamphlet solves the problems of Isherwood's lack of appropriate Shanghai material, of his own distracted lack of interest in China, of his being too confused to know what to write. His

recourse to Alley also helps Isherwood resolve the compositional and moral difficulties he has been drawing attention to in his approaches to his ending.

Here we should recall Dällenbach's idea of the enunciative *mise en abyme* and the idea of Alley as authorial substitute and double for Isherwood. Isherwood shows us an Alley producing a meaningful activist interpretation of China which Isherwood receives, records, and relays to us. We get Alley and his CIC text second-hand, but to an extreme degree Isherwood reduces himself to a transparent medium for transmitting Alley's message, essentially copying directly from Alley's text, and keeping himself invisible in his own text until his puzzling exclamation at the very end. There is an analogy of semantic production and reception here such that Alley's production is to Isherwood's reception as Isherwood's production is to his own reader's reception. Isherwood allows the forcefulness and apparent precision of Alley's information and agenda to fill the blankness of Isherwood's ignorance and distracted lack of interest in China. In the absence of a meaningful and intelligible vision of China of his own, Isherwood can at least convey to his readers this Alley-derived vision. Alley solves Isherwood's problem of having to find something appropriate to say about China and provides Isherwood with a way to end his "Travel-Diary." With his final disconcertingly campy "Oh dear," Isherwood completes the process of reception represented in his enunciative *mise en abyme* by introducing the unexpected and complicated moment of his subjective reception of Alley's vision. This moment too will have its analogue in the process of the reader's response to Isherwood's text. In fact, that final campy moment seems intended to provoke the subjectivity of the reader and to highlight, not the possibility of a direct comprehension, but ambivalent, problematic aspects of the reception of Isherwood's text. This analogy of Alley and Isherwood to Isherwood and us is made all the more forceful by the degree of similarity

between Isherwood and Alley. The similarities between Alley and Isherwood will emerge more fully in our discussion of the textual and historical dimensions of the conclusion of the "Travel-Diary," but for convenience let us list those similarities now. Briefly, Alley and Isherwood resemble one another in their role as authorial figures, as writers and foreign interpreters of China; in their personal proximity to the homosexual and proto-Communist undergrounds; in certain physical and temperamental characteristics; and in a similar degree of virtual invisibility in the final passage of Isherwood's text.

If Isherwood can rely on Alley as a recognizable authorial substitute, it is also true that Alley seems to have been ready to rely on Isherwood as an authorial intermediary in Alley's own project. Isherwood's access to Alley and Alley's evident generosity with Isherwood indicate that Auden and Isherwood's fame as engaged writers and Alley's faith in the congruence of their views with his were secure enough for Alley to entrust his vision of China to their care. As much, though, as the left-leaning Alley must have hoped Isherwood would portray him and his vision in congenial terms, I doubt whether the publicity-loving Alley was any more satisfied with the perplexing rendering of their interview than Isherwood's other readers have been.

In the context of 1938-39, the sketch of CIC policy conveyed in the pages dealing with Alley constitutes a significant journalistic scoop. Isherwood, despite his fashionable contempt for journalists, shows himself picking up almost before anyone else what would soon become a major story in Chinese and Anglo-American relations. When Isherwood interviewed Alley in June 1938, the industrial cooperative movement was still little more than an amateur scheme (Snow Scorched 99), conceived earlier that spring by Alley and the Snows in discussion with a group of friends and associates. Alley had only recently sent the proposal for cooperatives to the KMT government in Hankow. Within a month of

Isherwood's departure from Shanghai, however, Alley would begin to implement his ideas under the sponsorship of the KMT and of important foreign sympathizers like Eleanor Roosevelt and Clark-Kerr, and by the time Isherwood was completing his "Travel-Diary" in late 1938 the CIC movement had become established policy in China. Giving his Chinese Industrial Cooperative Association the slogan "Gung Ho", Alley inadvertently gave to the English language the term that describes the idealism and over-ready team spirit he came to be identified with for the rest of his life. Though its success as an industrial program is debatable, the CIC movement did succeed in doing what Auden and Isherwood tried to do through the talks and magazine articles on China that they temporarily devoted themselves to in England and the U.S.; that is, *Gung Ho* did bring "liberal world opinion to bear in favour of China's resistance to Japan at a time when China had little reason to be grateful to [arms-dealing] America or [Japan-appeasing] Britain" (Snow Scorched 138).

Not only does Isherwood in Journey offer a glimpse of Alley's vision in the three-month lull between the time Alley submitted his proposal and the time when he was called upon to put it into practice, but some have suggested that Isherwood and Auden themselves facilitated the adoption of Alley's policy by the KMT. While they were in Shanghai, Auden and Isherwood were house guests of the British ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr. After Edgar and Helen Snow introduced Rewi to the two writers, Isherwood and Auden "tried to get the ambassador into a more active stance, helping Indusco" (Helen Snow 306). Alley, for his part, remembers that Indusco went forward when the Snows "through their connections, arranged for Clark Kerr to take [the proposal] to Hankow, and which resulted in my being invited to set up Gung Ho" (page dated Oct. 9, 1968, appended to "Village

Industrial Cooperatives”, ts⁷). Perhaps resentfully remembering the plagiarism and the unenthusiastic portrait of himself in “Travel-Diary,” perhaps prudently not wanting to associate himself with two famous bourgeois homosexuals who had long ago taken their distance from Communism, Alley does not name the Snows’ “connections” as Auden and Isherwood. In any case, until Auden and Isherwood introduced it to Sir Archibald, *Gung Ho* had “remained a radical programme, stonewalled by the Chinese government” but “Sir Archibald represented Britain, and Britain was still the power with the biggest investments in China. His access to high Chinese officials was immediate. On condition that Rewi Alley had agreed to lead the scheme, he accepted the task of salesman for CIC [. . .] and without further hedging, the Chinese government agreed to it” (Chapple 106).

Several underground currents are at play in this coming together of Alley the proto-Communist political activist, Auden and Isherwood the left-leaning writers, and Clark-Kerr the international diplomat. Their collusion is fascinatingly suggestive of Clark-Kerr’s association with obscure mid-twentieth century connections between Comintern and Homintern, that subversive nexus of the homosexual and the communist which in the Anglo-American Cold War context seems more familiar than the nexus of the homosexual and the fascist that we encountered at the Journey’s End. Clark-Kerr, whose well-known “professions of socialism” were much suspected (Gillies 95), would remain a “benevolent friend of the Chinese Communists for many years” (Utley 106). Furthermore, Isherwood’s speculations that Clark-Kerr was spying on their trysting in Shanghai bathhouses—

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I obtained a copy of this document from Dr. Anne-Marie Brady. Dr. Brady was given her copy by Lu Guangmian, “from his personal papers.” Dr. Brady writes that “Lu Guangmian used to head the Baoding Gong He office in the 1940s and was a close friend of Alley’s [. . .] The 1968 article was written when Alley and many of those involved in Gong He were under attack during the Cultural Revolution. The later articles were written by Alley to help get the reputations of some former Gong He cadres cleared post-CR” (E-mail to the author, 23 Feb. 23 2006).

Every evening, when they returned [from the steam-bath] for cocktails, Archie would ask them what they had been doing and every evening they told him a different story of where they had been--out shopping, or to visit some local beauty spot, or to interview someone. Archie accepted all these stories with a straight face. But they liked to believe that they had alays [sic] been followed, for security reasons, and that a police report of their actual doings lay on his desk. (Kind ts CI 1029 170)—

are not so conspiratorially juvenile as it might seem. Such spying may have been in character for Clark-Kerr, a “favoured focus of [whose] outrageousness was sex [. . .] he never lost an amused interest in the topic and an undoubtedly morbid curiosity about its diverse manifestations, as demonstrated in the various corners of the globe in which he laboured” (Gillies 13). If the issues of homosexuality and proto-Communism complicate Clark-Kerr’s attentiveness to Alley, Auden, and Isherwood, how much more would they complicate his courting of the young British left and his later closeness to the infamous pro-Soviet homosexual or bisexual moles Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean (Gillies 226, 140). Clark-Kerr’s courtship of the educated, frequently homosexual, British left is a consistent feature of the “Peter Pan politics” of his diplomatic career (95, 140), and Clark-Kerr’s bitter disappointment over Maclean and Burgess’ treachery (226) conforms to a pattern of enthusiastic patronage and eventual disappointment already observable in his relationship with Auden and Isherwood. Clark-Kerr had been “a staunch supporter of New Writing and all the young authors associated with it, but when [John Lehmann] met him in London under bombardment he was very much disappointed that the two whose company he had enjoyed so much in China and for whom he had done so much, had opted for America” (Lehmann 205). The later association of Clark-Kerr, Burgess, and Maclean, the latter two Cambridge-educated like Isherwood, makes the coincidental evocations and allusions to Communism, homosexuality, and international diplomacy in the last chapter of Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary” seem curious. The coincidences grow curiouser when one remembers the

controversy over Burgess' repeated attempts to contact Auden on Ischia in the days before Burgess defected with Maclean to the Soviet Union in 1951 (Carpenter 369-70). And still curiouser when one sees Maclean's biographer, in his account of Maclean's defection, invoking *Journey's* critical vision of the significance of the voyage: "The journey is false; the false journey really an illness" (Davenport-Hines 275)—lines which recall both the modern medical conception of homosexuality as illness and the complex deceptions of the modern homosexual's political journeys. It is significant too that Auden, initially reluctant to believe Burgess could be guilty of spying (275), eventually equated Burgess's defection with his own adoption of American citizenship, seeing both expatriations, like the queerness and the alcoholism they also shared, not in Cold War terms, but as revolts against English provincialism (Davenport-Hines 179).

Suggestive as such evocations of a Comintern / Homintern underground may be, it is clear that given the endorsement of Alley and Indusco that Isherwood and Auden reportedly conveyed to Sir Archibald, and given the compatibility of *Gung Ho* with the activist and geopolitical objectives of Auden and Isherwood in 1938, one finds it difficult to explain why Isherwood's presentation of Alley and his vision are so ambivalent and oblique. The treatment of Alley seems even odder when one considers the scoop he had delivered into the hands of an Isherwood looking for copy and imagines how easy it would have been for Isherwood to portray himself in the flattering role of insider and accomplished foreign correspondent rather than as an ineffective annoyingly campy outsider. However much he depends on Alley and the CIC booklet as his guides, Isherwood's choice of where to lay the closing emphasis in his "Travel Diary" is entirely his own. The oddness of Isherwood's conclusion has much to do with Isherwood's insistence on the intractable idiosyncrasy and irreducibility of the human individual. However, his

treatment of Alley also reveals an astute clairvoyance on Isherwood's part regarding Alley and regarding China's future and mid-twentieth century political ideologies, a clairvoyance that approaches the dystopian visionary and the unfortunately prophetic. The "Travel-Diary"'s conclusion, while neither explicitly making predictions nor explicitly endorsing any political programme, does not just point in the direction of Alley's inchoate *Gung Ho* movement. It also illuminates the hidden, self-denying, self-distorting, personal situation of Alley's disturbing and enigmatic life. Furthermore, it points to the wartime industrial and social conditions which are in part the empirical basis and justification of an eventual victory of the Chinese communists, something that hardly seemed likely in 1938. Those final pages point too to the potential individual-obliterating inhumanity of the CCP's materialistic regime. The puzzling conclusion of Isherwood's "Travel-Diary" turns out to be less inconsequentially eccentric than readers have thought. To the contrary, Isherwood's conclusion is a fascinatingly complex moment in the narrative of twentieth-century Western attempts to comprehend modern China politically and indeed a revealing moment in the story of modern China's central political conflicts.

Two competing versions of whence the CIC booklet drew its original inspiration and ultimate authority situate Isherwood's conclusion in the context of the conflict of the KMT and the CCP. Thus, in the original pamphlet, intended as it was to appeal to the KMT administration, the authors and publishers relied heavily on excerpts from the pronouncements and writings of Chiang Kai Shek, and those close to him like Mme. Chiang, H.H. Kung, and delegates of a KMT congress, to lend authority to the anonymous CIC document. Much later, though, Alley would claim that his very first attempt at sketching a proposal for industrial cooperatives was written "after studying the original translations of the two articles that came to Shanghai in late 1937 [. . .]. In their correct

translation they may be found in Vol. 11, pp.35 on, in the Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung. [. . .]. It was from this document that the Snows helped draw up the first promotion pamphlet” (page dated Oct. 9, 1968, appended to “Village Industrial Cooperatives”, ts). As with the later Auden and Isherwood, Alley must be seen here as revising his 1938 state of mind in the light of subsequent Chinese history. By associating the origins of CIC with Mao, he is also protecting himself in the context of the Cultural Revolution from whose depredations he had no immunity. Alley’s claim that CIC was initially inspired by Mao’s writings is, though, consistent with Alley’s links to Western Communists in China and to the CCP underground, and with the fact that the KMT fired Alley in 1942 for allowing “CIC factories to make guns and blankets for the CCP” (Brady Friend 37).

The point for us is that just as Alley and the CIC booklet are permanently caught within a KMT/CCP conflict that was merely dormant in 1938, so is Isherwood’s conclusion. When Isherwood turns to Alley as authorial substitute, he involves his own text in the same struggle for power and authority within which Alley and the CIC committee were operating. Isherwood’s reliance on Alley’s authority at the end of “Travel-Diary” is a sign of Isherwood’s lack of authority and his incapacity to make sense of China and to decide what must be done. Behind Isherwood’s reliance on Alley’s authority lies, however, a fascinating series of appeals to such authority figures, and implicit transfers of responsibility to them. Thus, the text of Isherwood’s conclusion is largely a revised version of an entry, the final one in their jointly-kept diary, written by the more confidently objective, more ambitiously systematic, Auden. Auden’s entry, for its part, copies passages wholesale from the anonymous CIC pamphlet, which itself reflects the combined Chinese and political expertise of Alley and the Snows. Furthermore, this document, while relying explicitly and thoroughly on Chinese and Western journalists and theoreticians of the cooperative

movement, refers ultimately to the political authority of, in one account, Chiang and the KMT, and, in another account, Mao and the CCP. In recruiting Alley as authorial substitute and by incorporating so much of the CIC pamphlet, Isherwood involves his text in this chain of derived authority and ultimately, if probably inadvertently, positions the concluding moment of his text within modern China's principal contest for political power. The KMT / CCP contest is at play during the two principal sojourns of "Travel-Diary," when in Hankow Isherwood relies for information and introductions on Hollington Tong, KMT propagandist and author of a biography of Chiang, and in Shanghai on Alley and Snow, author of the CCP-celebrating Red Star. Isherwood's dependence on these guides draws his text into the matrix of the KMT / CCP rivalry.

Even though an appreciation of the dominance of the KMT and of the nature of the Japanese invasion are essential to understanding the "Travel-Diary," it does make sense to think of the conclusion of the "Travel-Diary" as more pertinent to the specific context of Chinese Communism. Within that conclusion, Isherwood unfolds a vision of China that is principally the work of Alley and the Snows, all of whom, but especially Alley and Edgar Snow, had significant roles in shaping Anglo-American and world comprehension of Chinese communism. Snow's Red Star remains one of the most influential books, both within and outside China, ever written on the Chinese communists. Red Star's sympathy is not without guile—in spite of Snow's lies about his impartial independence, Mao not only dictated to Snow "a mixture of valuable information and colossal fabrication" for Red Star, he also "took the added precaution of checking everything Snow wrote afterwards, amending and revising parts" (Chang 192). As for Alley, he became one of the most prominent foreigners in mid-twentieth century China, an icon in both KMT and CCP propagandizing and a prolific purveyor of propagandistic views of China under the CCP. In

Isherwood's "Travel Diary," we see Alley in 1938 already assuming the role which would later become one of his principal functions as a 'Friend' in Communist China, i.e. "playing an active part in the reception and guidance of important foreigners" (Hollander 332). In Shanghai, Auden and Isherwood had stumbled upon two interlocutors who would be instrumental in articulating the dominant English-speaking vision of mid-twentieth-century Chinese politics. When Isherwood, as much through private reasons of temperament and personal limitations as through actual political prescience, is compelled at the end of the "Travel-Diary" to take his distance from the emerging Alley-Snow account of Chinese Communism, he was proleptically taking his distance from an account of modern China that would become the dominant paradigm for political thinking on China from 1949 through 1989.

MEN WITHOUT QUALITIES

A mix of apotropaic intuition and ideological discomfort explains Isherwood's odd treatment of Alley. The oddness of that treatment becomes clearer when one contrasts Isherwood's Alley to the versions of Alley that other authors offer us. For Alley seemed, at least as Edgar Snow would mythologize him in the Saturday Evening Post, to mean "to China today at least as much as Colonel Lawrence to the Arabs, and perhaps more. Where Lawrence brought to Arabia the destructive technique of guerilla warfare, Alley is teaching China the constructive organisation of guerilla industry" (12). "Alley's efforts," writes Snow, again comparing him to Lawrence, "may yet rank as one of the great human adventures of our time" (Battle 100). The obviousness of the comparison to Lawrence would have been clear to the Lawrence-fixated Isherwood too. Yet Isherwood does not imbue Alley with any of Lawrence's heroic glamour.

We can interpret in various ways the fact that Isherwood does not present Alley

heroically as Snow and others do. To some extent Isherwood's portrayal of Alley antedates the orthodoxy regarding Alley was Snow's hagiography would help create. Isherwood's odd presentation of Alley also needs to be appreciated against the political and social background of British class and national identities. Unlike the aristocratic Lawrence, Alley, as a colonial of Irish extraction with a farming background who was named after a renegade Maori chieftain, is Isherwood's social inferior. Evelyn Waugh easily imagines Isherwood a fellow public school snob:

The quality which makes Americans and colonials excel in news-reporting is the ease with which they are impressed by fame. Mr. Isherwood met nearly all the public characters in his district; he felt it his duty as a war correspondent to be interested in them. But they were bores—or rather the kind of contact a foreign journalist establishes with a public character is boring—and he is too honest a writer to disguise the fact. Nowhere in China did he seem to find the particular kind of stimulus that his writing requires. (Haffenden 290)

How easy it would have been for Auden and Isherwood to look down their noses, not so much at the Chinese who were too exotic to fit into British social hierarchies, but at the other, particularly English-speaking, Westerners whom they encountered in China. There is, however, remarkably little of this kind of snobbishness in *Journey*. Compared to Waugh's own travel books or a book like Robert Byron's *Road to Oxiana*, Isherwood displays a generous degree of patience with "Americans and colonials." "Travel-Diary" as well as being the story of Auden and Isherwood's journey across the Otherness of China, is also the occasion of an encounter with a more proximate Other. For *Journey* marks the first time the public-school, Oxbridge, Europe-touring pair ventured into the larger English-speaking world. They not only travelled across Canada and the U.S. on their way back from the East, but in China the English-speakers they met were more frequently Canadians, Americans, Australians, and New Zealanders than English. Unlike Waugh, Auden and Isherwood, at the very moment that Britain's cultural hegemony over the anglophone world

was coming to an end, seem in Journey to have rather liked the “Americans and colonials” and would soon shock their followers in England, and annoy Waugh in particular, by emigrating to the U.S. Waugh fails to appreciate that for Isherwood, as he articulates in Lions and recalls in Kind, the Truly Strong Man has become, not the hero who must distinguish himself as exceptional by doing something like travelling through wartime China, but the man who “travels straight across the broad America of normal life” (Kind 258). The attention Isherwood pays to Americans and colonials like Alley is an expression of his efforts to take that truly strong journey across the broad America of the twentieth-century and to disavow the relative privilege of his class position within the English-speaking imperium. If this explains in part his attentiveness to figures like Alley, Isherwood’s treatment of Alley requires a far different explanation. The peculiarity of that treatment has less to do with class and nationality than with political ideology, specifically with Isherwood’s concern about the relationship of human individuality to the purely materialistic and collectivist qualities of what he represents as Alley’s ideological position.

The peculiarity of the presentation of Alley is illuminated through a comparison to the treatment of another ideologically strong, imperially marginal character, the Canadian medical missionary Dr. Robert McClure. If Alley’s stature is magnified by his presence in the “Travel Diary”’s conclusion, no other figure in Journey is allotted so many pages or allowed to dominate them to the degree that McClure is. Isherwood is excessively neutral and objective in his portrait of Alley. He lets Alley’s concern for the seriousness of the Chinese socio-political situation speak for itself and elevate Alley, so that Isherwood can seem to be describing Alley “in tones of awe” (Brady Friend 29). With the obviously meritorious McClure, however, Isherwood allows himself to turn, however benignly, the good doctor into a figure of fun. Certainly Isherwood is obliged to acknowledge McClure’s

courage and vigour, but he clearly enjoys sending up McClure's eager-beaver boy scout comportment.

Isherwood's understated mocking of McClure can seem typical of the condescending treatment of missionaries, particularly North American ones, in snobbish 1930s Oxbridge travel writing. In a survey of this literary reflex, Cunningham cites several examples from *Journey* (389), but he does not mention McLure, who is the book's most prominent religious figure, and who in important respects does not conform to Cunningham's thesis,⁸ anymore than Isherwood's text conforms to Waugh's snobbish views. Still, Isherwood's humorous treatment of McClure contrasts significantly with his impersonal treatment of Alley. 1930s political correctness and literary bohemian orthodoxy seem to require that Isherwood defer to proto-communist pieties and to avoid making fun of Alley the way he has McClure, even though the nickname "Screwy Rewi" (Marcuse 119) suggests that Alley too was easily mockable. Surprisingly, despite the seriousness of Isherwood's Alley and the lightness of his McLure, Isherwood's presentation of Alley's ideological and personal positions is much more critical than Isherwood has been of McLure.

Ideologically both McClure and Alley belong to what Isherwood jokingly refers to as "The Moscow-Heaven Axis." This was the name that had been given to the house of

⁸Cunningham does cite *Journey*'s anecdote regarding Auden's "delighted fury" with the "lady missionary" at the American Mission Hospital who asked him "Are you insured with Jesus?"; and whose admonitory finger Auden "wishes he had bitten" (*Prose* 1: 596)—no doubt because of her presumption in lecturing Auden on anything but even more probably because of his disdain for her bad taste in kerygmatic rhetoric. Ironically, the snootily outraged, uncertainly secularist Auden, who is in this passage represented as a snob, would soon hear the Good News himself. In a further irony, one of Auden's exemplary Christians to be, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose martyrdom at Nazi hands Auden would commemorate with "Friday's Child," would see in insurance a revealing phenomenon of Christian faith and Western culture, and moreover a phenomenon whose motivation—human independence from nature—is identical with one of the principal themes of Auden's "In Time of War" and indeed of Auden's work as a whole (Bonhoeffer 337). See note 2, chapter 2 for the relationship between insurance and homosexual identity in *Goodbye*.

Bishop Roots, the Episcopalian bishop of Hankow, after the Communist Agnes Smedley began living there (514). More than a passing joke, however, the Moscow-Heaven Axis should be thought of as the actual ideological axis along which Auden and Isherwood oriented themselves throughout their journey. Thinking of it as an ideological, ethical pro-Chinese continuum, one imagines that towards the Heaven end, Isherwood would place the self-described “Christian revolutionary” Bishop Roots and Roots’ daughter who had recently visited the communist Eighth Route Army in Yen-an, as well as the Presbyterian McClure and his associate the Anglican medical missionary from Toronto Richard Brown (whom Isherwood presents as the straight man to McClure’s clown and who is encountered for a second time just before Brown leaves for Yen-an to assist the recently arrived Canadian communist Dr. Norman Bethune). Towards the Moscow end of the Moscow-Heaven axis are Smedley and Alley, even Mao Tse-tung, who is “said to have attended Mass as a gesture of goodwill towards the missionaries” (580). This tolerance of Mao’s, and phenomena like the Moscow-trained, Methodist convert Chiang Kai Shek broadcasting his April 16 “Message to Chinese Christians” are signs that the ‘Moscow-Heaven axis’ was in the context of the Anti-Japanese War a significant element in Chinese political life and geopolitical strategy.⁹ In 1938 Isherwood and Auden, as “In Time of War”’s fusion of Christian and Marxist themes shows, were looking for a place in an ill-defined middle

⁹Variants on Hankow’s and China’s Moscow-Heaven axis, such as Latin American Liberation Theology, have arisen over the last hundred years, and in comparison to other political movements, including the contemporary 1930s alliance of right-wing Catholicism and fascism, have been among the more attractive ideological alignments of modern times. One indication of the affinity between the Moscow and Heaven parties in mid-twentieth century China is their shared taste in film scores. As Jay Leyda points out in his history of Chinese film, Auden and Isherwood report (v. *Prose* 1: 536) hearing the 1935 song “The March of the Volunteers” from the Chinese film “Sons and Daughters of the Storm” “adapted as a Protestant hymn in a Canadian mission near Hankow.” The same song “was adopted by the Red Army and in 1949 became the national anthem of the People’s Republic of China” (Leyda 99). In 1982 “The March of the Volunteers” was officially named China’s national anthem.

region of this axis. Journey reveals, however, that they were moving decisively away from the outskirts of the Soviet capital in the direction of what turned out to be their separate religious destinations. “After two months,” Auden wrote a friend, “we are pro Chinese and pro missionary” (Carpenter 238).

Why, given that Isherwood and Auden were closely identified with the secular political left is Isherwood more at ease around Christians like McClure and Brown than around politicians like Smedley and Alley? The contrast of his treatment of missionaries and left-wingers is telling. Of both he can be admiring; of both he can be critical, but the nature of his criticism is far grimmer in the case of the left-wingers. His presentation of the missionaries is frequently comic, but contrary to what Cunningham suggests, Isherwood’s humour is not dismissive of the Christians. To borrow a nuance from Evening’s discussion of Camp, Isherwood is not “making fun of” the missionaries, he is “making fun out of” them (110). He may turn McClure into a figure of fun, but nothing seems seriously, pathologically wrong with McClure. In contrast, Isherwood’s Alley is no fun at all. With Alley, he may be deferential, but he makes Alley appear inhuman. Of Alley’s person, all we learn is that he is “a stocky New Zealander with light cropped ginger hair and a short rugged nose” (630). The brevity of this description of Alley and his nose is more significant than one might first suspect. Isherwood needs to get Alley’s nose into the picture because it is through that “short rugged nose” that Isherwood will signal his ambivalence to Alley and Alley’s politics when he describes Alley’s “snort” as “ferocious” (634). Alley’s ferocious snort hints at something beastlike and terrible in Alley’s character or in Alley’s vision of the future. This suggestion goes against the grain of other contemporary representations and later reminiscences of Alley. Aside from the odd exception, most notably Hyde’s diffident portrait of an ill-tempered, judgmental Alley as Caley in Dragon Rampant, early

representations of Alley dwell on the singularity and goodness of Alley's character: his physical strength and stamina, the memorable cragginess of his face, the moral qualities of his bearing, his determination, simplicity, altruism, openness, compassion, and capacity for friendship. The comment of the foreign medical specialist flown to Kiangsi by the Bishop of Hong Kong to treat Alley for life-threatening typhoid in 1940 strikes the predominant note in representations of Alley: "for days [the specialist] went about Hong Kong talking of Alley. 'A saint,' he told everybody in an awed voice. 'I went in there and found a saint'" (Snow "Blitzbuilder" 38).

Isherwood's portrait is an anomaly, and there is no lack of representations against which to measure Isherwood's Alley. By the time Alley passed away in 1987, there had been two English-language biographies; an autobiography; several documentary films, a New Zealand opera, a Canadian play, and a thirty-two part Chinese TV series on Alley's life; sculptures of Alley; innumerable articles on Alley and references to him in memoirs; Alley's own lamentable outpourings of fellow travelling chinoiserie; and a Rewi Alley Research Centre. The anomalousness of Isherwood's Alley explains why Alley's authorized biographers Airey and Chapple and even the revisionist biographer Brady, though they acknowledge Isherwood's interest in Alley, can incorporate no more from "Travel Diary" into their accounts of Alley than Fussell and Swingler can into their understandings of *Journey*. Anomalous though Isherwood's portrait of Alley may be, Helen Snow's much later recollections of Alley confirm Isherwood's suggestion of a funless ferocity in Alley: Alley's "sense of humour had been arrested, and he was God's angry man, volcanically alive with all kinds of frustrated indignation. 'I'd like to get behind a machine gun,' he announced, crushing walnuts with his fingers" (301). Isherwood could hardly help recognize his own much remarked upon angriness in the ferociousness of Alley, and their

common irascibility is an important similarity between the two men.

The ferociousness of Alley's snort occurs at a crucial juncture in the story of Journey. Well before Alley's ominous snort, it is clear we have entered a realm that is more intensely cruel than the diffuse, confused, relatively uneventful war zones that Auden and Isherwood have encountered earlier in China. Isherwood spends most of those final pages listing, enumerating, tabulating, and projecting rates of pay, daily working hours, registration fees, black market mark ups, labour costs, costs of accommodation, rates of profit, results of questionnaires, percentages, sizes of workforces, phases of action plans, industrial requirements, numbers of factories, numbers of people needed, and rates of mortality.

In comprehending the significance of all this quantified, organized, mortal information, we should recall Isherwood's persistent sense in the "Travel-Diary" of the lack of congruity between things and human efforts to represent, categorize, and name them and his sense of the constant slippage of signified and signifier. This preoccupation with numbers and quantifiable hard facts is also, as elsewhere in Auden's and Isherwood's work, a sign of the infernal and inhuman. We see this in the "Bureau of Statistics" in Auden's "The Unknown Citizen" from early 1939, a poem satirizing the use of instrumental reason as a measure of human experience. We see this in Auden's mature distinctions between, on the one hand, the Natural World of the Dynamo legitimately "describable not in words but in terms of numbers, or rather algebraic terms" where "Freedom is the consciousness of Necessity" and, on the other, the Chimerical World of "mechanized history" where faces illegitimately become masses and the Virgin a statistic (Hand 61-2). We see it when, as Lucy McDiarmid remarks in a discussion of the subordination of Art to the morality of Hunger and Love in Auden and Isherwood, "The deadpan listing of facts [. . .] gives notice

that [the radio script] *Hadrian's Wall* is another piece about tyranny" ("Liberating the Pseudoese" 145). At the end of the "Travel Diary," Isherwood presents the capacity of impersonal quantitative data to tyrannize and efface the human individual.

Alley is the guide who leads Isherwood and his readers to Journey's lowest, most dispiriting, moment and into the numerical and ethical inferno whose roaring threatens to engulf the human. The catastrophe of war, the hell of infinite enumerability and of meaningless tabulation; the suggestion in Alley of a beast-like ferocity—these signal that we have reached the low point in the quasi-mythic narrative structure of descent and ascent sketched at the outset of this chapter. However, it is not just that through Alley Isherwood descends into a dehumanizing inferno that the rest of Journey must struggle to get out of. Something more is amiss. Even before Isherwood's confusion about how to proceed and before Alley's frighteningly ferocious snort, the very manner in which Isherwood refers to Alley's activities and interventions shows that Isherwood is not as well-disposed to Alley as might be expected. We learn surprisingly little about Alley's appearance and comportment. Through several pages, Alley is the subject of only four verbs, all describing impersonal or official actions: "he has had its owner into court three times" (630); he "estimates" that forty thousand children will die (631); he "is convinced" China will not win the war without an inland industrial co-operative movement (632); he "points out" the Chinese government's success with agricultural co-operatives (633). This depersonalized Alley is in his element as Virgil-like he guides Isherwood through Shanghai's infrastructural and superstructural disaster. Isherwood's Alley remains faceless, except for his ginger hair and "short rugged nose," and reveals nothing of himself until he snorts ferociously through it at the thought of the once and future Communist initiatives of 1927.

The almost absolute impersonality that results from Isherwood's effacement of

Alley contrasts with the fascinated amusement of his memoir of McClure, or the fascinated gush in his cameo of Madame Chiang: “The poet-journalists Auden and Isherwood had been so impressed by Madame Chiang that they almost exhausted the English language of adjectives. In one short paragraph they used: vivacious, cultivated, simple, affectionate, terrible, gracious, ruthless, and clinging. They were also impressed by her perfume” (Scott 238). Isherwood’s non-portrait of Alley is therefore a radical contrast not only to other writers’ portrayals of Alley, but to Isherwood’s treatment of other individuals. The blankness of Alley is reminiscent of the blankness of the Isherwood narrator of Goodbye. In fact, at the end of “Travel-Diary” both Isherwood and Alley approach states of textual non-entity. As he relays Alley’s vision of things, Isherwood completely absents himself from the picture, until, that is, his sudden final reassertion of his own incongruous, useless presence—a reassertion all the more forceful for his preceding absence. The blankness of Alley and Isherwood in the conclusion of “Travel-Diary” is comparable to Auden’s absence in Journey’s sonnets as evident in his avoidance of first person singular pronouns, his adoption of third person pronouns, his epistemological objectivity, and his single recourse to the objective pronoun “me.” What is more, Isherwood’s concluding reassertion of individual subjectivity recurs, in the case of Auden, in the conclusion of “Commentary” when Auden finally utters, once, a first person subjective “I”.

In the diary Isherwood kept as he worked on Journey in the fall of 1938, Isherwood calls himself a man without qualities: “I once read the title of a German novel (I forget the author’s name) *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaft*. That, I’ve come to feel more and more, just describes me. For the more I think about myself, the more I’m persuaded that, as a person, I really don’t exist” (“Diary” 1935-38” 38). There is an obvious link between this private self-perception of Isherwood’s and his presentation of his textual narrators. The lack of

affect and sexuality, the qualitylessness, of Isherwood's namesake narrator in Goodbye is a passive aggressive expression of Isherwood's unrepresentable homosexuality. So, when Isherwood turns both himself and Alley into barely perceptible Men Without Qualities at the end of "Travel-Diary," it is reasonable to wonder about the connection between the absence of personal characterization and the issue of their homosexuality.

Isherwood's Alley is a Man Without Qualities for virtually the entirety of the "Travel-Diary"'s conclusion. What is more, when Isherwood does hint at the idea of Alley's fleshly person, his description of the physical feature that will be most significant, Alley's nose, misrepresents Alley's actual appearance. Photos reveal that far from having a "short rugged nose," Alley had a prominent, long and markedly sharp nose. We have already seen Hogg's eyebrow-raising reference, in his description of Alley's boy-swarming cave, to the "generous proportions of the foreigner's nose" (132). When Simone de Beauvoir met Alley in Peking in the 1950s, she too noted that "de près on remarque [. . .] son grand nez" (24). Alley's nose is, in fact, much remarked upon. A New Zealand school journal, *Aotearoa*, refers to Alley by the nickname "Kao Pi-tzu—tall nose" (cited in Brady 7), and Brady confirms that Alley's nose "was big like an eagle's beak, all the Alley relatives on the male side seem to have this nose" (E-mail to author. 3 July 2002). Snow describes being struck by "the man's great head, with a profile like something carved from Stone Mountain" (Battle 92), "those long-view eyes, his reddish hair, and his hawklike nose" (93); and later revisits that description: "Flaming red hair, a big head, a hawklike nose. He's built like a bulldozer" (Beginning 201). Peck concurs with Snow: Alley "was not a large man, but built on such rugged lines with wide shoulders and a strongly aquiline face"; "with his prow of a face turned into the wind, he looked like a seer" (150).

Alley's nose utterly dominates the bust of Alley entitled "Profile of Tomorrow"

which Francis Shurrock did for the Royal Academy in 1937 and included in the Academy's 1938 exhibition. There is no evidence that Isherwood saw the bust there after he returned from China, but a photo of the bust in full-snouted profile later illustrated Snow's Saturday Evening Post piece. The Chinese too, impressed as always by the size of occidental noses, could not help noticing Alley's snout. Alley told Snow of the impression his nose made: Alley "was riding on an ancient bus through Kiangsi one day when a bearded elder in front of him spoke to a youth seated alongside. 'Chinese make better aviators than foreigners,' the elder enigmatically remarked, 'they can see on all sides.' [. . .] 'Just take a look at that Tall Nose behind us. How can he see around an obstacle like that?'" (Battle 200). "In Alley's case," continues Snow, ever a promoter of Alley's vision, "the English proboscis proved no handicap."

If otherwise there is unanimity that Alley's nose was big, long, and sharp, why does Isherwood represent it as short? In the diary that Isherwood and Auden kept during their China trip, Isherwood describes Alley as a "stocky rugged nosed New Zealander" (entry for June 3), and it is out of that phrase that Isherwood generates the image of "A stocky New Zealander with [. . .] a short rugged nose." Whether this is an unconscious metonymic lapse of memory in which Alley's nose stands not so much for itself but rather for Alley's entire short rugged stature, or whether Isherwood has deliberately distorted the nasal aspect of Alley's physiognomy, the falsification of the dimensions of Alley's nose emphasizes the contrast between Alley and Isherwood. Isherwood earlier has Auden remarking on to the largeness of Isherwood's own nose—"“You looked wonderful,’ [Auden] told me [after photographing Isherwood lying on his back during an air raid], ‘with your great nose cleaving the summer air’” (552), a comment which Isherwood thought worth quoting again forty years later in Kind (303).

The issue of Isherwood's nose arises in a peculiar diary entry made when he was back in England mulling over his China material. Recognizing that war with Germany seems imminent, Isherwood decides to keep a journal that "may even be of some value, to somebody, later" ("Diary 1935-38" 38). Rather, though, than a meditation on the global political crisis, Isherwood writes, with characteristic narcissism that "if I am to do these notes properly, I'd better begin with a portrait of myself" (39). In the course of the same entry where he applies Musil's title "Man Without Qualities" to himself, he also provides an inventory of his features and a self-assessment at age thirty-four. Isherwood observes "My nose is too big, of course, and it will become fleshy later; but even if it were small and straight, I certainly could never be called good-looking: my head is such an odd shape."

Like Alley, Isherwood had a short body, but a large nose on a large head ("your enormous head," Auden calls it, with a boyish double entendre, in "Birthday Poem"). Photos in the biographies of the two men reveal the resemblances of their faces: high foreheads, same hair cuts, similar eyes, similar smiles, big noses. Yet when he writes in Journey of his encounter with Alley, Isherwood does not just ignore his physical similarity to Alley. He transforms their most prominent similarity, their large noses, into a point of contrast between them, as if to draw attention away from how similar—physically similar; and both angry; both gay; both writers; both traumatized by the Great War; both vaguely left-wing; both, in Isherwood's text, men without qualities—they in fact were. The presentation of the single emphatic physical difference of Alley's short rugged nose and Isherwood's great air-cleaving nose coincides with the jarring idea at the end of "Travel-Diary" of a great difference between their respective practical and ethical stances toward the socio-political challenges confronting them in China.

The near effacement of Alley as a person in Isherwood's conclusion has a political

and social significance in so far as it presents the liquidation of individuality in materialistic corporatist or Communist thought and the public invisibility of the homosexual. Certainly there is something unnerving about Alley's facelessness, just as in Auden's poems "killing is always an *effacement*" [original italics] (Mendelson Later 156). The shock of the faceless Alley's ominous final ferocious snort is an instance of Isherwood's progressive revelation of character through the technique of his "dynamic portraits" in which "a portrait grows" through successive revelations "until finally it looks completely different" than it did at first (Isherwood Conversations 6). The distortion of Alley's facial features is harder to account for, especially since the theme of the face is central in both Isherwood's and Auden's work.

It is worth recalling that Auden dedicated his Poems (1930) to Isherwood with the epigraph "Private faces in public places / Are wiser and nicer / Than public faces in private places"; and that the first page of Mr. Norris focuses on Norris' face; and that Isherwood's work contains so many portraits of individuals to whose faces Isherwood is particularly attentive. In Journey, the theme of the face is ubiquitous. In contrast to his presentation of a faceless Alley, Isherwood immediately personalizes Charleton as "a big, bald man with the face of a good-humoured don or judge" (587). The ideas of the face and of the individuality of features recur in Journey's sonnets, as does the word "face," and Auden's photos in "Picture Commentary" are predominantly individual portraits. For his part, Isherwood frequently turns his attention in the "Travel Diary" to reflecting on faces. Leo Oufan Lee appreciates Isherwood's perceptive comments on Chinese film acting styles and the then unrealized expressive potential of the Chinese face (109). In fact, analogies to the photographic and the cinematographic are basic to Isherwood's understanding of his own work, especially texts, like "Travel Diary," from the late 1930s. "I am a camera", writes Isherwood's narrator in the opening of Goodbye, and in Lions, the "cinema [. . .] coincides

with his fascination for ‘the outward appearance of people—their facial expressions, their gestures, their walk, their nervous tricks’” [sic] (Mizejewski 75 / 85-86).

The emphasis on the face in Journey contrasts with the facelessness of the Chinese in Julia Kristeva’s Des chinoises and Roland Barthes’ Alors la Chine?. In those later texts, “no one person is ever engaged or described. China exists only as a vast landscape of faceless indistinguishable people—‘ce peuple immense’—who are of one homogeneous character” (Lowe 181). In L’empire des signes as well, Barthes reads “the Japanese face as ‘un signe vide’” (159). Criticizing the persistence of an Orientalizing insistence on the complete otherness of China and Japan in Kristeva and Barthes’ postcolonial texts, Lowe explains the recurrence of classical Orientalist motifs in their texts in terms of the unreal utopian significance “as absolutely nonoccidental phenomena” (178) that Maoism and the Cultural Revolution had for much of the French left in the early 1970s. Isherwood and Auden’s insistence on the individuality of the Chinese testifies to the radically different, richer perception of China possible in 1938 when China appeared not as a “utopian antithesis” (140) to Western culture and Western categories, but, however disorientingly foreign, appeared also as a real and essential military ally, as a local variant on a global political crisis, as a cultural interlocutor on par with the West, and as a potentially democratic as well as a potentially Christian society. In contrast to Barthes, who in rendering China a transcendent Other “allows little correspondence between the China of Alors la Chine? and the historical circumstances of struggle and chance in the People’s Republic of China” (175) (and who reveals no concern for the circumstances of an enormous tyranny), Auden and Isherwood do perceive the accidents of individuality, circumstance, and history in 1938 China.

Though there are photos in the “Picture Commentary” of individuals and types

described in the “Travel Diary,” there is no photo of Alley. Alley was famous and photogenic, and his picture would have enhanced the “Picture Commentary,” but a photo of him would have undone the operations of effacement and defacement that Isherwood has performed. Alley’s facelessness and the disturbing lack of humanity it implies are anticipated by Isherwood’s portrayal of Agnes Smedley, a friend of Alley¹⁰ and unlike Alley a declared Communist: “That Miss Smedley had agreed to be photographed at all was a great concession. ‘If you weren’t a leftist writer,’ she told Auden, ‘I shouldn’t let you do this. I hate my face’” (585). But there is no photo of Smedley either—as if in confirmation of the lady Communist’s willful self-effacement, the photographs Auden had taken of Smedley were “to our lasting regret [. . .] all blurred or spoilt” (586). In contrast, the inimitable Mme. Chiang has the distinctions of appearing first in the “Picture Commentary,” of being the only person whose photo appears twice, and of being the only woman other than a surgically masked nurse to make it into Auden’s gallery of notable men. Smedley and Alley share qualities besides facelessness. Like Alley, Smedley is “so grim and sour and passionate” (519). There is too their common asceticism: for “Miss Smedley”, the Red Army is her “whole life—her husband and her child” (581). Isherwood’s suggestion of Smedley’s total sublimation of her sexuality to her cause matches the absence of sensuality and subjectivity in Isherwood’s Alley.¹¹ Indeed the

¹⁰Smedley was also a friend of Clark-Kerr, who told Freda Utley “he thought Agnes was ‘the greatest woman he had ever met’” (Utley *Story* 107).

¹¹In spite of Isherwood’s impertinent remarks, Smedley’s love life in China was respectably passionate. Her lovers included Chinese patrician poet Xu Zhimo; a Manchurian translator ten years her junior; a Western surgeon; and a German masquerading as a correspondent while spying for the Soviets. “Smedley determined to ‘take sex like a man’. For several weeks she seemed to bring home ‘anything in pants that she found around town’” (Mackinnon *Smedley* 140-1). Smedley was “sent packing” from Yen’an after square-dances she organized became occasions for Mao’s philandering and caused some vociferous marital discord in which Mao’s wife called Smedley an “Imperialist whore” and Mao a “Son of a pig, turtle’s egg, whoremongering no-good!” (Chang 194-5). Ironically, considering his uneasiness in *Journey* with what he saw as a pathological self-denial

apparent lack of erotic love in Alley's life is a striking negative aspect of the Airey and Chapple authorized biographies of Alley. Only with Brady's strong recasting of Alley as a closeted homosexual riven by contradictions were the erotic dimensions of Alley's life given the attention they deserve as a critical part of his human, all too human, story.

It is as if Isherwood's dehumanization of Alley indicates an intuition on Isherwood's part of the silence and taboo with which Alley managed to cloak his erotic life. Few were more sensitive to that kind of silence and taboo than the author of Goodbye, that masterpiece of homosexual indirection and revealing self-erasure. There is no way to know for certain whether Isherwood saw Alley as gay, even if popular ideas about the immediacy of homosexuals' mutual recognition suggest he would have, but Isherwood's portrayal of Alley does imply something is amiss. In the overall context of the inchoately spiritual Journey Isherwood's concluding portrait of Alley surely makes a humanistic, incipiently religious point about the omission of the individual in collectivist, materialist political thinking. By contrasting so starkly Isherwood's own inconveniently fruity self to Alley's impersonality, Isherwood dramatizes the risk of the obliteration of the individual in Alley's objective, narrowly politicised, inhumanly numerical perspective, and reminds us more generally of the obliteration of individuality in warfare and in mid-twentieth century collectivising political movements like Nazism and Communism, and in the modern reliance on instrumental statistical reason to conceive of human life. Isherwood's conclusion also has a specifically homosexual significance. It records the falseness of the lack of affect in the public mask adopted by the closeted homosexual, and enacts the special risk of the (self-) obliteration of the homosexual in the face of ideological and social

of sexuality in left-wingers like Alley and Smedley, Isherwood would soon try to escape or sublimate his sexuality as he prepared to become a celibate Hindu monk in bohemian Santa Monica.

conformism. In this context, the sudden shattering of their common qualitylessness through the revelation of Isherwood's fruitiness and Alley's pent up anger becomes an act of homosexual resistance on Isherwood's part. This resistance involves, not just Isherwood's timid self-exposure, but in his depiction of Alley's nose an implicitly aggressive criticism of Alley too. The homosexual context of Isherwood's conclusion allows us to see in the diminishment of Alley's nose relative to the insistence on Isherwood's own big nose a gesture of symbolic castration. It is as if Isherwood is confirming Alley's self-excision of his own phallus, in order for Isherwood to preserve himself from a similar psycho-sexual mutilation.

SISSYWOOD VERSUS ALLEY-MAN

If Isherwood is ambivalent towards the sexless, faceless ideologues Smedley and Alley, he also feels that they and others no doubt return the favour. Alley probably despised Isherwood's ineffectual "liberal and humanitarian intellectual," for as Helen Snow tells us, Alley "had a blind spot when it came to 'intellectuals', who refused to work with their hands" (301). Isherwood certainly believes that Smedley (who resembles Isherwood in the way she is "so mercilessly critical of everyone, herself included") judges the young authors "suspiciously, with her fearless, bitter grey eyes," and gives Auden and himself "a bad mark" (519). Even the good natured, fun, but exceedingly vigorous McClure, suspects Isherwood, "considered our possession of beds and a private servant as slightly sissy" (530).

Whatever McClure, Smedley, or Alley (colonials or Americans all) thought of metropolitan Isherwood, the issue of Isherwood's sissiness comes to the fore in the campiness of his diary's closing lines. Isherwood's suspicion regarding others' condemnation of his sissiness is consistent with Bryant's question about whether some critics object to Journey because of its authors' "failure to measure up as 'real' men" (142).

That final picture of the “well-meaning tourist, the liberal and humanitarian intellectual” wringing his hands and exclaiming “Oh dear” is the book’s most obtrusive moment of sissiness. The campiness which Isherwood displays so briefly after Alley’s grim concluding tour of Shanghai have already been displayed in much more leisurely and humourous fashion at the *Journey’s End*, but there the fruitiness is Isherwood’s by association, and is embodied rather in the person of the risible Mr. Charleton.

The ending’s fruity “Oh dear” is clearly set in contrast to Alley’s ferocious snorting. When critics judge Isherwood’s fruitiness harshly, as Swingler does for Isherwood’s uninvolved or as Fussell does for his campiness, they forget to read his “Oh dear” in relation to Alley’s snorting reference to 1927. It is easy to reject Isherwood’s fairyishness and self-conscious helplessness, even easier to do so when we recall Isherwood’s narcissism, vanity, immoral whoring, taste for impoverished boys, and heartless self-centredness. Less immediately obvious is the sinister potential of Alley’s asceticism, faceless selflessness, and his fierce evocation of the Chinese communists. Isherwood’s persona is rightly an object of criticism, as is Isherwood, but that criticism needs to engender an equally critical evaluation of Alley’s persona. For Isherwood is presenting for contemplation the tension between irreducible poles of human incompleteness: the subjective and the objective; the individual and the collective; the self-indulgently self-involved and the self-abnegating community-minded; the ineffectually benevolent and the decisively violent.

To use a quintessentially Chinese expression, which Isherwood must have appreciated, Isherwood allows himself to lose face. By presenting himself as an impractical sissy, he invites criticism of himself, but he is losing face precisely because he shows, instead of what the suffering of the Chinese and the need for a wartime strategy call for,

something of his real face. For Isherwood, the human face, the private face in the public place, not faceless numbers, not a public mask, is an uncircumventable bearer of human truth. This is not sentimentality, since the truths of the human face are not necessarily comforting, but can be as unwelcome as any other form of truth, including Alley's. Yet the unwelcome truth conveyed through Isherwood's loss of face must be embraced. As Cunningham observes, the "reluctant acceptance of lowliness, cowardly baseness, heroic failure, may be [. . .] the best thing about the '30s business of heroics" (176).

The contrast of Alley's compelling impersonal collectivist altruism to Isherwood's disturbingly self-centred personal truth involves dimensions in which Isherwood's political idiot begins to look more attractive than Alley's gung-ho cadre. For in the context of 1938, Isherwood's campy tourist embodies Isherwood's demurral from a vicious fellow-travelling ideological conformity. The pressures on young British writers to adopt a proto-Communist position in the 1930s were enormous, especially in "Hitler's year" as John Lukacs has called 1938. 1938 was, however, also the year of Stalin's show trials, and in any case Soviet atrocities had by then damaged the Communist cause beyond repair, no matter how long the list is of people who did not accept that it was so. In *Journey*, Isherwood reveals that he will no longer pretend to be or let others imagine that he might be a fellow-traveller. Just as Auden in "In Time of War" paradoxically turns away from a Marxist position at a moment of maximum engagement with Marxian perspectives, and does so by implication, by omission, or by creative ideological inclusiveness, so Isherwood's turn is signalled unexpectedly, idiosyncratically, and indirectly, and occurs as he relays Alley's proto-Communist perspective almost without impediment.

More than just a demurral from proto-Communist commitment, however, Isherwood's presentation of himself at the end of "Travel Diary" implies an act of resistance

specifically to Communist orthodoxy in so far as it challenges current left-wing condemnation and oppression of homosexuals. When the 1917 Bolshevik revolution repealed Russian anti-homosexual laws, homosexuals and others had been able to look to the Communist left as the vanguard of a movement to put an end to the legal prohibition of homosexuality and of a more general sexual liberation. However, “the Communist Party of the Soviet Union became increasingly puritanical and homophobic under Stalin and finally promulgated a new anti-sodomy statute in 1934” (Hekma et al 23). Isherwood remembers being disturbed by Soviet sanctions against homosexuality:

I never really joined the Communist Party in any way. [. . .] the tremendous stumbling block to me personally was the homosexual question: the treatment of homosexuals in Russia—which was absolutely in contravention to their original declarations, that the private life was no concern—was something which kept being brought up again and again with my friends [. . .] The point was that the Russians started to equate homosexuality with fascism. And this in itself was such a loathsome piece of hypocrisy that, while I hardly admitted it to myself at the time, I see now that a government that can lie like that about one thing is really profoundly rotten all the way through, and just like any other government, in fact—and not at all the Kingdom of Heaven! So that alone would prevent me. (Conversations 65)

As an instance of the individual’s resistance to political conformism, as a defence of the subjective, idiosyncratic, irreducibly imperfect in human experience, Isherwood’s foregrounding of the individual situation of his frail self in the final paragraphs of the “Travel-Diary” has broad political significance. As the assertion of his own fagginess in the face of aggressive collectivist prohibition and condemnation, Isherwood’s campy narrator has a specifically homosexual significance. Between the destruction of the Weimar homosexual emancipation movement, which Isherwood witnessed, and the post-Stonewall formation of a gay liberationist sensibility, which in the 1960s and 1970s Isherwood helped usher in, there were many dark nights for homosexuals, whether in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, the McCarthyite United States, or Maoist China. 1938, however, is perhaps

close to the nadir of homosexuals' public fortunes and of the 'hiding' period of gay publishing that lasted from 1933 to 1967 (Bergman 6). In this other political context, the context in which Isherwood's work is consistently engaged, his public display of sissiness, rather than being a revelation of apolitical unmanliness, is politically defiant and courageous.

It is not that one must now choose the sissy Isherwood as the true hero over the more heroically masculine Alley. Rather the opposition of Alley and Isherwood presents a crucial moment in Isherwood's development of the dialectic of the Truly Strong and the Truly Weak Men. Beyond Isherwood's own preoccupation with the Truly Strong and the Truly Weak, however, Alley and Isherwood, as opposed, but inseparably related terms, provide an instructive variation on a contemporary idea of the modern hero less ironically expressed in 1938 in the comic book debuts of the meek, inhibited Clark Kent and his alter ego the crusading world-saving Superman. Any evaluation of the opposed Alley and Isherwood personae at the end of "Travel-Diary" must also consider them in the particular political context of homosexuality. Alley's apparent impersonal objectivity and ferocity mask personal realities which are not shown in the "Travel-Diary," either by Isherwood or Alley, and which in fact all his life the historical Alley would be too weak and vulnerable to show, and would work diligently to hide. Alley's whole life, or at least his personally compromised, ideologically sycophantic post-1949 adventure as crusading champion for the tyrannical CCP, can look from an Isherwoodian perspective like a long self-evading and futile version of the search for the North-West passage. By contrast, it takes some personal strength for Isherwood to display his weakness and his sissiness in the face of political and moral prohibitions against homosexuality and unmanliness and in anticipation of the certain condemnation of readers like Swinger and Fussell. Weighing the Alley and Isherwood

personae in the balance, one must admit that however much falsehood and imperfection each bears, neither possesses the whole human truth. If each figure is threatened by that part of the truth embodied by the other, surely in 1938 with murderous anti-individualistic homophobic totalitarianism ascendent in the world and with actual oppression and murders in the offing for homosexuals world-wide, the threat of Alley's 'selfless' truth to Isherwood, as to Alley himself, is much more dangerous than the threat of Isherwood's selfish and private sissy truth to Alley. We cannot but be provoked by Isherwood's out of place fagginess and uninvolved in bombed-out Shanghai, but we must also understand that for good reason the ferociously snorting Alley may be a figure to fear. The danger to individual integrity inherent in Alley's position in 1938 has been amply born out not only in the obliteration of homosexuals and human individuals in the history of Communism in China, but also in the sad fakeness and moral confusion of Alley's singular life story. The intuition of this danger seems inextricably part of Isherwood's portrait of Alley. Paradoxically, in the end of the "Travel-Diary," a moment of apparently maximum objectivity and deferential substitution of Alley for himself, Isherwood crafts a conclusion that has turned out to be politically prophetic, by relying on his own subjective intuition and most private personal truth.

The end of the "Travel-Diary" is not Fussell's moment of homecoming and social reintegration, even if in Shanghai, Auden and Isherwood encounter Auden's hometown in the H.M.S. Birmingham and dimensions of their cultural selves in the embassy of the British Empire. The ending with Alley is, though, a moment of mirror reflection in Journey. For in coming face to face with Alley, the reflective authorial substitute, Isherwood comes face to face with a version of what he himself would have become had he denied himself rather than weakly defying his own effacement. Isherwood's encounter with

himself in Shanghai also reveals the true obstacle to his integration into society, namely Isherwood's homosexuality. The final moment of "Travel-Diary" is therefore a crucial moment in Isherwood's Chinese journey "au fond de la connaissance de soi." As with the previous endings at the Journey's End and in Wenchow, the painful moment of self-knowledge and self-revelation with Alley in Shanghai requires that Isherwood enact a wrenching turn away from the false ideological and personal terminus that Alley represents.

In each of the endings of "Travel-Diary," Isherwood turns away from a powerful contemporary vision of the world: away from a sentimental colonial vision in Wenchow; away from fascistic erotic hedonism at the Journey's End; away from self-denying impersonal Communist commitment in Shanghai. Together the three endings constitute an almost complete, if negative, political programme for the 1930s. Isherwood does not offer a concluding moment of social reintegration in "Travel-Diary," no positive moment of ideological homecoming. The positive reintegrative moment is left for Auden to achieve at the end of Journey after a long labour of ideological reconstruction by way of the faces and human categories of "Picture Commentary," the historical review of the sonnet sequence, and the sublime messianic reconciliation of "Commentary." Isherwood does not represent such a moment for himself partly because Isherwood's homosexuality in itself impeded his reconciliation with any place or world view available in 1938. It is also true, however, that "Travel-Diary" is not relentlessly negative. The negative turnings away in the successive endings of "Travel-Dairy," as well as the critical use of the Gospel to present erotic and spiritual temptation and the surprisingly sympathetic portrayal of missionaries, all of these implicitly announce new beginnings as well as endings. They point to the world views and place where Isherwood would begin to make his political and ideological homes. They point to the actually existing electoral republicanism of the United States (which Isherwood

had encountered between his early 1938 Chinese journey and the late 1938 composition of Journey); and point to the pacifist Christian activism of the Quakers, and beyond that to an imperfectly realized Vedantic spirituality; they point too to Isherwood's later gay liberationism. It is in the course of his detour through China, which began as his own search for the North-West passage, that Isherwood admirably, but not recklessly, initiates these new beginnings by turning away in "Travel-Diary" from the falseness of Fascism, colonialism, Communism, sexual heartlessness, and homosexual self-denial. It is during his Chinese journey that we see a baffled and gay Isherwood encountering the individual Chinese faces, the "Americans and colonials," and the genial Christian missionaries, who direct him away from all that to the strange place that will become his home.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A HUMAN APOCALYPSE

Literature is a human apocalypse, man's revelation to man,
and criticism is not a body of adjudications, but the awareness
of that revelation, the last judgement of mankind.

Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination*

FROM THE SONNETS TO "COMMENTARY"

A neglected poem, "Commentary" is a defining moment in Auden's work. Its poetic shortcomings have prevented critics from perceiving the poem's thematic soundness. In "Commentary," two major themes come together in a late modernist presentation of Auden's emerging postmodern notions of redemption and of the modern city. "Commentary" constitutes a missing link that joins McDiarmid's discussion of the theme of the city in Auden and Mendelson's discussion of redemptionism in Auden. In "Commentary," Auden strives to reveal the grounds for an imperilled human hopefulness and gestures towards an idea of a paradisaical condition that, though an essential aspect of his vision, remains elusive throughout his work. "Commentary" uncovers complementary messianic principles that become permanent features of Auden's work.

Few will ever read "Commentary" for pleasure. The cumulative effect of the poem is of a long droning. Reading it, one sees the pertinence of complaints about the willed prolixity of some of Auden's work (Rowse 17). Orwell's sarcastic comment that with the work of the 'Auden generation,' there is a shift from a high modernist "twilight of the gods into a sort of Boy Scout atmosphere of bare knees and community singing" ("Whale" 510) captures some aspects of the 'later early' Auden of "Commentary." The imagery of the poem at one point—" [our dead] aid us everywhere, that in the lovers' bedroom, [. . . / . . .] the public meeting, / The enemies of life may be more passionately attacked" (686)—flops into laughable bathos. In contrast to the assuredness of *Journey's* sonnets, the poem displays the uncertainty of tone that Fussell condemns. Despite its defects, though, "Commentary" rewards close attention. Read in the context of *Journey*, the poem's ambitious vision complements the humorous personal uncertainties of "Travel-Diary" and the historical perspicacity of the sonnet sequence. Seen in the context of the rest of Auden's

oeuvre, “Commentary” fascinates, because of the contrast of its aesthetic failings to its complex thematic success. In our reading, the poem has a special importance because “Commentary” finally resolves the aesthetic and thematic problems of how this book will end.

One might expect its function as conclusion to make critics attend carefully to “Commentary,” yet no critic has given “Commentary” a remotely adequate reading. Fussell in his criticisms of the way Journey ends gravitates mistakenly to the ending of Isherwood’s “Travel Diary” and lumps “Commentary,” with the sonnets, as “among Auden’s very worst things.” Most critics seem to discourage the idea that “Commentary” is worth trying to understand. This state of affairs is unsurprising. For replete as it is with abstract thought, dense moral argument, heterogeneous historical information, and long complex, sometimes imperfectly structured, sentences, “Commentary” is the book’s least pleasurable section. “Commentary” is also the culmination one of the least aesthetically accomplished strands in Auden’s work. “Commentary” belongs to a series of poems expressing the early Auden’s Bloomean struggle with his Modernist predecessors, specifically with the unmastered influence of Dante as he had been defined by Eliot and with the modernist-Dantean aesthetic that the older Stevens and Pound were working through at the same time. This somewhat neglected strand of Auden’s work is nonetheless essential in his aesthetic and ideological development. “Commentary” is a crucial moment in that development and its engagement with some of his most persistent philosophical preoccupations is as profound as that of the sonnets that precede it. Thus, Binni’s description of “In Time of War” as “la più decisa operazione audeniana del decennio 1930” (25) embraces both the sonnets and “Commentary.” In contrast, Mendelson, who praises the sonnets as “magnificent” (Early 202), as a “moral achievement” (Later 305), as “Auden’s most profound and audacious

poem of the 1930s, perhaps the greatest English poem of the decade" (Early 248), joins Fussell in dismissing "Commentary." For Mendelson, the poem is propagandistic (200), inauthentic (246), leaden (301), wordy, wooden, lame, tired, circular, simplifying, and self-contradictory (358). When great poets write as badly as Auden seems to in "Commentary," particularly when "Commentary" is the second part of a sequence whose first part contains some of his best work, it is worth questioning the causes of his lapse.¹ This questioning becomes more urgent as it becomes apparent that the aesthetic failure of "Commentary" stands in contrast to its thematic accomplishment.

Auden himself was dissatisfied with "Commentary" as a work of art. In the midst of its composition, he was "uncertain whether this kind of thing is possible without becoming a prosy pompous old bore" (Carpenter 242). He later revised "Commentary" for the 1945 American edition of his Collected Poetry, though his revisions concern the matter and not the manner of the poem. That revised version survives in the 1950 British edition of his Collected Shorter Poems, after which Auden excluded "Commentary" from his canon (Prose 1: 831). He did, though, allow it to reappear in the 1973 edition of Journey when, forgetting or undoing his earlier revisions, Auden made new changes to the matter of "Commentary," while apologizing for the poem in a preface as far too "preachy in manner" (831).

Though the revisions of 1945 and 1973 shed no light on Auden's discontentment with the manner of "Commentary," they draw attention to ideological nuances in the original version and to the continuing significance of the poem in Auden's work. More

¹One reason for the dullness of "Commentary" relative to the sonnets is its diminished engagement with sexuality. Whereas an oblique, subtle, or playful attentiveness to Eros runs through the sonnets' review of human conditions past and present, erotic concerns seldom gleam through the dense dullness of "Commentary." The inconspicuousness of Eros in "Commentary" makes more curious the discretely tendentious associations of homosexuality and heterosexuality with the different terms of the poem's opposition of fascistic militarism to democratic humanism.

importantly, given the controversies associated with Auden's revision or rejection of some early poems, those revisions reveal that Auden never repudiated "Commentary." Auden may have recognized that "Commentary" was potentially boring and preachy. Mendelson may feel that "Commentary" is inauthentic dross, but unlike various unpublished, revised, or disowned poems such as "Spain 1937" and "September 1, 1939" with which Mendelson groups "Commentary," Auden never condemns "Commentary" as morally or ideologically offensive, other than in his mild remark that the poem was "too New Deal" (Mendelson Early 200n)—a belated confirmation that the U.S. of Roosevelt is in some ways Journey's real ideological destination. Rather than reject it, Auden even gave the poem a retrospective emphasis when, violating the chronological order of his work, he used it pointedly as the conclusion to the Collected Shorter Poems (Beach 8). Furthermore, writing in 1973 in defence of the function of the poet as preacher, Auden implies that, though he "should do it very differently," he might even "preach the same sermon to-day" (Prose 1: 830). In spite of his uncertainty about the poem's style, Auden stands by the substance of "Commentary."

One aesthetic difficulty in "Commentary" derives from Auden's efforts to write about human virtue to resolve not just the compositional problem of how Journey should end, but to resolve the ethical problems of what the End of Man is, of how one should live, and how one should act in the political crises of 1938. One easily imagines how urgent this task must have seemed. "Commentary" is a flawed poem in part because of this topical urgency, but also because, as Auden would write later, without the exceptional assistance of Ariel, the description of virtuousness, of "Thick-headed goodness," is often a "bore" (Collected 406). It is also true, though, that "never / to be dull shows a lack of taste" (693), as Auden notes of poetry and truth in "The Cave of Making," and for all its dullness, "Commentary" deserves attention as one of Auden's most ethically, conceptually, and

ideologically fraught poems.

“Commentary” is also a key poem because it participates in Auden’s discovery of his mature rhetorical pattern. Mendelson’s description of the rhetorical pattern of myth and parable, enchantment and disenchantment, in the later Auden corresponds to the pattern of rhetoric in Journey’s sonnet sequence and to the inherent Before and After structure of a sonnet’s octave and sestet. We have also seen the Before and After, or Then and Now, alternation that structures successive chapters in Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary” and seen how this temporal binarism is analogous to a set of interactive binary structures developed throughout Journey. The whole example of Journey makes it imperative that we examine closely the binary relationship of the parts of “In Time of War.” The exact arithmetical analogy that we noted in chapter three between the ratio of the two parts of a sonnet and the two parts of “In Time of War” suggests that “Commentary” follows the sonnet sequence of according to an intentional logic. Formally, the relationship of the first and second parts of “In Time of War” looks like the conventional relationship of the first and second parts of a sonnet. As a purely proportional relation, this is merely curious. However, as an aspect of Auden’s fascination with sonnet structures in Journey and an indication of a semantic dimension in the relationship between the sequence of sonnets and “Commentary,” the formal relationship of the two parts of “In Time of War” helps us interpret the significance of both parts. Semantically, the crucial aspect of this relationship relates to the idea of a turn. Just as there is a turn between octave and sestet, so is the sonnet-like relationship of parts in “In Time of War” indicative of a turn occurring between the sonnets and “Commentary.”

Although the precision of the formal relationship of “Commentary” and the sonnet sequence indicates that there is a comprehensible logic to the relationship between the two,

no one has ever discussed the relationship of the different parts of "In Time of War." It is not enough to note that the sonnets are more successful than their "Commentary." Nor is it enough to note that "Commentary," in some unclear way, "performs the service promised by its title. It elucidates at great length the historical sonnets in the first half of the sequence" (Mendelson Early 358). In fact, this is untrue, since "Commentary" is as concerned with the present moment of 1938 and the Sino-Japanese War as are the sonnets of the sequence's first half. "Commentary" actually reveals, relative to the sonnets, a much more conscientious and systematic effort on Auden's part to integrate an awareness of Chinese history and culture into a large historical vision and into his perception of the present geopolitical moment. Though critics have neglected "Commentary" and the multifaceted relationship of the two parts of "In Time of War," "Commentary" is at least as historically and cosmically comprehensive, and as thematically and dialogically rich, as the sonnet sequence; its poetic has its own complex inner workings to which only close reading grants one access.

The complexity of both parts of "In Time of War" and the overlap of their subject matter obscure the nature of the turn that occurs as we move from Auden's epic sonnets to his "Commentary." Yet given the semantic, syntactic, and rhetorical emphases on the turn in the sonnets, and given the defining significance in Auden's work of the turn from mythic enchantment to parabolic disenchantment, it is critically important to understand the turn between the parts of "In Time of War." The principal qualities of this turn are quite simple, though the development of its implications is not. The turn from the sonnets to "Commentary" confirms Fichte's insistence on the ethical necessity of turning from speculative, self-reflective irony to "action" and "determinate knowledge," and confirms Mileur's insistence on the need for authentic desire to find an accommodation with the world.

Leaving behind the speculative irony that has characterized Journey so far, “Commentary” moves toward what Booth describes as stable, though still infinite, irony, and toward a starkly determinate vision of actual political and ethical choices. In so doing, “Commentary” outlines a definite political position and articulates a positive vision of the infinite condition of human discourse in which an authentic human desire can accommodate an authentic temporality.

Another essential aspect of the turn is that, while “Commentary” revisits both the sonnet sequence’s ‘historical’ review of the human past from Creation onwards and its survey of the war-torn present of 1938, it distinguishes itself from the sonnets (and from the conclusion of Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary”) in the way it proceeds to turn toward the perspectives of the future and to reveal how we are to live for the future. It is not that the sonnets are never concerned with the future. The future tense occurs a half-dozen times in the second half of the sequence: the actions of the Japanese bomber pilots in XV show that at “any time it will be possible / To turn away from freedom” (674); the death in XVIII of the Chinese soldier whom we will forget raises the question of the more dignified future his death may have made possible; in XXVII, the future tense is used negatively to insist “we never will be perfect,” and the future implicit in XXVII’s concluding infinite regress is a future of the eternal recurrence of the alternation of our flight from freedom and our recognition of our freedom. The future is also envisioned negatively in XIV where there is the slim chance we might one day be free of “the intelligent and evil” because after all “they die” too.

Only in the sestet of XX, however, does Auden raise the issue of the future as an explicit question to which it is possible to imagine a substantial response, as a problem that is something more than a purely formal temporal category. XX turns to the question of the

future through a riddlingly metaphoric linking of present to the future:

We live here. We lie in the Present's unopened
Sorrow; its limits are what we are.
The prisoner ought never to pardon his cell.

Can future ages ever escape so far,
Yet feel derived from everything that happened,
Even from us, that even this was well? (676)

There are two metaphoric ideas here. One is the idea of the present as a prison-cell, a metaphor developed more fully in "In Memory of W.B. Yeats" where "each in the cell of himself is almost convinced of his freedom" and "In the prison of his days / Teach the free man how to praise." In XX, though, the unpardonable prison of the present is made tolerable, not by some illusory freedom or inextinguishable capacity to praise, but by a future which still offers the possibility of escape. There is a progressive or dialectical hope implicit in the sonnet's final question about whether the future will ever be able to escape from the past and present, even "from us," to the point that everything, including the unpardonable "this" of our present, will seem to have been well because, presumably, it will have been a step on the way to an emancipated future. It is unlikely, however, that many future-dwellers like us would agree that we have far enough escaped from the horrors of the twentieth-century that we can indeed feel that even they were well.

The possibility of hope in the future that XX's question evokes has, however, already been betrayed by the sestet's opening metaphor: "We lie in the Present's unopened / Sorrow." There is a pun on "present" here; so that the unopened sorrow of the poem's present moment is also the gift of the present. As Fuller notes, the unopened gift of a present moment is that moment's future (239), and in XX what lies in the unopened gift of 1938 is a future of neither hope nor emancipation, but of sorrow. The sorrow that is the content of the punningly metaphoric present suggests that the hope implicit in the sestet's

final question may be a lie told by those who must otherwise live within the present's imprisoning limits. At the same time, the future "actually is unlimited, and need not be sorrowful at all" (239); thus the idea of a future of sorrow may be as much a lie as the idea of a future of hope. XX's sestet suggests that anything we imagine about the future contained within the limits of the unopened present is almost of necessity a lie.

The sonnets' various glimpses of the future and particularly XX's riddling problematization of the relationship of the present to the future are hardly insignificant, but it is really in "Commentary" that the perspective of the future becomes a primordial concern in "In Time of War." The turn to the future in "Commentary" is, however, a temporal turn only in a purely formal, empty way. The future in "Commentary" is not a futurologist's concretely imagined future; it is not a predicted, foreseeable, future; it has no time-line; it is not even announced with the future tense. The turn to the future is an ethical, apocalyptic turn that seeks to reveal what it is we are to live for. The future in "Commentary" is a question of a choice. In "Commentary," 'choice' ceases to be, as it has been in the sonnets, an abstract theme through which Auden contemplates historical, developmental, or metaphysical aspects of the human condition. As we turn from the sonnets to "Commentary," the theme of choice mutates into a presentation of the actual choices facing mankind, the political, ethical choices of the historical moment of 1938. The principal choices presented in "Commentary" are the immediate choice between Fascism and anti-fascism and the teleological choice of how and for what humanity should choose to live.

In "Commentary," as the theme of choice narrows to the urgent ethical-political issue that hinges on the endorsement or rejection of fascism, the future becomes a prophetic, apocalyptic, messianic horizon. After the poem's reviews of the past of the cosmos and of human history and of the current geopolitical moment, "Commentary" opens

onto its closing revelation of the ends for the sake of which individuals and humanity should live. Identifying three messianic ends for which we should live—*Jen*, Justice, and a united world—the poem explicitly defers their achievement to an indefinite futurity, but offers them as ethical orientations for the future. As one might expect of a work that plays with the problems of beginnings and endings, *Journey* ends, not with satisfying closure and the sense of an ending, but with an opening onto the indefinite perspective of an infinite future that hangs on our uncertain choice. But then, as Gottlieb writes of the messianic, “the *telos* of human life is precisely not to reach an end—either in the sense of achieving a purpose or coming to a conclusion. On the contrary, the end is to begin” (141). What “Commentary” reveals at *Journey*’s end is precisely the End of Man, that for the sake of which we are to live; and this final revelation turns out to be the new beginning *Journey* has been seeking from the outset.

THE PLACE OF “COMMENTARY” IN AUDEN’S WORK

In his 1973 preface, Auden calls “Commentary” a sermon, thus providing a clue to what one should expect of the poem: some public oratory, some seriousness, some dullness, some edification. Characterizing “Commentary” as a sermon recalls two earlier sermons in Auden’s work. The first is *The Orators*’ “Address for a Prize-Day” whose opening is Auden’s “parody of a sermon from his schooldays” (Mendelson *Early* 98). The second is the Vicar’s sermon in *The Dog*, beginning “What was the weather on Eternity’s worst day?” and first published as “Sermon by an Armament Manufacturer” (Auden *English* 423). Thematic elements from both earlier sermons recur in “Commentary.” The address from *Orators* shares with “Commentary” an explicit orientation to the “here now,” allusions to Dante’s example, concerns with the relationship of the living to the dead, and a

comprehensive wish to cure humanity, while “Sermon by an Armament Manufacturer” prefigures the concern in “Commentary” with eternity, the cosmos, combat, freedom, tyranny, the power of the State, the absence of God, and the contrast of spiritual wish and worldly violence.

Both those earlier sermons, however, are in prose and parodic. These differences throw into relief the stylistic difficulties in “Commentary.” For one thing, Auden writes in verse where prose might be the more congenial form. Frye describes the sermon as a “prose form founded on the exhortation” (*Anatomy* 296) which emphasizes “social action and individual thought” (326-7). A sermon is to prayer, rhetorically, as *epos* is to lyric, where *epos* designates literature in which “the radical of presentation is oral address” and embraces “all literature, in verse or prose, which makes some attempt to preserve the convention of recitation and a listening audience” (248-9). Reading “Commentary” not for lyrical inwardness but for outward-directed oral address, one begins to find its discursive clunkiness as poetry less off-putting.

In “Commentary” Auden also tries to write seriously in a genre which he has hitherto parodied. This new seriousness, along with the idea that a sermon is intended to provoke thought and action in its audience and with the poem’s concern for mankind as a creature who “communicates, and chooses” (682), suggests that interpretation cannot avoid the elucidation of what Auden is attempting to communicate. “Commentary,” as Spears perceives, “is of special interest as an explicit statement of Auden’s ideas in this transitional period” (*Disenchanted* 132), and clarification of the arguments of “Commentary” is fundamental to readings of the poem. More, though, than a transitional period in Auden’s thinking, 1938 is a critical year in Euro-American and Asian civilizations, and “Commentary” gains in interest when read as a record of those interdependent public crises.

Just as “Commentary” comes into focus through comparisons to Auden’s earlier sermons, so other poems reveal other essential features of “Commentary.” Replete with recycled material, the poem grows out of a compost of earlier writing. It appears alternately as a barely serviceable patchwork of recycled odds and ends, and a philosophically topical collage of heterogeneous insights. Perhaps having “left China empty-handed” (Carpenter Auden 239), Auden like Isherwood who had to rely on Alley’s pamphlet to conclude his “Travel-Diary,” was so strapped for material that he had to mine his old notebooks in order to fill out Journey. Few poems better illustrate Isherwood’s remark that some of Auden’s poems resemble anthologies of lines rescued from rejected poems and reworked into a new one (Exhumations 19).² It is, though, not just a matter of Auden opportunistically salvaging reusable material, for “Commentary” involves an ambitious rethinking of thematic and philosophical concerns. The poem restates conclusively themes, intuitions, and concerns that had preoccupied him through the thirties. Key series of poems lead up to “Commentary” and another key series extends beyond it. Though any judgement about its meaning must derive from the poem’s own argument, those other poems provide important glosses on “Commentary.” Approached through those poems, “Commentary” becomes a missing link in Auden’s ideological and thematic development between urgent, but frequently unachieved work from earlier in the 1930s and major subsequent work of the 1940s. Much of the poem’s difficulty arises from the fact that several complex themes that Auden has been thinking through intersect in it. The intersection of such themes and the

² “Commentary” echoes two stanzas of the 1932 “O Love, the interest itself in thoughtless Heaven, ” a formal and thematic precursor of “Commentary.” “Commentary” also adapts, from an unpublished 1933 sequence of love sonnets, the phrases “the zone where casualties begin,” “the great trackways where our tribe is nothing, ” “the night’s tiny noises everywhere / Beat vivid on the owl’s developed ear, / Vague in the watchman’s” (English 146-7), and from a 1937 poem, “The moon [lights] / The sleepers ruined in a brief embrace” (288). Mendelson, McDiarmid, and Fuller identify further material dating from 1927 through 1938 that is recycled in “Commentary.”

affiliation of “Commentary” with other poems indicate its thematic and developmental importance. As this thematic significance of “Commentary” becomes clearer, so does the relation of its ideological ambitions to its poetic flaws.

One important series of poems with which “Commentary” has significant affiliations derives from Auden’s unfinished 1932 epic “In the year of my youth.” Mendelson characterizes “In the year of my youth” as a poem in cantos based on Langland and Dante which Auden abandoned “at the point where its structural logic required him to compose a third canto portraying the Communist paradise to follow the capitalist hell and revolutionary purgatory of the first two” (*Later* 103). The original matrix of a rich thematic complex that Auden develops throughout his work and the source of materials for poems and plays throughout the 1930s, “In the year of my youth” “makes visible patterns and relations” within Auden’s work and puts the “rest of Auden’s poetry in a new perspective” (McDiarmid “Year” 279). In “Commentary” Auden reuses fifteen lines from the unpublished earlier poem and further develops themes that poem had originally broached. “In the year of my youth” shares with several of Auden’s greatest poems—“New Year Letter”, *Anxiety*, “Memorial for the City”, and “City Without Walls”—the expression of “certain attitudes to the city” (McDiarmid “Year” 279-281). In particular, those later poems borrow ideas and images from the infernal vision of the city in “In the year of my youth.” Whether the later poems “are concerned with the redemption of the contemporary city” (280), or show “the contemporary city not as a ‘chaos of values’ but as a deviation from Value” (280), or involve a “notion of the city as a nightmare of impersonality and mechanization” and a “notion of an historical ‘fall’ in the seventeenth century” (281), the attitudes of “In the year of my youth” function in those subsequent poems as views to be rejected (280). For McDiarmid, “Auden’s later poems propose, and then deny, that the city

is a waste land, or that history is a process of decline. The resolutions are various—loving your crooked neighbour, seeking God in the Kingdom of Anxiety, or building the Just City—but the poems generally begin with the vision of autumn, 1932” (281).

Though McDiarmid fails to consider “Commentary” as part of the series of poems deriving from “In the year of my youth,” all the rejected attitudes of those later poems are present in “Commentary.” In fact, since it antedates the poems McDiarmid identifies, those poems must be read as reaching back not just to “In the year of my youth” but to “Commentary,” one of two published works (the other is The Dog) in which versions of the vision of “In the year of my youth” actually appeared during the 1930s. Thus, the lines “His predilection / As we wander and weep is with us to the end” (Collected 535) from Anxiety’s conclusion quote “We wander on the earth [. . . / . . .] and weep for the lost ages” (684) from “Commentary.” Furthermore, Anxiety with its interlocking set of four endings is a more focussed and controlled version of the technique of presenting multiple endings that Auden and Isherwood develop in Journey, and, as we shall see, the orthodox concluding messianism that Auden articulates at the end of Anxiety also reaches back to a similar, if more improvised and idiosyncratic, concluding salvationism in “Commentary.”

For its part, the opening section of “New Year Letter” provides justifications for that poem’s disowning of the “preacher’s loose immodest tone” and the “slip and slapdash” of earlier poems such as “Commentary” (Collected 204), and for its adoption of a tone that is less self-serious, and more intimate, light, and informal (206). In “New Year Letter,” his earlier tone is explicitly associated with his time and mood in Brussels (199), the city where he composed “Commentary.” That earlier tone is contrasted with his mood in Manhattan a year later where he is writing “New Year Letter,” even as the latter poem revisits, not to disown but to expand on, a great number of concerns that first appeared in the earlier poem.

“New Year Letter” extends, for instance, specific metaphysical and historical arguments from “Commentary” (v. Fuller 321). Characteristically, Auden’s use of form signals the relationship between the poems. “New Year Letter” was first published in The Double Man with the sonnet sequence “The Quest” following it. The correspondences between the parts of “In Time of War” and The Double Man—the “Quest” revisiting themes first explored in the sonnets of “In Time of War” and “New Year Letter” standing in the same relation to “Commentary”—as well as the fact that the order of the corresponding parts is inverted, suggest that “Commentary” and “New Year Letter” should be considered together. Mendelson allows that Auden wrote “The Quest” on the model of the 1938 sonnet sequence, and as a corrective to those earlier sonnets (Later 135), but his distaste for “Commentary” does not allow him to see it in its similarly rich relationship to “New Year Letter.” In Auden’s Collected Poems which, as his preface notes, is arranged according to the chapters of his life, his Chinese sonnets appear immediately before “New Year Letter,” while the “Quest” has been dissociated from the latter. This suggests a development from “In Time of War” to “New Year Letter,” and suggests that the latter is the achieved commentary on the former’s sonnets of which the uncanonical “Commentary” was the original sketch.

“Commentary” anticipates “New Year Letter” and all the other offspring of “In the year of my youth.” The setting of “Commentary” is bombed out, divided, occupied industrial Shanghai: “For this material contest that has made Hongkew / A terror and a silence, and Chapei a howling desert, / Is but the local variant of a struggle in which all [are implicated]” (681-2)—and the poem intimates the redemption of war-torn Shanghai and China: “As now I hear it, rising round me from Shanghai, / [The voice of Man crying] [. . . /] *Rally the lost and trembling forces of the will, / [. . .] Till they construct at last a human*

justice (687-8). This bleak redemptive vision of the modern city degraded or laid waste recurs in “Memorial for the City” and “New Year Letter.” With its juxtaposed “cities, deserts” (682) and its comparison of war-ravaged Shanghai to a desert, “Commentary” is the origin of Auden’s contrast of the desert and the city in the concluding prayer of “New Year Letter” (Collected 242). This contrast recurs in Hand and in The Enchafèd Flood in a concluding apology for the civilizing persona of the later Auden: “We live in a new age [. . .] in which the heroic image is not the nomad wandering through the desert [. . .] but the less exciting figure of the builder, who renews the ruined walls of the city” (150). This later observation, for Jed Esty, summarizes “beautifully” the “thematic shift from discovery to rebuilding in late modernism” (224). It is an observation whose details are all predicated on lessons learned in Journey. If the renovative vision of the war torn city in “Commentary” represents a shift from high to late modernism, the uncertainties of the poem’s manner express the instabilities of this transition as Auden moves toward the great late ‘city’ poems that are artful and enduring achievements of his late modernist condition. Indeed from this late modernist perspective, Auden articulates a founding post-modern vision to which his career-long aesthetic and ideological interests in cities, building, and architecture are central.

The Shanghai of “Commentary” belongs with London, Berlin, New York, Brussels, Madrid, Rome, and other modern cities that figure prominently in Auden’s work, and behind which hovers the spectre of Eliot’s Waste Land and the modern theme of the degraded, dehumanized city (“Metropolis, that too-great city,” as Auden describes it in “Memorial for the City, or “Megalopolis” as he calls it later in “City Without Walls”). It is well to remember, however, that though the explicit setting of “Commentary” is Shanghai, two other Chinese cities are also significant in Journey. For the writing of Journey must be

conceived of as suspended between the Rape of Nanking in December 1937 and the Fall of Wuhan in October 1938. Nanking, after its infamous massacre was still smoking when Isherwood and Auden departed for China, and Wuhan was falling, at the cost of 800,000 lives, as they submitted their completed typescript.³

The desire to salvage civilization defines a series of redemptive poems in which “Commentary” figures prominently. Mendelson gives the fullest discussions of the development of the redemptive messianic idea and experience in Auden’s early work. Unfortunately, Mendelson is no kinder to “Commentary” as a redemptive poem than he is to the idea of its poetic competence. He far too quickly throws “Commentary” on the ideological rubbish heap with earlier flawed redemptive poems. Consequently, he misjudges “Commentary,” in terms of its redemptive argument, its function in *Journey*, and its place among Auden’s poems of redemption. Nonetheless Mendelson establishes a context for the messianic features of “Commentary.” Mendelson shows where “Commentary” occurs in the development of Auden’s redemptive ethical and social thought through the 1930s. “Commentary” concludes a series of poems in which Auden works through the themes of social redemption and of individual redemptive heroism. “It all began”, writes Mendelson, “in the autumn of 1933” (*Early* 239) when Auden began seeking for prophets of “a new life” and for “a brief and secret interval” sought a role for himself “that was nothing less

³Indeed, since the atomic bombings of 1945 need to be remembered not only in relation to Japan’s war with the United States, but also to Japan’s invasion of China with its innovative bombing of civilian populations, its calculated atrocities, the intensity of the slaughters of Nanking and Wuhan, and the doggedness of a Chinese resistance which tied up most of Japan’s army, we can add Nagasaki and Hiroshima to the cities whose redemption “Commentary,” even with its call for the defeat of Japan (687), seeks to envision. The stalemate in the Sino-Japanese theatre that followed the Battles of Nanking and Wuhan would only be broken when, to adapt Auden’s retrospectively ominous phrase, the two Japanese cities “receive[d] the slanting radiations” (687). This interpretive drift from an image of solar radiation to nuclear radiation is encouraged by the previous year’s line in “Spain” about “the gradual exploring of all the / Octaves of radiation.” Leaving behind the wasteland of Shanghai, Auden and Isherwood themselves passed through Nagasaki, as Isherwood reminds us, “seven years before the atomic bomb” (*Kind* 310).

than redemptive—the role of the poet as messianic prophet, healer, and reconciler” (238). Auden unfolds the poetic and ethical implications of the ideas of redemption and the redemptive hero, beginning in 1933 with what Mendelson describes as “the most problematic poem Auden ever wrote” (Early 241), and culminating in 1938 with “Commentary.” The unpublished 1933 poem which first states Auden’s “redemptive ambition” is problematic for technical and conceptual reasons. Expressing the desire that the world, or at least the poet’s “generation” and “race,” be saved, the poem is a “self-preventing” testament that involves a paradox of prophetic writing, namely that it is “written in order that it may not be written” (242). In Auden’s case, the poem ends up more “concerned with its own composition, and ultimately with preventing itself from being written” than with “the purpose of saving his generation” and helping “rescue an endangered public” (243).

The poem’s argument is circular. What will save humanity is “the testament [readers] themselves would write had they not been changed by reading it” in Auden’s poem first (242). The poet charges a “prophetic friend” to write this saving testament, which is actually humanity’s own testament, though it is the poet himself who immediately proceeds to write it (243). A similar circularity and short-circuited ventriloquism occurs at the end of “Commentary” when the poet hears the messianic speech of the “human cry” that he himself is actually articulating. In “Commentary,” rather than seeming hopelessly contradictory, this representation of intersubjective redemptive reciprocity is ethically interesting and conceptually defensible as, among other things, a means of reconciling authentic temporality with authentic desire. That it is a view of human interdependence which lends itself to gushy idealism or to delusional self-importance does not entirely invalidate it.

More problematic than the 1933 poem's compositional and generic complications is the fact that Auden himself writes as the saving prophet. For Mendelson, this is an episode of hubris with far reaching consequences for Auden. Only a saving reticence about publicly assuming the role of redeemer explains why Auden never "could finally bring himself to publish his early redemptive poems" (252). Unpublished or uncanonical, though they would remain, Auden's adaptations of the 1933 poem and his reexaminations of the idea of himself or others as redemptive heroes are crucial to his development through the 1930s. In 1934 Auden reuses stanzas from the 1933 poem twice. He first transferred seven stanzas that presented the earlier poem's saving testament (242) to "The Malverns," a poem in which Auden is writing about "secular redemption" (240). In "The Malverns" Auden avoids the objectionable "circular argument of their original context" when he attributes the poem's testament to "a generation already dead, the fallen of 1914-1918" (242). The role of the dead as redemptive spokesmen also recurs in "Commentary." Several other stanzas from the original 1933 poem were transferred to another poem which like the original and like "Commentary" was written in unrhymed triplets and which opens with an "apocalyptic warning" (243) in lines that Auden later adapts in F6 and "Commentary." "'Sweet is it,' say the doomed, 'to be alive though wretched'; / But here the young emerging from the closed parental circle, / To whose uncertainty the certain years present / Their syllabus of limitless anxiety and labour ("Five Early Poems" 52). This poem constitutes Auden's "most detailed program for salvation." In contrast to the 1933 poem, Auden "was more wary of declaring his personal role." The redemptive responsibility "he now assigned to real contemporaries whose names he listed and whose wisdom he conveyed" (Mendelson 243). Freud, Groddeck, Marx, Lenin, the two Lawrences, Gerald Heard, Schweitzer, and others (including physicists who made the atomic bombs of 1945 possible) somehow all "promise

rescue.”

So “magical is the power of the healers’ names that by the latter part of the poem the disaster that seemed inescapable in the beginning now seems easy and exciting to avert” (244). When “Commentary” revisits the theme of intellectual and scientific heroes, they do not appear as secular redeemers. Rather we find a *trahsion des clerics* in which “many famous clerks,” including Plato, Shang-tzu [sic], Machiavelli, Hobbes, Hegel, and Bosanquet, act as insidious apologists for falsely redemptive, fascistic power politics. Or, we find that in the cases of Descartes and Galileo, their historic roles, while not evil, are entirely negative and critical. In a poem much concerned with building and renovation, their role is deconstructive rather than constructive; and, in the crucifixion-evoking phrase “not knowing what they did, [they] sapped belief” (683), they are inadvertently offensive to some divine principle as they render obsolete the messianic dispensation of medieval Christian culture.

One reason why Auden had to keep taking his earlier redemptive poems back to the drawing board is the sophomoric vagueness of their imaginary solutions to real disasters. The 1934 poem, notes Mendelson, remains “oddly reticent about the pioneering choice” it demands (245). The poem’s final lines—“And to our vision lead of one great meaning / Linking the living and the dead, within the shadow / Of which uplifting, loving, and constraining power / All other reasons do rejoice and operate”—are very close to the concluding “vision of human justice” in “Commentary.” In the 1934 poem, however, “by defining his redemptive program almost entirely by negatives, or by terms that cancel each other out, Auden managed to avoid giving any precise indication of what he had in mind” (245). One way to evaluate “Commentary” is to ask whether Auden manages in 1938 to spell out a more convincing program than that of the 1934 poem. What we will find is that

while the nature of both the apocalyptic threat and its solution are indeed clearer in “Commentary,” the hopefulness in the poem also seems more tenuous.

In 1934 Auden, however, immediately rejected his redemptive fantasy. In May of that year he wrote the sonnet “A Misunderstanding,” which Mendelson identifies as “the first of his poems in which he writes as his own severest critic,” developing a “precise and devastating critique of Auden’s fantasy that the world needed him to save it” (247). In 1936’s F6, Auden equates the “redemptive hero and fascist dictator in an explicit rebuke to his fantasy” (248). It is easy to appreciate the motivations of such a self-rebuke given that Auden’s 1933 and 1934 ‘fantasies’ of himself and others as redeemers had coincided with Hitler and the Nazi’s ascension to power and with such landmarks of redemptive propaganda as Riefenstahl’s “Triumph of the Will.”⁴ In F6’s exploration of the theme of the redemptive hero, the “significant parallel is between Ransom and Auden” (251) so that at “his most self-important—and sometimes hysterical—moments, Ransom’s speeches turn into exact transcriptions of Auden’s unpublished poems in triplets” (249). Through Ransom, Auden is disowning the “part of himself for which the character stands” (251) and Auden’s treatment of Ransom “amounts to a psychological critique of the redemptive fantasy, but with theological overtones” (253). For Mendelson, Auden in F6 exorcises “the private disorders that gave rise to the redemptive ambition in the first place” (255) and “buries the notion that he himself could save his readers” (256). By 1936, Mendelson concludes, “redemptive heroism is dead as a possibility, for himself and for everyone else” (256).

The next item in Auden’s development of the redemptive idea is “In Time of War,” with X’s anonymous messiah and “Commentary” itself. Mendelson’s use of the term

⁴ Auden alludes critically to Riefenstahl’s film in “Canzone” (v. Gottlieb 170, 262n37).

“fantasy” to describe Auden’s messianic poems precludes the possibility of taking such poems seriously. Certainly this possibility is dead for Mendelson after F6’s association of the dictator with the theme of redemption, and his remarks on “Commentary” in Early condemn the poem as a dead end and as mere inauthentic repetition of ideas Auden had outgrown. Nonetheless, there is more to “Commentary” than Mendelson’s dismissive comments suggest. Rather than the end of the redemptive theme in Auden, “Commentary” is its consolidation, a summing up of Auden’s entire previous development of the theme, and the poem which allows Auden to proceed to redemptive poems such New Year Letter, Anxiety, “Memorial for the City,” and “City Without Walls” which McDiarmid identifies as growing out of “In the year of my youth.” As with the theme of the city, “Commentary” is pivotal in Auden’s development of the theme of redemption. It revisits and extends virtually all Auden’s earlier explorations of the theme: 1932’s epic “In the year of my youth,” the 1933 presentation of Auden as redeemer, “The Malverns” and the other untitled poem from 1934, and 1936’s F6. “Commentary” also points to further transformations in Auden’s understanding of the nature of redemption. Those later messianic elaborations are more poetically assured than “Commentary” and their other precursors, and in association with the theme of the city, constitute one of the major accomplishments of Auden’s late-modernist renovative vision of twentieth-century civilization. “Commentary,” however, is not a transitory moment in the story of Auden’s development of the idea of redemption; like the sonnet sequence of “In Time of War,” which has been too facily read as merely transitional, “Commentary” is in its own right a major statement of Auden’s redemptive theme.

SAVING “COMMENTARY”

In “Commentary,” Auden reconceives the relationship of redemption and the figure

of the dictator. Rather than identifying Audenesque redemptive heroism with the fascist dictator in order to discredit the idea of the redemptive hero, “Commentary” dissociates the issue of redemption from the figures of fascism and tyranny. The contrast of the false messiahs of fascism to what Auden presents as the true redemptive heroes and true nature of human redemption structures much of “Commentary.” Fascism may be an ideology in which strong chiliastic or messianic components are essential (Passmore 19), but it does not follow that when F6 satirizes the idea of the fascist dictator as redemptive hero, Auden must give up the idea of redemption or redemptive heroism. “Commentary” articulates a new vision of redemption in contrast to the contemporary examples of Germany, Italy, and Japan; and in contrast to the examples of “All the great conquerors [who] sit upon their platform” in Auden’s “thumb-nail sketches of celebrated proto-fascists from history” (Fuller 243); and in contrast to the “many famous clerks [who] support their programme.”⁵

5

Earlier we noted that one of the rare instances in Journey where Isherwood and Auden echo one another to speak not so much dialogically but with one voice occurs when Isherwood refers to one of those great conquerors, “the Emperor Ch’in Shih Huang Ti (200 BC), who burnt the scholar’s books” (568), and Auden to “*Ch’in Shih Huang Ti* who burnt the scholars’ books” (684). The repetition here and their shared emphasis on Ch’in Shi’s infamous crime no doubt has much to do with the fact that the story of the burning of the books by China’s founding emperor inevitably in 1938 evoked Hitler, his thousand year Reich, and Nazi book burnings like the one Isherwood had witnessed in Berlin (Kind 129). Auden and Isherwood’s single-voiced rejection of Ch’in Shi as a political role model contrasts starkly to Ezra Pound’s ridiculously sympathetic reference to him in “Canto LIV”. Cantos LII-LXXI, having been written “in no more than six months, beginning no later than the summer of 1938” (Carpenter Serious 569), are exactly contemporary with the composition of Journey and “Commentary.” The progress from an examination of China in the Chinese History Cantos to the example of the United States in the John Adams Cantos can be compared to Auden and Isherwood’s ideological trajectory in Journey and to the historical sweep of “Commentary.”

Politically, the contrast between the leftist, liberal democratic Auden and Isherwood and the fascist Pound could hardly be starker; Pound’s foolish viciousness leaves one speechless. Pounds alludes to the same book burnings—

CHI HOANG TI that united all China
 who referred to himself as the surplus
 or needless bit of the Empire
 and jacked up astronomy
 and after 33 years burnt the books
 because of fool litterati (Cantos 275)–

The vision of possible redemption in “Commentary” unfolds in opposition to fascist dictatorship and in spite of the troubling fact that “every family and every heart is tempted” by the “brazen offer” and the “simple message” of fascism’s corporatism, violence, anti-

and interestingly, virtually every single point in this brief passage has its counterpart in “In Time of War”: the idea in “Commentary” and sonnet VI of the Leader as redundancy; the association of astronomy with civilizing progress in sonnet VI and “Commentary;” the catalogue in “Commentary” of wrong-headed “famous clerks,” to which we can add Pound. However, unlike Auden or Isherwood, Pound presents the Emperor’s bibliophobic conflagration in a positive context and suggests that “CHI HOANG TI” and Hitler probably had valid motives by implying that the book burnings were really the fault of the “fool litterati.” Such an attitude on the bookish Pound’s part seems incredible, though, given the recurrent human embrace of perverse self-contradictoriness, perhaps it should not. In any case, later in the same “Canto”, the library-inhabiting Pound revels in the thought of “great works by oppression / by splendid oppression (285). Ah yes, those great works accomplished under Stalinist, Hitlerian, Maoist, and all the other varieties of modern oppression, I’d completely forgotten them. Though to be fair to Pound, one should note that Benjamin makes a similar point, albeit to utterly different effect and for different motives, when he writes that there “is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism” (*Illuminations* 258). Certainly, Pound’s vision is diametrically opposed to the vision Auden presents in “Commentary” of human creativity as depending on diligence and concentration applied in spite of and in opposition to the splendid oppressors. The appropriateness of relating the ancient Chinese burning of the books to Hitler and the Nazi’s book burnings is substantiated in the same Canto when Pound draws a parallel between the visit of a Tartar king to the Chinese Emperor “HAN SIEUN” and a visit of Adolph Hitler to Mussolini in October, 1938:

And the Tartar ran from his car to HAN SIEUN
held out his hand in friendship
and then remounted his war horse...

to the joy of HAN SIEUN TI
(Pretty manoeuvre but the technicians
watched with their hair standing on end
anno sixteen, Bay of Naples). (279)

That’s “anno sixteen” of Mussolini’s Fascists’ rule. The dangerous “Pretty manoeuvre” that Pound is celebrating was that of “a group of submarines diving and surfacing in formation in honour of the [visiting] Führer” (Carpenter *Serious* 571). The parallel is a little complicated: in ancient China it was the visiting Tartar who performs the gallant but risky manoeuvre for the hosting Chinese emperor; but in 1938, it was the hosting Mussolini’s submarines that performed for the visiting Hitler (Kenner 435). For Pound, which of the two contemporary authoritarian Eminences is the gallant Tartar and which the well-pleased Emperor? Perhaps the confusion of roles here, with Hitler and Mussolini each fulfilling aspects of both the Tartar king and the Chinese emperors’ roles, is meant to suggest that the two modern figures are equally gallant, equally imperial, equally deferential to the power of the other. However Pound imagined the parallel, his poem excuses Hitler’s hate-filled totalitarian book-burning and revels in the antics of oppressors.

individualism, mindlessness, police statism, paternalism, and racial pride (684-5).

“Commentary” offers no easy redemption from the false salvation of the fascists. For fascism tempts everyone, meaning even the purportedly anti-Fascist, meaning even Auden and his readers. If in 1934 Auden could imagine a list of secular redeemers who “promise rescue,” in the political crises of 1938 he has no leaders to set in opposition to the fascist conquerors: “Nor do our leaders help; we know them now / For humbugs.” Political leaders, democratic no more than fascist, are simply not candidates for redemptive heroism in “Commentary.” Yet in spite of the incompetence of leaders, in spite of Auden’s renunciation of the role of redemptive hero, “Commentary” does raise some sort of redemptive hope. The question will be what the nature of this hope is.

Besides the redemptive poems to which he links “Commentary,” Mendelson groups “Commentary” with “Spain” and “September 1, 1939,” poems which Auden infamously disowned for reasons that Mendelson lucidly details. Both “Commentary” and “September 1, 1939” refer, for instance, to “the Just”, whom Mendelson, endorsing Auden’s rejection of the latter poem, describes as “unportrayable figures of political fantasy [. . .] called into being by the rhetoric of poetic endings” (Later 103). This idea of the Just resembles the 1930s theme of “the small circle” that occurs elsewhere in Auden’s work—this is the idea of “a private community, a miniature saved civilization” (McDiarmid Saving xvi) which is “the germ of a new society” (16). A more public and loosely defined version of the “small circle” appears in the conclusion of “September 1, 1939” when Auden presumptuously, if tentatively, includes himself among “the Just / [who] Exchange their messages.” “Commentary,” however, only partially conforms to Mendelson and McDiarmid’s descriptions of Auden’s treatment of the themes of “the Just” and “the small circle.” When in 1973 Auden drops from “Commentary” the stanza with which humanity’s “faithful sworn

supporters" (683) conclude their response to the fascist temptation—"Only a whole and happy conscience can stand up / And answer their bleak lie; among the just, / And only there, is Unity compatible with Freedom" (687)—he not only excises some rank stupidity (why, after all, can a broken, unhappy conscience, Hegelian or otherwise, not answer a lie?); he also rejects his recurrent vision of an inexplicably just, civilization-saving grouplet that is akin to the disowned vision of the conclusion of "September 1, 1939." (Easy as it is to scoff at the pretensions of the various groups Auden or anyone presents in this saving role, it is hardly possible to conceive of society without 'the group' as an essential term between the individual and the collectivity as a whole. An important dimension of Auden's conception of groups is the moral obligation of 'private communities' to exist in a concerned relationship to other human beings). In "Commentary," however, the uncapitalized "just" are not really a small circle at all. "Commentary" has already rejected a facile version of the small circle which in the face of suffering, fear, and other pressures of the present finds its solidarity and efficacy breaking down as "the Thirteen gay Companions / Grow sullen now and quarrelsome as mountain tribes" (684). The satirical image is self-critical. The gayness of the bickering companions evokes the youthful high-spiritedness and the predominant homosexuality of Auden's literary circle; the unlucky number thirteen ironically recalls the archetypal sacred small circle of Christ and his disciples; the adjective "mountain" recalls the insurmountable moral difficulty of XXVII. Finally, the designation "tribes" evokes a breakdown of civilization, but also reminds us that "Commentary" describes a world "Where not a tribe exists without its dossier" (682) and an indifferent universe where each "tribe and truth are nothing" (680). In that world and universe, all human tribes, all small circles, are, if not doomed to defeat, then incapable of victory.

If they are neither tribe nor small circle, who are “the just”? The grammar of the poem is ambiguous. “The just,” though, must be one of the following: they are “our faithful sworn supporters;” or “the Invisible College of the Humble;” or, if those two groups are one and the same, then the just are both of those; or lastly, “the just” are a subset of one of those groups recognized by the larger group as specially just. In any case, “the just” in “Commentary” are not really so unportrayable. They have at least some of the qualities attributed to those larger groups: faithfulness, diligence, absorption in the task at hand, concentration, hospitableness, humility, and the qualities of being dead, self-conscious, self-critical, and able to give counsel and encouragement (685-7). The only characteristic common to “our faithful sworn supporters,” “the Invisible College of the Humble,” and “the just”—whether those phrases designate a single group or an interlocking set of groups—is opposition to tyranny through history and to its contemporary fascist version.

For Mendelson, a common flaw of “Spain” (Auden’s most famous anti-fascist literary contribution), “Commentary,” and “September 1, 1939” as “large public poems” is their “claim to have joined the realm of the private will to that of the public good” when “the union had been made through the force of rhetoric alone” (Early 201). Mendelson’s reading of “Spain” provides the terms for his dismissive view of “Commentary.” For Mendelson, “Spain” joins “private emotion to a public myth of meliorative history” (230) and asserts that “a certain form of partisan political action can express the will to love and foster ultimate justice,” even though Auden “knows that the political action [. . .] claiming to express these things in fact does nothing of the kind” (315). “Spain” also involves contradictory arguments about human action as a matter of choice and freedom and human action as an expression of natural and historical necessity (317-323).

In “Commentary,” Mendelson discerns similar attempts to “reconcile private

intentions and public acts” and similar suggestions of optimism conveyed through moral paradox, self-contradictory metaphor, and propagandistic sleight of hand, (Early 198-9). Though these objections are not irrelevant, the failings of “Spain,” cannot be projected directly onto “Commentary.” For the latter’s review of three successive epochs of Great Disappointment and its preoccupations with failure, grief, ruin, uncertainty, obsolescence, and decay do not a meliorative historical vision make, even if there are some glimmers of optimism. There is a vague idea, for instance, that those disappointments and negative results have their lessons and “in the interest of intelligence were necessary” (687). On the other hand, the meliorative line “Man can improve himself but never will be perfect” (680) is actually the response of “our faithful sworn supporters” to the totalitarian speakers’ claims about the perfectibility of man. Far from ignoring, XXVII’s conclusion that humanity will never be perfect (Mendelson Early 200), “Commentary” insists on human imperfectibility.

Mendelson’s strong objection to the hope that the poem expresses, particularly at the end of its concluding speech, remains the defining response to the substance of the poem. Mendelson correctly identifies the final hope in “Commentary” as a vital issue, even while his aversion to the poem leads him to misrepresent the nature of its final hope:

[. . .] *O teach me to outgrow my madness.*

*It’s better to be sane than mad, or liked than dreaded;
It’s better to sit down to nice meals than to nasty;
It’s better to sleep two than single; it’s better to be happy.*

*Ruffle the perfect manners of the frozen heart,
And once again compel it to be awkward and alive,
To all it suffered once a weeping witness.*

*Clear from the head the masses of impressive rubbish;
Rally the lost and trembling forces of the will,
Gather them up and let them loose upon the earth,*

*Till they construct at last a human justice,
The contribution of our star, within the shadow
Of which uplifting, loving, and constraining power
All other reasons may rejoice and operate. (687-8)*

It is almost plausible to argue that the suggestion that “the will” might “construct” one day “a human justice” participates in the same kind of delusion of perfectibility that Auden puts into the mouths of the fascist orators when they say “We build the Perfect City time shall never alter” (684). Significantly, in the revised version of the conclusion of “Commentary”—“*Till, as the contribution of our star, we follow / The clear instructions of that Justice, in the shadow / Of Whose uplifting, loving, and constraining power / All human reasons do rejoice and operate*” (*Shorter* 296)—Auden alters the nature of the process by which humanity might achieve perfection. Rather than constructing an ultimate justice, it seems “the will” might eventually operate in a way allowing us to conform finally to a Justice which apparently has always existed. Even in the original, though, there are major differences between the hints of perfectibility in the conclusion and in this speech of the fascists:

Man can have Unity if Man will give up Freedom.

*The State is real, the Individual is wicked;
Violence shall synchronize your movements like a tune,
And Terror like a frost shall halt the flood of thinking.*

*Barrack and bivouac shall be your friendly refuge,
And racial pride shall tower like a public column
And confiscate for safety every private sorrow.*

*Leave truth to the police and us; we know the Good;
We build the Perfect City time shall never alter;
Our Law shall guard you always like a cirque of mountains,*

*Your ignorance keep off evil like a dangerous sea;
You shall be consummated in the General Will,
Your children innocent and charming as the beasts. (684)*

The promise of the fascist orators and the concluding hope of the voice of Man contrast, of

course, in terms of who is speaking, but there is more to the contrast than that. In spite of the fact that the fascist speech is a supposedly “simple message,” its abstract nouns, multiple intimidating similes, and menacing imperatives constitute a more elaborate rhetoric than the self-directed, prayerful imperatives and modest hopes of the final passage where the only allusion to perfection—“the perfect manners of the frozen heart”—actually identifies a human failing. An equally crucial difference is that, whereas the fascist speaks of the wickedness of the Individual in order to replace it with the State, in its concluding cry the voice of Man speaks as an individual who wishes “to outgrow my madness.” Auden modified this to a collective “teach us to outgrow our madness” in 1945, but in 1973 restored the original line identifying the individual as the locus of hope. Finally, whereas the fascists allude to violence, terror, the army, and the police, the force invoked in humanity’s concluding hope is not political or armed force, but “the lost and trembling forces of the will.” Unlike the fascists, “We cannot postulate a General Will” (498), an idea rejected at the outset of Journey, but can only assume the feeble personal will.

It may be an exalted-sounding “voice of Man” whose “cry [. . .] streams out into the indifferent spaces” (687), but Auden is the intermediary—“As now I hear it, rising round me from Shanghai”—who transcribes what he hears and tells us what that human cry is saying. This is the first and only time Auden uses the first person singular pronoun in the whole of Journey. The lateness and singularity of the shift to the first person give it an emphatic ethical significance.⁶ The sudden insurgence of the heretofore objective and objectifying Auden as a responsive subject at the end of “Commentary” recalls the contrasts between the impersonal erasure of Rewi Alley and the reassertion of Isherwood’s indecisive private, subjective, self at the end of the “Travel-Diary.” It is as if, at the end of

⁶Contrasting Auden to Isherwood, Izzo and Kerr mistakenly assert that “not once does Auden speak in the first-person singular in this book” (Isherwood Encyclopedia 82).

“Commentary,” the “voice of Man” with its hopes and ethical imperatives must, if it is to be heard at all, be heard by an individual in his active subjectivity.

Here we reencounter the circularity of Auden’s original 1933 redemptive poem. In that poem, the poet tells the prophetic friend to preemptively provide humanity with its own saving testament which the poet then proceeds to write. In “Commentary,” the voice of man streaming into space is overheard by the poet who proceeds to articulate it for readers who are themselves part of that crying humanity from whom the message purportedly originated. The recurrence of this reciprocal communicative relationship, like Auden’s persistent interest in the question of third person plural subjectivity evident in poems from the same period, is not a symptom of incoherence, but an indication that a fundamental intuition of the source of a poet’s meaningfulness is at stake in Auden’s insistence on the ‘circular’ mutually reinforcing relationship between the poet and society or humanity. The poet and humanity stand here in the original pre-decadent relationship depicted in VII in which the poet “was their servant [. . .] / Their feeling gathered in him like a wind / And sang: they cried—‘It is a God that sings’” (670). The quasi-divine hermeneutics of the relationship of poet and humanity lead Aquien to misread the ending of “Commentary”: “Le commentaire [. . .] se termine par une prière adressé à Dieu, dans l’oeuvre d’Auden, l’une des premières manifestations du sursaut du religieux contre la menace de l’apocalypse” (102). Aquien rightly notes the significance of “Commentary” as an early stage in Auden’s religious turn in the face of an apocalyptic threat, but he is wrong to describe the concluding prayer as addressed to God. It is not to God, but “into the indifferent spaces” that the voice of man streams. Binni more accurately describes that prayer as “un’ invocazione della voce dell’Uomo ad un potere superiore” (*Saggio* 123). The higher power at issue is not a theistic personal God, but the power deriving from the mutually-reinforcing circular relationship of

the poet and humanity, or of any individual voice and of the collective human voice.

Decadent the deliberate poet of Journey may be, but after the formalism of Journey's verse, after the erasure of his subjectivity, Auden represents himself at the end of "Commentary" in a symbiotic, hermeneutically circular, relationship with his audience and humanity, in which if humanity hears anything divine in his "Commentary," it is because it overhears itself.

What the poet of the voice of Man says at the end of "Commentary" is, though, decidedly ungodlike. The final hopeful cry in "Commentary" may be a crucial moment in his ideological history and a crucial expression of the dialect of Auden's messianism, but it is an odd moment. Rather than prophetic or divinely inspired, the modest wisdom offered in the "It's better to be sane than mad" stanza is trivially self-evident, to the point of being anti-climatic and agnostic. The unprophetic, unassuming imperatives which follow are a faint echo of the supplications of Auden's early "Sir, No man's enemy." They ask not for Salvation, but personal sanity; not Revolution, but personal emotional renewal; not Revelation, but an uncluttered head; not for the Triumph of the Will, but for the forces of the will to be gathered only to be immediately dispersed to construct a constraining human justice. The impatience of Mendelson's rejection of the conclusion of "Commentary" is inversely proportional to the modest hope expressed. Certainly the representation of such hopes, or the mere acknowledgement of the desire for hope, and even the identification of Justice, as the thing to be hoped for, does not commit one to a meliorative view of history. The contrast of the lost and trembling hopefulness of its ending to the pessimistic historical vision of "Commentary" exemplifies Gramsci's motto "Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will." The messianism of "Commentary" prefigures Benjamin's epiphany in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" regarding the *weakness* of the messianic force

that every human generation possesses (Illuminations 256). As in other late modernist works, in “Commentary” the “vectors of despair and utopia, the compulsion to decline and the impulse to renewal, are not just related, they are practically indistinguishable” (Miller 14).

Mendelson’s rejection of the “rhetoric of poetic endings” in “Commentary” obscures the anticlimax of the poem’s ending, and the fact that the poem is ethically and rhetorically so circumspect that it tends to the “mock prophetic.” Mendelson’s observation that “Spain” and “Commentary” are better understood “not as public poems but as utopian poems” (202) exaggerates the utopianism of “Commentary” and diminishes its resolutely public dimensions. Mendelson does suggest something of the abyss between the severely limited hope that the conclusion of the poem manages to represent and the catastrophic state of the world that it has depicted, but the hope at the end of “Commentary” does not constitute an optimistic program. The poem does not assert an expectation of the fulfilment of the hope it alludes to. The conclusion of “Commentary” amounts to little more than a review of some of the necessary conditions for hopefulness. As such, the concluding speech becomes a catalogue of personal and psychological impediments to the individual’s ability to contribute to the realization of justice. Justice, or rather the repeated acknowledgement of its absence, not any falsely utopian hope or fantasy, is the essential concern in the conclusion of “Commentary.”

Mendelson sees a contradiction ‘erupting’ in the last stanza where “justice is a gift of light, the contribution of a star, and a barrier to light, as it casts a shadow,” and claims the contradictions in these metaphors undermine the poem’s argument and the coherence of its concluding hope for justice (199-200). But the metaphors of light and shadow emerge quite coherently. They have antecedents beginning at the outset of Journey in the “evil star” of

“The Voyage” and “the tortured stubborn star” of “The Sphinx” and later in VI’s scientist who “watched the stars” (669), with such antecedents proliferating in “Commentary.” “Our star”, the sun, is present from the poem’s second line with its descriptions of our solar system; and present in the image of Japan’s “blood-spotted flag” (681); in the prehistoric “warm sunshine of the Laufen Ice Retreat” (682); in the modern notion of “a neutral dying star, / Where Justice could not visit” (683); in Galileo’s implied heliocentricism (683); in the “dust of all the dead that reddens every sunset;” in the assertion that “*common justice can determine private freedom, / As a clear sky can tempt men to astronomy*” (686); in the image of “the cities that receive the slanting radiations” (687).

The sun may be an ever-present, central fact of earthly life, but it has nothing to do with justice, except insofar as it sustains us, like everything else about the earth, while we construct our human justice. We depend on the sun, but justice must be our creation. Only the justice we could create would shade us from our neutral dying star. Protective in the final stanza, the image of shadow elsewhere can be ambiguous. There is the child’s “clandestine evolution in the mother’s shadow” (680). There are the privileged and compromised “European shadows” cast by Auden and Isherwood (681); there are the medieval men “camped like tourists under [the] tremendous shadows” of the Universal Churches (682); there is human fear “casting shadows / [. . .] upon the outer world” (683); and at the limit of the sunlight, there is the “great arc of travelling shadow [that] / Moves over land and ocean, altering life” in the various countries and climates of the globe (687). The mother, Europe, medieval churches, the psychology of fear, the earth, all stand against some light, and in every instance except that of fear, the light is the sun. In every instance, except fear, the ensuing shadow is, if not wholly beneficent, then in some respect enabling.

Similarly, in the poem’s final stanza, justice is interposed between the sun and

humanity whence its shadow would allow other reasons to rejoice and operate. The *chiaroscuro* metaphors imply that our “reasons” can only “rejoice and operate,” not in the glare of the sun, but within the protective shadow of the justice only we can create: “It is strange but true that human life depends on something as fleeting and fragile as shade” (Kapusinski The Shadow of the Sun 318). It is worth noting that, as with the Japanese flag, the sun (in the form of the swastika) was the symbol on the German flag of 1938; and recalling Auden’s satire on sun-worshipping modern utopian naturalists at the beginning of The Dance of Death; his trepidation before “the unshadowed sand” and “plain sun” of “Pleasure Island” (Collected 343-4); his skepticism in “In Praise of Limestone” about the “earnest” Wallace Stevens-like “habit of calling / The sun the sun” (540); his description in “Nones” of the hour of the crucifixion as “too hot, too bright” (634); his designation in “Good-Bye to the Mezzogiorno” of “the Sun / [as] He-who-smites-from-afar” (644); his evocation of the dystopian dog days in “Under Sirius” and “Cattivo Tempo”; his disavowal of photophilism and preference for “some sheltered shade” in “Stark bewölkt” (846); and his late gratitude for extremes of nebulosity in “Thank You, Fog.” In “Commentary” Auden’s nuanced, abstractly symbolic metaphors of light and shadow evoke those of the Paradise of Dante, the poem’s principal poetic forefather. “Commentary” resembles an “Inferno” and a “Purgatory” more than a “Paradise,” but the poem’s final gesture towards the idea of humans acting to create or conform to justice is a gesture towards paradise, using a language of light and its shadow to suggest a state which remains as unrealized as its nature remains ineffable. Subtle metaphors of light and shadow recur in Auden’s moving elegy for Louis MacNeice when Auden presents the negative relationship of poetry to a second ineffable absolute, which like that of Justice is also a concern in “Commentary,” namely Truth: “Speech can at best, a shadow echoing / the silent light, bear witness to the

Truth it is not" (Collected 693). Far from contradictory, such images in "Commentary" are grounded in a scientific perception of our place in the solar system in which Justice is neither the cosmic principle of a supernatural sun-god, nor a natural emanation of a material sun, but can only be a human creation. The metaphors at the end of "Commentary" are consistent too with Auden's overarching concern with freedom and necessity, with the light of the sun being associated with the necessity of nature and justice with humanity's responsibility for the recognition, exercise, and realization of its own freedom.

There is no eruption of metaphoric incoherence in "Commentary," but there is an irruption in its conclusion of a redemptive tone and orientation. Only with the final quatrain, do this tone and orientation mutate from a weak messianism to something that sounds and looks strongly messianic. A similar irruption of the messianic was to have occurred at the end of Anxiety in a brief anthem praising the Lord and presenting a vision of paradise. The conclusions of "Commentary" and Anxiety with their coincidences of messianic and paradisaal motifs represent Auden's achievement of an abstract, detached vision of paradise, after his apparent inability to articulate a more extended Paradise in the abandoned "In the year of my youth." The final celebration of paradise was cut from Anxiety, perhaps because none of the voices in the poem "is in a position to deliver the anthem" (Gottlieb 129), and perhaps also because the horrors of the Second World War simply precluded it.

Auden did publish "Anthem" in his 1946 Litany and Anthem for S. Matthew's Day where he remarks of history and the messiah that

It is the particular glory of Matthew that he recognizes in Jesus the Messiah foretold by the Prophets, that his witness emphasizes the Christ who gives to history its meaning, and warns us against the idolatrous fancies of the gentiles who would either, like the pagan Greeks regard time as the Evil One or, like the romantic apostates, bow done before the historical process. Let us pray especially therefore at this time to be delivered from all such heresies and

follies; from making our society or our age the final revelation of truth, from justifying present sin as a historical necessity that future good might come. May we worship neither the flux of chance, nor the wheel of fortune, nor the spiral of the zeitgeist but, following the commandment of Christ, take up our cross of the moment on which alone the past is redeemed and the future is set free. (quoted in Gottlieb 242n.114)

The Christian inflection Auden gives to the themes of freedom, necessity, and redemption, to heresies resembling fascism and Marxism, and to the relationship of the past, present, and future, is consistent with the treatment of those themes in XXVII and “Commentary.” Brief as it is, “Anthem,” which in Anxiety would have corresponded structurally to the last quatrain of “Commentary,” occupies an essential position in Auden’s work as his most direct evocation of Paradise. “Anthem” finally appeared in Epistle to a Godson, the last book of verse Auden saw through to publication. It is as if the Dantean vision of paradise that eluded him in 1932’s “In the year of my youth” and that we glimpse at the end of Journey had to be held back, at least from the general public, until the end of his life where it could be properly revealed. Judging by critics’ rejections of “Commentary,” even its inchoate concluding vision of Paradise was, in the hellish heart of the twentieth-century, premature to the point of seeming offensive. But then Auden too recognized that it is not the Resurrection, but the crucifixion which must be believed. “Today, we find Good Friday easy to accept: what scandalises is Easter: Modern man finds a happy ending, a final victory of Love over the Prince of this World, very hard to swallow” (cited in Kirsch 21).

VERSIONS OF THE MESSIANIC

In his Making of the Auden Canon, Beach provides the only substantial response to “Commentary” other than Mendelson’s dismissal and Fuller’s annotations, the one response to explicitly question the religious dimensions of the poem’s conclusion. Beach correctly identifies Auden’s revisions to “Commentary” as a turning point in the ideological

definition of Auden's work. Scandalized by those revisions, Beach highlights differences between the 1939 and 1945 versions while remaining blind to relevant features common to both. Beach's conclusion is that through his revisions to "Commentary," Auden gave to the entirety of "In Time of War" a "more distinctively religious cast than [it] had when first written in 1938" (10). Beach approves of the original closing quatrain of "Commentary" as a completion of the "In Time of War" sequence's "eloquent and inspiring plea for the humanistic ideal of the good life, to be built up on earth by the earnest pursuit of social justice supported by generous fellow-feeling" (7). However, he rejects the religious tenor of Auden's revisions (9-10). Beach writes that instead of

'constructing at last a human justice,' man is adjuring himself to 'follow the clear instructions' of a Justice not human—a Justice capitalised and thereby signalized as divine. The divinity of this Justice is further emphasized by the capitalized personal pronoun 'Whose' in the following line, in place of the neutral 'which,' and the substitution in the final line of 'human reasons' for 'other reasons,' where (in the revision) the human reasons of a secular or purely humanistic philosophy are opposed to the divine reasons derived from God's will. (7-8)

For Beach, Auden's religious revisions might lead readers to take "In Time of War" to be "an anticipation of the most orthodox Christian views" (7), as indeed many readers have done. He observes further that since the revised version of "Commentary" closes the Collected Shorter Poems, the concluding religious emphasis there threatens to affect the reading of Auden's entire *oeuvre* (7), as indeed it probably should.

Beach's strong objections to Auden's Christianizing retrospection resembles Mendelson's impatient dismissal of "Commentary." Beach's negativity involves the false assumption that the "more religious cast" of the later version of "Commentary" is diametrically opposed to the more secular original version. As Fuller remarks "Auden's conversion of the phrase to 'Justice' [. . .] was, given the sermon-like character of the speech in the first place, understandable" (244). Moreover, regardless of whether it is

justifiable to consider Western secularism and theistic religious belief as diametrically opposed, what Beach does not see is that such an opposition is not at play in “In Time of War.” Beach neglects to mention—probably because of the ideological prohibitions of the McCarthyite 1950s—that the secularism of the sonnets of “In Time of War” is thoroughly inflected with elements drawn from Marx and Engels. This omission precludes any consideration of the compatibility in “In Time of War” of the emancipatory and messianic themes common to the Bible and secularism, Marxist or otherwise. Beach could also not have known that in the 1973 edition of Journey the later Christian Auden would restore and endorse the original supposedly ‘secular’ ending.

Beach is right to consider the Christianizing revisions in the 1945 version of “Commentary” controversial. The shortcomings of Beach’s reading derive from his failure to consider the inherently Biblical qualities of both “Commentary” and “In Time of War” as a whole. For, however secular or Marxian the original version of “In Time of War” may appear, the sequence’s overall mythic structure and many of its rhetorical features are essentially Biblical. Like the Bible, the sonnet sequence begins with Creation, first of the plants and animals and then of man. I’s account of creation is more Darwinian than Biblical, but it is followed by II’s unmistakable evocations of the story of the Garden of Eden and X’s version of the Messiah. “In Time of War” goes on to end in “Commentary” unmistakably on late-Biblical messianic, apocalyptic, and prophetic tones. In fact, “Commentary” opens with a return to I’s secular creation story and in several passages reprises the sonnets’ review of the history of humanity as a series of falls up to the Japanese invasion of China and to the sense of 1938 as an “hour of apocalypse” (Lehmann 179) that informs the messianic, apocalyptic, and prophetic vistas of “Commentary.” The overarching structures of “Commentary” and “In Time of War” as a whole are analogous to

the mythic structure of the Bible, from Creation to Apocalypse. What is more, “Commentary” abounds in allusions to ‘the forever’, ‘the limitlessness’, ‘the eternal’, ‘the everlasting’, to Evil and goodness, to Heaven and Hell, to faith, to prayer, and to God and to Christ. The poem is clearly the expression of a sensibility for which Christianity’s conception of all these things and the modern history of Christianity are central references and for which mankind’s religious relationship to the eternal is a living issue. That “In Time of War” rests so squarely on a foundation of Biblical myth and rhetoric and manifests an essentially religious concern for eternity mitigates the severity of Beach’s charge that the later theistic revisions to specific passages are incompatible with Auden’s original meaning.

We have seen that there are Biblical and religious dimensions to the sonnets of “In Time of War,” but even Beach admits that the later version of “Commentary” has, not an entirely new, but only “a more distinctively religious cast.” Stan Smith who has at times articulated a view of Auden of the thirties as a secular and proto-Marxist writer, has also come to emphasize the importance of Biblical and Christian aspects of Auden’s early work. “For Auden, the perspectives offered by his Christian upbringing provided a narrative paradigm which underlies” many of his early poems (Smith “Ruined Boys” 117). This conclusion of Smith’s does not necessarily negate his earlier condemnation of Callan’s Christianizing reading of XXVII, but it does require Smith to conclude that “Auden’s ‘communist’ gospel of love in the 1930s [. . .] repeatedly finds its imagery and idiom in that earlier gospel [of the Bible], which in an essay such as “The Good Life” is explicitly recruited as the authentic tradition of revolt” (127). Smith emphasizes Auden’s affinity with prophecy and apocalypse, traditions especially relevant to “Commentary.” Thus in Auden’s early work, Smith perceives an archaic “eschatological vision that looks down the generations of men with the clairvoyant ferocity of a Biblical prophet” (114). In various

Auden's work "sonorously proclaim a prophetic rhetoric which fuses revelatory and revolutionary modes" (114), or "is a compendium of Biblical prophetic senses" (117), or "calls up the *dies irae*, the 'day of wrath' of the Apocalypse" (116), or involves "an easy transition from Revelation to Revolution and back again" (117), or alludes to apocalyptic, prophetic, and chiliastic passages in the New and Old Testaments (117, 119, 120).

Though Smith like most critics neglects "Commentary" and the question of its "archaic" Biblical elements, McLeod, like Mendelson, notes the poem's messianic features. Where Smith argues that Auden's recourse to the rhetoric of Biblical eschatology and prophecy is consistently in the service of his proto-communist revolutionism, McLeod describes "Commentary" as "an appeal to modern man [. . .] to reassume his traditional responsibility for the establishment of the Messianic ideal" (116). For McLeod, messianism is "a spiritual tradition fundamental to the Western way of thinking" (116), and Auden in "Commentary" reasserts the Messianic ideal "by exhorting man to recognize the necessity of certain conditions to his existence as a human being" (99). McLeod's vague statements regarding teleological aspects of Auden's messianism and Smith's more detailed endorsement of 'revolutionary' eschatological elements in Auden's early work stand in contrast to Mendelson's view of "Commentary" as an incoherent poem whose "contradictions [as in Auden's other] redemptive poems are signs of his buried distrust of the messianic ideal" (Early 249). McLeod and Smith's readings of messianic dimensions of Auden's work also stands in contrast to Kirsch's claim that "Auden had little interest in eschatology" (20). Kirsch is right about the later Auden's skepticism about dogmas of the last things, but Kirsch's study of Auden's Christian faith ignores the process of its reemergence out of an phase in which eschatological and teleological elements inform a sustained messianic vision.

If Auden becomes wary of redemptive ideals, this neither prevents him from continuing to endorse, wearily, important versions of the messianic later, nor from openly and systematically displaying more of its contradictions as he does so. As Gottlieb points out, Anxiety displays two major endings, not including the postponed Paradise of “Anthem,” which shift in their conclusions to a messianic or salvationist perspective. Those endings articulate respectively a Jewish and a Christian understanding of salvation, but, as Gottlieb insists, Auden does not seek “to resolve the conflict established by [this] double conclusion of Anxiety” (130). Rather he recognizes the integrity of the opposing Jewish and Christian meditations of Rosetta and Malin. The unifying ecumenical moment, fusing Jewish and Christian horizons, which could have been provided by the concluding “Anthem” does not occur in Anxiety (Gottlieb 128-131). This preservation in Anxiety of the distinctiveness of Jewish and Christian messianic horizons should be appreciated in contrast to the revelation of the affiliation of Marxist and Biblical messianism and of the conciliatory mingling of Marxian and Biblical themes in “In Time of War.” In both the latter case and in Anxiety, Auden’s approach involves a strategic choice to preserve and protect where destruction threatens. In 1938, while there is still an at least possible hope that global conflict might be averted, he seeks to overcome destructive and aggressive polarization through the revelation of the affinity and commonality of Marxian and Christian views. In 1944-46 in the face of civilizational annihilation and genocide, he preserves the separate integrity of Christian and Jewish particularities. Gottlieb’s explicitly Jewish approach to messianism in Anxiety responds to Auden’s effort to preserve the Jewish experience of the messianic.

The redemptive theme in “In Time of War” and generally in Auden clearly avails itself of both Christian and Marxian readings, but there are several reasons why it, as indeed

other significant aspects of Auden's *oeuvre*, also requires a Jewish reading. Auden's sensitivity to the threats facing European Jews is an important element of his well-known opposition to fascism and is explicit in Journey's XIV and XVI ("And life can really point to places / Where life is evil now: / Nanking; Dachau."), and in the only slightly later "Refugee Blues." There are too key personal experiences such as his love for Chester Kallman, his familiarity with Jewish life in New York, and his friendship with (to borrow a phrase from Auden's elegy for Freud) an "important Jew who died in exile" like Hannah Arendt. Auden even entertained the idea of converting to Judaism, and traces of his engagement with figures such as Spender, Hirschfeld, Freud, Arendt, Buber, Wittgenstein, Kallman, Elizabeth Mayer, Richard Howard, Oliver Sacks, Joseph Brodsky, and Edward Mendelson who are or were Jewish in varying respects, are found throughout his work. In light of Auden's philosemitism, it is fitting that Anxiety be recognized as "the first major poem in English that touches on the extermination camps" (Gottlieb 19); and the preservation of the Jewish experience of the messianic in Rosetta's speech be recognized as well.

A full account of the messianism of "Commentary" requires the inclusion, along with Christian, Marxian, and secular perspectives, of an explicitly Jewish perspective. Interestingly, just as it was the lapsed Jew Kallman who, in the shadow of the Holocaust, persuaded Auden at the last minute to drop the ecumenical paradise-evoking "Anthem" from the conclusion of Anxiety and to replace it "with a deliberately anticlimactic prose paragraph in which the narrator reports that Malin has returned to duty (Mendelson Later 273), some of Mendelson's strongest objections to "Commentary"—his sense of the poem's concluding vision of Paradise as paradoxical (199); as a "dream of a world only imagination can build" (202); as "a Utopia defined in vaguely religious terms, wherein love's will is our peace, and the present 'work' of the will may somehow bring about the rule of love"

(293)—occur precisely where the poem’s messianism, in turning inward and focussing on individual psychology, takes a typically Christian and decidedly unJewish turn. “The major difference,” writes Dan, between messianism in Judaism and Christianity “is that Christianity spiritualizes the concept of messianic redemption, removing it from the historical to the inner, spiritual realm, whereas Judaism has always insisted that messianic redemption is a historical occurrence” (80). The messianic conclusion of “Commentary” moves Christian-wise away from engagement with the reality of history to the idea of a messianic arrival which could only happen outside, beyond, or in spite of, any conceivable history and for which the responsibility is put on the individual and his inner condition.

Later we will consider the relationship of the messianism of “Commentary” to history, but it should be noted that the proto-Christian Augustinian spiritual turn from history does not mean that Auden’s messianism is not historical. The period of Auden’s sustained interest in messianism is, for instance, coeval with Hitler’s Reich. Distrust it he might, but in his fascination with “the messianic ideal,” Auden manages between 1932’s “In the year of my youth” and his 1933 redemptive poem and the later Anxiety to rehearse an encyclopaedic series of the most compelling versions of the messianic ideal in Western culture: Dante’s saving cosmic vision of hell, purgatory, and paradise; the ‘Romantic’ idea of the poet as redeemer; the idea of cultural, scientific, political, and philosophical heroes as discoverers of the way to a secular salvation for humanity; F6, “Commentary,” and Frontier’s negative examples of the dictator as redemptive hero; the satirical “Lament for a Lawgiver” in Anxiety praising the democratic politician as redeemer; the idea in “Commentary” of an unheroic, but just, sizeable, and saving portion of people who virtuously withstand tyranny; the meditation on the birth of Jesus as the Messiah in Time Being; and in Anxiety, Jewish and Christian perspectives on the conditions of salvation.

Tellingly, of all versions of the messianic, it is the concluding Communist 'scientific' paradise of "In the year of my youth" which the purportedly proto-Communist Auden was never able to commit to paper.

As with Auden's preservation of the distinctive Jewish and Christian versions of salvation, none of these variations on the messianic ideal really ever renders the others entirely obsolete, or will ever manage to shut down the messianic dialect of the others. Even Auden the mid-twentieth-century poet of messianism, who considers but rejects the role of messiah for himself, may be recuperable as a version of the redemptive hero in so far as his timely meditations clarify the messianic ideal and constitute a modest messianic gift to humankind. Reflecting on a similar recognition of the plurality of messianisms and on the messianism implicit in Marxist ontology, Derrida argues that the "messianic eschatology common both to the religions it criticizes and to the Marxist critique [is not simply to be] deconstructed" (59). Though clearly irritated by American "neo-testamentary" (56) "neo-evangelism" (61) and "Christian eschatology" (60), Derrida emphasizes the common promise in competing messianisms. However incompatible their eschatological picture books may be, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Marxism all share a messianic eschatology whose "formal structure of promise exceeds them or precedes them" in their doctrinal particularity. For Derrida, this formal promise is not to be deconstructed because "what remains irreducible to any deconstruction, what remains as undeconstructible as the possibility of deconstruction is, perhaps, a certain experience of emancipatory promise; it is perhaps even the formality of a structural messianism, a messianism without the religion, even a messianic without messianism, an idea of justice" (60).

Derrida's comments return us to the specificity of the messianic concern of "Commentary." Not only is there the poem's concluding hope to "construct at last a human

justice,” but there are references throughout “Commentary” to justice, injustice, judging, judges, being just, and the just. In the twenty-three-line speech of humanity’s “faithful sworn supporters,” there are five such references, while in the thirteen-line speech of the fascist dictators, we find references to the State, violence, terror, the police, and the Law, but not one allusion to justice. Implicit in “Commentary” with its hope for justice and its opposition of the ideas of justice and fascism are the philosophical and ethical motives for Auden’s religion: “The novelty and shock of the Nazis was that they made no pretense of believing in justice and liberty for all,” Auden would write later, explaining his eventual conversion to Christianity as in part a result of the incapacity of “liberal humanism” to provide a convincing answer as to why his concern for justice and the Nazi’s disregard for it were not merely matters of personal taste or relativistic value (Pike Canterbury Pilgrims 40). Derrida’s (undeconstructed) insistence that justice is the undeconstructible emancipatory promise common to Marxist and religious messianisms is an endorsement of the final emphasis on justice in “Commentary.” If the presence of the theme of justice is common to several variants of messianism, however, it alone is not enough to distinguish one messianic dialect or vision of redemption from another, even though for Auden the essential difference between Nazi messianism and the version he expresses in “Commentary” is their respective attitudes to the idea of “justice for all.” It is possible, though, to look beyond the undeconstructible kernel of justice to sketch the distinctive qualities of the flowers of messianism in “Commentary” and relate them to the larger field of competing messianisms.

Even within “Commentary” several messianisms are at play. After the false messianism of fascism and the past examples of insidiously critical secular messianism, the poem settles on two positive sources of messianic hope. There is the Christianizing

messianism of personal spiritual renewal in the concluding speech; and there is the earlier messianism of the ‘supporters’ of humanity. The poem’s principal justification for the messianic hope it expresses actually rests on the example of humanity’s “faithful sworn supporters” whose weakly messianic lives bear witness to practical human creativity. Despite the special dullness of Auden’s writing in this part of “Commentary,” its vision has redeeming ethical, conceptual, and even poetic features. The messianic role of the “Invisible College of the Humble” stands in contrast to the assumption of the role by the fascistic conquerors. This contrast between the sinister brutality of fascist politics and an ideal ageless human community is essential to the messianic vision in “Commentary.” Fuller points out that “Auden’s description of [the Invisible College of the Humble] accords with positions like that of Forster in the essay ‘What I Believe’” (Commentary 243). Written while Auden and Isherwood were in China, Forster’s essay “made a considerable impression,” annoying “orthodox patriots and orthodox Marxists” (Furbank 225), and was published in time for Auden to draw upon it thoroughly as he was finishing Journey (Auden would draw on it again in the last stanza of “September 1, 1939” (Mendelson Later 371)).

Journey, then, ends as it begins on a Forsterian note. The book opens with its dedicatory sonnet to Forster, and moving to a conclusion presents a Forsterian vision of the saving capacity of human decency. Forster’s vision and the people it relies on are at once idealistic and skeptically practical, utopian and modestly quotidian, abstractly idealist and plainly materialist: “They represent the true human tradition, the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos. Thousands of them perish in obscurity, a few are great names” (Forster 87). Adapted and expanded in “Commentary,” Forster’s redemptive vision with its contrast of rampaging history and bumbling but triumphant human goodness remains permanent in Auden, sustaining his subsequent work. Auden returns to the vision

several times; nowhere more tersely than the conclusion of “Archaeology,” the last poem he wrote for publication (Mendelson Later 512). That poem closes his Collected Poems with a retrospective gloss on the first three quarters of “Commentary:”

What [our school text-books] call History
is nothing to vaunt of,
being made, as it is,
by the criminal in us:
goodness is timeless. (896-7)

Its connection to common-sensical Forsterian idealism situates the homey messianism of the just, humble, and faithful in “Commentary” in the context of Forster’s defence of British liberalism and parliamentary democracy. It is worth noting that Forster’s essay was originally entitled “Two Cheers for Democracy” and that it explicitly, though not entirely convincingly, claims to rest on a secular non-doctrinaire argument for the power of ordinary human decency to redeem. Auden would soon demur from Forster’s secular position, but even “Commentary” includes a corrective to the quiet confidence of Forster’s vision. Where Forster describes “the true human tradition” as “invincible” (87), Auden substitutes “invisible” and emphasizes, the perilousness of its present challenge, the uncertainty of its future, its liability to defeat, the stark possibility that it will perish.

There is, though, that other strand of positive messianism in “Commentary” deriving from Auden’s cultivation of the redemptive theme from 1932 through 1938, and grafted onto the poem in its recycled last stanza. The specific nature of that messianism, which is more original to the Auden than his borrowed Forsterian vision, is clarified by the debates of Jewish thinkers on the distinctions between varieties of the messianic. Dan’s conception of Christian messianism as involving a non-chiliastic spiritualization of redemption (80) highlights a quasi-doctrinal dimension of Auden’s proto-Christian turn from history, but Buber provides terms for a detailed classification of the messianic qualities of “Commentary.” Distinguishing between prophetic and apocalyptic modes, Buber explains

the motive for messianism through the opposition of resignation in the hour of crisis and activation of hope through the two available messianic modes (173). The contrast between resignation and messianism is “the dilemma whose discursive expression is the old philosophical quarrel between indeterministic and deterministic views of the world” (173). “Commentary” rejects resignation in the face of fascist power in the stanza on those who “have accepted *Pascal*’s wager,” and chooses instead the freedom of the messianic. Such a choice, argues Buber in terms recalling the eternal return of the problem of freedom in XXVII, involves “the life experience in which the moment of beginning the action is illuminated by the awareness of freedom, and the moment of having acted is overshadowed by the knowledge of necessity” (173). Pertinent as is this association of the origins of the messianic with an awareness of freedom, Buber’s privileging of prophetic over apocalyptic messianism provides the terms for a more thorough evaluation of “Commentary.”

For Buber, prophetic messianism is undogmatic. It emphasizes both a “dialogical intercourse” of God and man, and man’s power of choice. The prophetic is spoken in the “present historical-biographical hour,” and there is a clear involvement with “the *factual* character of human experience.” In this prophetic mode, the future is unfixed; salvation and disaster are both still possible (177-80). In the contrasting apocalyptic mode, a fictionalized speaker “has no audience turned toward him” in the present historical-biographical hour; the ‘speaker’ is detached, is perhaps a writer who recounts conversations with angels and the succession of historical epochs. The apocalyptic evinces a literariness rather than an engagement with actuality. Finally, the apocalyptic future looks determined and the power of the community to turn to good “is no longer thought of” since “turning no longer has history altering power” (181-2). There is a whiff of dogmatism in the opposition Buber proposes, but its contrasting terms help situate “Commentary” among the messianisms.

Though the poem's review of historical epochs and its conspicuous learnedness seem apocalyptic, the rest of "Commentary" tends to Buber's prophetic pole, displaying variations on all the prophetic characteristics Buber identifies. Dogmatic certitude is associated with the false fascistic messianic, or shown to be historically transitory. The Forsterian review of the redemptive work of humanity is rooted in the facticity of the practical. Only the god-like nature of the circular dialogue of poet and humanity is unorthodox and obscure enough to make its compatibility with Buber's notion of the prophetic somewhat less obvious.

The question of "the catastrophic nature of the redemptive process" (Dan 81) in the apocalyptic is also relevant to "Commentary." For though it describes a catastrophic historical situation with an obvious potential to become more catastrophic, "Commentary"—both in its celebrations of the timeless, decent and creative goodness of the "just," the "faithful sworn supporters," and the "Invisible College of the Humble," and in its final prayer for personal transformation which would open onto a messianic future—offers redemptive possibilities independent of catastrophe. Redemption in "Commentary" only requires us to follow the example of the just and humble and to conduct our own inward renovation in order to turn away from history and catastrophe to our better natures. As an instance of messianic writing, "Commentary" reveals Auden's notions of how individuals should act and of what a redeemed and redeeming humanity would look like. Gottlieb's recent expression of a desire for "a messianic idea that, while resolutely opposing any hint of [catastrophic] apocalypticism, nevertheless refrains from neutralizing messianism" as an effective force (251) has already been partly fulfilled in the neglected "Commentary" with what became for Auden a lasting vision of an ahistorical, non-catastrophic messianism.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE BLOODY HOUR

“Out of the Future into Actual History”

Important as comprehending the messianism of “Commentary” in its thematic, literary, and doctrinal dimensions is, it is more urgent to understand its historical and political implications. The poem’s antifascist messianic vision is complicated by the problem of violence and by the national and cultural identity of the messianic subject whom the poem addresses. Surprisingly, Auden’s vision has no place for Communism or a Soviet Union on which the messianic subject of his poem actually depends. Instead, Auden’s historical vision involves an Anglocentric bourgeois subject presented in a relation of dependence on the U.S.A. and, especially, on the late-colonial world. The implicit global coalition required by Auden’s messianism is sustained by an ideal of reconciliation. A central theme throughout Auden’s work as well as a response to strategic KMT and CCP cooperation in the China of 1938, the idea of reconciliation is crucial to the vision of “Commentary.” Reconciliation in the poem is a function of a recognition of self-interest and seeks an achieved condition of Confucian *Jen*. An estranging analogue of Christianity’s Agape, *Jen* returns us to a long view in which the Sino-Japanese War becomes representative of mankind’s permanent messianic struggle to achieve its essential humanity. That long view encompasses past and future, a present of struggle and choice, and an awareness of the presence of death. The sublime conclusion that “Commentary” provides for Journey as the book struggles with the reality of death in the mid-twentieth century rejoins other sublime moments and reveals Journey as a response to its authors’ encounters with a series of overwhelming realities.

Auden’s messianism may be ahistorical and non-catastrophic, but “Commentary” is nonetheless overburdened with history, and it is catastrophe, not paradise, which is pending.

The doctrinal and imaginative qualities of “Commentary” as an instance of messianic writing are easier to grasp than the poem’s representation of the confusing historical and political contexts in which its messianism is embedded. The examination of the poem’s political dimensions will necessarily be more consequential and controversial than a strictly religious readings of its version of the messianic, for such an examination exposes the Realpolitik of the messianism of “Commentary.” Gottlieb’s discussion of messianic hope in Arendt helps us move from Auden’s ahistorical messianism to the catastrophe of history:

Messianic hope expresses itself in the idea that time is coming to a close. Although this idea can then be represented in apocalyptic imagery, such imagery is not only not necessary; it may have little—and, as some [notably Buber] have argued, absolutely nothing—to do with messianism. Apocalyptic messianism from The Book of Daniel and The Apocalypse of John to modern totalitarian ideologies represents the competition in terms of clashing armies. The violent imagery of a final and decisive battle is in no small measure the reason for mistrusting anything associated with militant, apocalyptic messianism. But the presentation of two times in competition with each other need not adopt any martial imagery, and messianism need not be confused with millenarianism. (140)

In “Commentary,” the epoch of the Third Great Disappointment is indeed coming to a close, and the poem is organized by a contrast of ethical alternatives (the authoritarian fascistic option and the peaceable humanistic option). Furthermore, each option has temporal, historical dimensions. Fascism’s is a “feudal ethic” (685), while the option of “our faithful sworn supporters” is explicitly post-feudal (687) and relies on the agelessness of anonymous human creativity. Both options involve present choices opening onto the future. The fascist future will be built by fascist leaders after humanity surrenders its freedom to them, and significantly they speak of their vision of the future with a ‘shall,’ which resounds as both an older form of a predictive future tense and the imperative voice of authority (684). The building of the humanistic future is scarcely alluded to in the speech of the “faithful sworn supporters” of humanity who actually do the building. Rather the

idea of building such a future appears at the end of the poem as an effect of the rallying and letting loose of impersonal forces of the individual will, or in the revised ending as an effect of the forces of many individual wills following an external justice.

In presenting the poem's central ethical opposition, Auden avoids the martial imagery that Buber and Gottlieb eschew. Indeed, a year after *Journey* appeared Auden in "New Year Letter" explicitly warns against the descent into violent apocalypticism:

Who, thinking of the last ten years,
Does not hear howling in his ears
The Asiatic cry of pain,
The shots of executing Spain,
See stumbling through his outraged mind
The Abyssinian, blistered, blind,
[.]
The Jew wrecked in the German cell,
Flat Poland frozen into hell,
[.]
[and is not] tempted to surrender to
The grand apocalyptic dream
In which the persecutors scream
As on the evil Aryan lives
Descends the night of the long knives,
The bleeding tyrant dragged through all
The ashes of the capital. (*Collected* 206)

This 1940 daydream of apocalyptic anti-Nazi anti-German violence may end with images that foreshadow the desecration of Mussolini's corpse and the destruction of Berlin, but its intention was cathartic rather than prophetic; the apocalyptic dream is depicted so that it may be resisted as the vengeful fantasy it is. In "Commentary" too Auden raises the issue of violence on the good side of the poem's messianic options, but to more ambiguous effect when "our faithful sworn supporters" insist that "*Now in the clutch of crisis and the bloody hour / You must defeat your enemies or perish, but remember, / Only by those who reverence it can life be mastered*" (687). This stanza begins as a conscientious acknowledgement of the regrettable necessity of violence, somewhat reminiscent of the line

“the conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder” from “Spain 1937” (a line whose moral implications both Orwell and Mendelson linger over; v. Early 321-2). The passage in “Commentary,” however, passes far too rapidly over the issue of violence between the two competing camps whose apocalyptic opposition organizes the poem.

Rather than dealing with the issue of the violence of apocalypticism, the passage actually masks the military reality of violence, and diverts attention from the fact that the competing messianic alternatives of “Commentary” do involve the opposition of clashing armies. Immediately after calling on us to defeat our enemies “*in the bloody hour*” (that is, to kill enough of them to bring about their defeat), the voice of our faithful sworn supporters begins talking, not about the deaths on which our victory depends, but about mastery through a reverence for life. The notion of a reverence for life is certainly worth raising in a military context, but raising it at this point avoids the reality of violence precisely when the poem is supposedly facing up to that very issue. The messianism of “Commentary” looks non-apocalyptic, non-militant, and non-catastrophic because it avoids dwelling on its own violent implications. We need only recall XXVII’s ambivalent phrase about “the disciplined movements of the heart” following “its harmless ways” to remember how sinister are the elisions that skirt the reality of violence.

After this slide into worthy talk of reverencing life, the poem immediately proceeds to the stanza about only “*a whole and happy conscience*” being able to answer fascism’s “*bleak lie*” and about unity being compatible with freedom only “*among the just.*” Unconvincing in themselves, these propositions go against the grain of the poem’s conscientious, though inadequately explicit, presentation of the historical geo-political context. “Commentary” begins to involve itself in contradictions not because the Christianizing inward turn of its messianism at the end is illegitimate or because the

messianism of its non-catastrophic Forsterian humanism is untenable. Where messianic rhetoric is recognized as deriving from an unavoidable impulse and a moral obligation to articulate one's experience of the principles of hope and justice, those dual redemptive ideas of "Commentary" are defensible enough as elements of a messianic vision. Mendelson objects to the spiritualised messianic conclusion of "Commentary" because he takes it as an instance of "the 'subjunctive mood' of 'bad' or premature utopianism [which] grabs instantly for a future, projecting itself by an act of will or imagination beyond the compromised political structures of the present" (Eagleton 25). For Eagleton a more worthy "utopian thought" must "attend to those forces or fault lines *within* the present that, developed or prised open in particular ways, might induce that condition to surpass itself into a future [. . .] To 'know the future' can only mean to grasp the present under the sign of its internal contradictions" (25-6). In these respects, Auden's attention to the present's complex forces and contradictions is sufficient to preserve his poem's intimations of a redeemed future from charges of empty utopianism.

Important objectionable difficulties do, though, arise when Auden links, as he must, the messianism of "Commentary" to the poem's historical and international context. To quote one of the poem's earliest precursors, it is when "Commentary" moves "out of the Future into actual History" (Auden English 119) that its messianism approaches a significant condition of self-contradiction and inconsistency. The poem's presentation of 'actual history' provides, for instance, no place for "a whole and happy conscience," or for the association of violence with conscience-salving pieties like 'reverence for life.' The poem also does not permit one to imagine that the possibility of a militant opposition to fascism is a question of those actually opposed to it being themselves just.

Rather, the poem repeatedly notes the guiltiness and injustice of those who are to

oppose themselves to fascism and defeat it, bloodily or otherwise. At its outset, Journey's dedicatory sonnet evokes the guilt of the British Empire, whose inescapable white man's burden of guilt Auden assumes for himself and Isherwood: "For we are Lucy, Turton, Philip, we / Wish international evil" (494). Not only does "Commentary" present the English as guilty and unjust, but it repeatedly suggests troubling similarities between the British and the Japanese and the other fascist powers. The parallels between Japan's and England's relationships to China are implicit, but obvious: "For centuries [the Chinese] looked in fear towards the northern defiles, / But now must turn and gather like a fist to strike / Wrong coming from the sea, from those [. . .] / Who even to themselves deny a human freedom" (681). As with the Japanese, the Chinese thought of British and Western European wrong as coming to China from the sea, and just as the Chinese had tried to do in the unsuccessful anti-European Boxer rebellion, the Chinese must "gather like a fist" in this anti-Japanese war. (The 'gathering' here is an unsettling contrast to the conclusion's transformative gathering of the forces of the personal will, but there the will's forces were gathered not so that they may strike like a clenched fist, but only so that they may be unclenched to do their creative work). Similarly the poem's "material contest" between Japan and China which has ravaged Shanghai—a city itself created by a "material contest" between China and the West—must be remembered as having been motivated in part by a material contest between Japanese and Western, notably British, imperialisms. Thus, the June 1938 issue of Pacific Affairs called the undeclared Sino-Japanese war "Great Britain and Japan's War in China." In that contest, Japan, Britain and the other powers share responsibility for the "colonial suffering" of the Chinese. Occupying somewhat analogous positions with respect to China, Japan and Britain appear more as rival brothers than as utterly dissimilar antagonists.

However great the historical differences between British and Japanese imperial actions in China, in “Commentary” the difference between the Eurasia-bracketing island nations of Britain and Japan does not lie so much in their respective historical relationships to China. The difference is that the Japanese “dwell in the estranging tyrant’s vision of the earth” (681) and deny themselves freedom, whereas the British, however much they may deny the freedom of others, grant it to themselves: “*You talked of Liberty, but were not just; and now / Your enemies have called your bluff; for in your city, / Only the man behind the rifle had free-will*” (687). Such acknowledgements of the West’s double-standard on the issue of freedom, along with acknowledgements of Britain’s colonial guilt and troubling resemblances to Japan, complicate the subsequent call for the violent defeat of the fascist enemy, making the confrontation between them anything but a clear cut battle between good and evil. The fascists too call for violence. Acknowledgement of their call for violence comes after a review of the civilizational developments that have led to the “experienced hatred” of the industrial proletariat and the “colonial suffering” of China, and after an acknowledgement of the apprehension that such hatred and suffering cause “in every body,” among the rich, among the gay companions, and among a “we” that for reasons outlined below inclines towards Britishness.

In humanity’s apprehension and confusion, the “base hear us, and the violent / Who long to calm our guilt with murder” (684). The seductive fascist offer to calm ‘our’ colonial or class guilt through violence contrasts to the explicit reminder of ‘our’ own injustice and guilt when ‘our’ supporters acknowledge the necessity of violence in their speech. The frank self-criticism of ‘our’ supporters is clearly more admirable than the soothing fascist offer. Immediately, though, their shift to talk of reverence for life tends to calm anxiety over the realities of the anti-fascist violence, and their subsequent suggestions of the

possibilities of a happy conscience and of the just reconciling unity and freedom minimize further the compromised nature of ‘our’ guilty colonial past and ‘our’ violence. These guilt-calming aspects in our supporters’ apology for violence tend to undo the earlier critique of the guilt-calming function of the violence of the fascists. That the fascists offer to use violence to calm our guilt; while ‘our’ supporters speak in such a way as to calm our guilt about our violence is not an unimportant difference. But the risk remains that both situations amount to the same neutralization of the reality of violence, and surely in the Anglo-American sphere, a sense of the justness of ‘our’ violent resistance and eventual victory over fascism has indeed been used to help calm ‘our’ guilt about colonialism.

The troubling half-revealed resemblances of ‘our side’ to that of the fascists has a further aspect. Not only are ‘we’ comparable to the Japanese in their colonial aggression against China, not only does the association of ‘our’ violence with reverence for life and happy consciences draw attention away from ‘our’ guilt, but ‘we’ share with the fascists a fundamental objective: “*One wish is common to you both, the wish to build / A world united as that Europe was in which / The flint-faced exile wrote his three-act comedy*” (687). The idea of a world as united as was the Christian Europe of the Middle Ages supposedly animates both fascist and unfascist parties here. We will return later to the political implications of this ideal of a united world. First, though, it is important to pause over the “you” that occurs at this point in the speech of “our faithful sworn supporters.” For the difference between this “you” and the other you’s that occur in their speech is critical. Unlike all those other ‘you’s, and unlike all the ‘we’s elsewhere in the poem, this “you both” refers not to a single collective subject, but to two different subjects. It is a dual “you” which embraces fascists and non-fascists, who paradoxically are united by their common wish for global unity even as they are divided in their opposition to each other.

Here an ethical, political, and conceptual muddle emerges that is of more consequence than any muddle flowing from the poem's utopianism or from any Jewish, Christian, or Marxian nicety. This more substantial muddle issues from the question, so familiar from the sonnets, of whom 'we' refers to in this poem. First person plural subjectivity is alluded to throughout "Commentary," but as with the sonnets, not always the same subject involved. In the sonnets, Auden's circumspect examination of the puzzles of plural subjectivity is reflective and instructive. In "Commentary," however, what happens is that one conception of the first person plural subject eventually crowds out all others. These unacknowledged substitutions of a certain plural subject for others obscure rather than illuminate the identities of the plural subjects at issue and consequently obscure the poem's morally crucial movement out of the messianic present and future into actual history.

It is easy to identify exactly where Auden's references to a first person plural subject shift from something comparable to the intelligent fluidity of reference in the sonnets to something involving incompatible notions of the plural subject. Early in the poem, the possessive pronouns of "our grief" and "our failures" (681) introduce an idea of first person plural subjectivity which involves humanity as one collective subject. This broadest possible plural human subject is immediately followed by references to the narrower subcategory of the human which is the Chinese nation ("Tarim nursed them"), and somewhat later by an even narrower European "we" that seems to refer specifically to Auden and Isherwood (681). The human species as one plural subject recurs when "we emerged [. . .] / And blinked in the warm sunshine of the Laufen Ice Retreat" (682), and recurs once "the machine has taught us how, to the Non-Human, / [. . .] Our colours, creeds and sexes are identical." Even if Auden usually associates the Machine with the modern West in Journey and elsewhere, this last phrase defines the human subject as broadly as possible, not against

itself, but in its contrast to the non-human. Each of these cases occurs in the first third of the poem, and context allows us to ascertain unproblematically whom the ‘we’ involved is, and the relations between the various plural human subjects remain clear. Later also, when we read “*we know the Good; / We build the Perfect City*” (684), context makes clear that this ‘we’ is the fascist leadership of Italy, Germany, and Japan.

The reference of every other instance of first person plural subjectivity in the poem is harder to determine. At about the mid-way point, there is a flurry of such references:

Fear builds enormous ranges casting shadows,
Heavy, bird-silencing, upon the outer world,
Hills that our grief sighs over like a Shelley, parting

All that we feel from all that we perceive,
Desire from Data; and the Thirteen gay Companions
Grow sullen now and quarrelsome as mountain tribes.

We wander on the earth, or err from bed to bed
In search of home, and fail, and weep for the lost ages
Before Because became As If, or rigid Certainty

The Chances Are. The base hear us, and the violent
Who long to calm our guilt with murder, and already
Have not been slow to turn our wish to their advantage. (683-4)

Here it is impossible to establish with any certainty the identity of the first person plural subject or subjects. Does that wandering ‘we’ refer back only to the “Thirteen gay companions,” or back to the subject of “our grief”? Does “our wish” at the end refer to the same subject who possesses “our grief” here? Is the subject of this “our grief” the same as that of the “our grief” which introduced into the poem the issue of first person plural subjectivity? On the last question, context argues no. The fear that builds those shadow-casting ranges between the inner and the outer world, so that what we feel and what we perceive are sundered, is “intrusive as a sill.” Like a sill, and like the enormous ranges or hills “that our grief sighs over,” the fear remains interposed between inner and outer, but it

comes from outside. The provenance of that fear is the same as that of the apprehension felt by the rich and the disturbance felt by “every body.” That fear is a response to the “experienced hatred” of people who resemble the proletariat of industrial Britain and to Chinese knowledge of their own “colonial suffering.” Such a fear would properly belong, then, to those who have reason to fear that proletarian hatred and to fear whatever the “attack of shyness” affecting the Chinese conceals. It is a properly British or Western European bourgeois fear, and the grief that is sighing over those fear-built ranges is not universally human, but Western European. The comparison to Shelley also gives our grief’s sighing, which recalls the mountain-bound sighs of XXVII, a specifically British inflection.

Here we come to the crux of the problem. What makes first person plural subjectivity in “Commentary” so problematic is that the identity of that subject drifts from a humanity imagined universally to something which at critical moments looks like a collective European, or British, or bourgeois subject without ever being named as such. There is an intimation of this transformation in our Shelley-like grief, but we sense it more in the following passage:

Nor do our leaders help; we know them now
For humbugs full of vain dexterity, invoking
A gallery of ancestors, pursuing still the mirage

Of long dead grandeurs whence the interest has absconded,
As Fahrenheit in an odd corner of great Celsius’ kingdom
Might mumble of the summers measured once by him. (685)

The passage is an allegory derived from a bit of nonsense verse by Christian Morgenstern for Anglo-German relations, with Hitler as Celsius and Chamberlain as Fahrenheit.⁷ The

⁷Fuller identifies the allusion to Morgenstern’s “Kronpräsidenten,” a poem in which Reamur scorns the apostasy of those who have abandoned Fahrenheit for Celsius. Auden’s very early allusions to that poem (in Auden and Day-Lewis preface to *Oxford Poetry 1927* and in Auden’s 1928 amateur first collection initially entitled “The Megalopsych”) were made in contexts having to do with sexuality and subjective excess (Fuller 3). In this passage, then, “Commentary” alludes not just to Morgenstern, but to the beginnings of Auden’s own work, and we note again the significance

shift in diction to the idiomatic British “humbug,” and the dig at a late-imperial Britain still clinging to Fahrenheit and its Fahrenheit dominions in contrast to Germany which had been using Celsius for half a century, allow us to associate “our leaders” with the antiquated Chamberlain of the Munich Crisis which overlapped with the writing of “Commentary.” Thus, the ‘us’ led by those hapless leaders seems by implication not only anti-fascist, but also vaguely British. This drift towards a British identity for the poem’s first person plural subject occurs even though the moral sense established early in the poem of humanity as one single subject continues to resonate in the poem’s later sections.

The dismissal of ‘our’ ineffectual Chamberlainesque leaders precipitates an intensification of attention to the first person plural subject two-thirds of the way through “Commentary,” as if the recognition of ‘our’ leaderlessness necessarily throws attention onto ‘us’. References to ‘us’ proliferate over the next ten stanzas: there are “our faithful sworn supporters” (685), “our dead,” “our lives,” “our gratitude,” “our struggle,” “our living,” and “our enemies.” Then, “we praise [the] names” of our dead, and it is the dead who give “us courage” and “aid us everywhere;” it is the dead whom, “if we care to listen, we can always hear” (686). The dead’s twenty-three line speech then keeps ‘us’ as a plural subject in play by addressing ‘us’ a half a dozen times as a plural “you.”

The proliferation of such references through this section defines the poem’s actual addressee. Noting that at this point “the tone becomes most preachy” (Fuller 243), and recalling that an important concern in a sermon is social action, we realise that

of “Commentary” as a summing up of Auden’s development to 1938. By the time of “Commentary,” however, the valence of the thermometric rivalry in “The Crown-pretenders” has become, not sexual and subjective, but political. In the context of the 1930s, this allegory for Anglo-German rivalry looks all the richer if one thinks of the hopeful reciprocity involved in the Anglophile Morgenstern imitating English nonsense verse and the Germanophile Auden then borrowing Morgenstern’s nonsense to satirize Anglo-German political relations. Auden’s incorporation of Morgenstern’s silliness into the seriousness of “Commentary” illustrates too the uncertainty regarding diction that runs through “Commentary.”

understanding the social action it envisions also involves understanding whom “Commentary,” and particularly this section of the poem, is addressed to. The speech of “our faithful sworn supporters” spells out most clearly the program for social action which the poem recommends. The “you” which is that speech’s addressee and which is to adopt that program coincides with the plural subject ‘we’ in whose pronominal name the poem has been spoken from the beginning. In this respect the address of the supporters stands in a *mise en abyme* relationship to the poem as a whole, and the social action which their address recommends is the social action promoted by the entire sermon-like poem. This recursive structure is compatible with the circular, mutually reinforcing relations presented elsewhere in the poem between what the poet, humanity, and their supporters articulate or hear. All of this constitutes a comprehensive hermeneutical vision of the nature of the meaningfulness of human dialogue, a vision of humanity as a self-comprehending whole, involving individuals, groups, and even the total species. This exalted and complex vision is, however, undermined by shifts in the identity of the plural subject from one part of the poem to another.

Scrutinizing the qualities of the first person plural subject in the middle sections of “Commentary,” we can establish with some precision its problematic identity or identities. A sense of the reference of that ‘we’ can be gained through ‘our’ association with “our faithful sworn supporters” whose unshakeable “faith in knowledge and man” identifies them as humanists. Those supporters exhibit qualities cutting across the broad human categories of child, elder, gender, and nation. Furthermore, Auden’s high-brow allusions to Kuo Hsi, Engels, and Blake, and to the Grand Canal and Madrid reveal the supporters as ideally internationalist. The supporters are, then, drawn from human categories diverse enough that both they and, by extension, ‘we’ suggest a broad conception of humanity as a

single human subject. The comprehensiveness of this collective subject is, however, reduced in the list of the places where the dead can help it. There, 'we' are distributed through an idealized set of human types: the lover, the scientist, the teacher or student, and the political or social activist. Though this selection is sentimentally compatible with a general sense of the first person plural as referring to humanity as an idealized whole, it also identifies humanity far too closely with select petty bourgeois figures. Auden's middle class humanist 'we' might be said to represent humanity as a whole only in the way that the earlier 'we' of the fascist leadership, like other political leaderships, think of themselves as a part embodying a whole.

Further problems regarding the core collective human subject that "Commentary" addresses arise in three stanzas from the dead's address to 'us.' The first of these is the tercet beginning "*You talked of Liberty, but were not just*" which identifies the poem's collective subject as a liberty-espousing Western subject, and perhaps a specifically British national subject, compromised by its injustice to both the proletariat and the colonized, and challenged by its fascist enemy. The second is the tercet in which 'we' are told that the wish to build a world as united as was medieval Europe "*is common to you both.*" Here the sense of the Western identity of the collective human subject is reinforced by the reference to a Western and Christian historical ideal, but far more significantly, that human subject suddenly and only momentarily becomes dual. "*You*" and "*your enemy*" involve two subjects whose common wish to unite the world obscures the fact that the stanza's "*you both*" refers, not to a single universal human subject, but to a humanity divided against itself as rival human collectivities. This division goes against the notion of humanity as a single collective subject established early in the poem and against the portrait of the human collectivity as a peaceable bourgeois humanistic subject presented subliminally in the

immediately preceding passages. In the light of the internecine human conflict at issue in the poem, it is hard to accept the implicit claim of universalism for the vision of a bourgeois humanity that the poem promotes. We might conclude that 'our' side of that "*you both*" has gathered to itself the claims of human universality and civilizing humanism. There is scant humanity left for the other fascistic 'you,' or rather that second 'you' must represent a less hopeful aspect of what humanity is which "Commentary" at this point prefers to ignore.

A third tercet further undermines the character of the imagined universal bourgeois human subject that the speech of the dead and the poem itself addresses. The potential of the collective humanistic subject to defeat its enemy "*in the clutch of crisis and the bloody hour*" is inconsistent with the presentation of that subject's peaceable qualities and with the attribution of violent qualities solely to the fascist alternative which constitutes the humanistic subject's enemy. Somehow the humanistic bourgeois subject has a violent military capacity that Auden does not emphasize. Furthermore, since we are talking about a real world crisis, in which the enemies are identified explicitly as fascist Italy, Germany, Japan, and potentially a host of lesser states who are tempted by fascism, the collective human subject that is called on to defeat violently those enemies must also have a real world political identity or identities. Even if the messianism of "Commentary" is ahistorical and non-catastrophic and avoids the imagery of militant apocalypticism, even if the Forsterian humanity of its vision cannot be identified with any national group, it nevertheless remains true that the 'us' who is called upon to defeat its enemies, or perish, implicitly relies upon the involvement of the anti-fascist military force of specific nations and states. It is the violent anti-fascist work of that multinational force that will render possible the humanistic messianic work of the humble, the just, the faithful, and the petty bourgeois who lie at the heart of the messianic vision of "Commentary." The principal

candidates for such a fascism-defeating role in 1938 were, of course, Britain and its empire, France and its empire, China, the Soviet Union, the United States, and a coalition of lesser states scattered across the globe. In actual political and historical terms, we have, then, a situation where a portion of humanity is being called upon in “Commentary” to defeat another portion of humanity. The poem’s notion of humanity as a single collective subject is incompatible with this situation of acute international human division. We might think of the splitting of the human ‘you’ into an antagonistic “*you both*” in terms of a civil war between two human factions. What then of the notion of the anti-fascist bourgeois humanistic subject of the middle section of “Commentary” as a universal human subject? That universal subject which, though manifesting no signs of omnipotence, tends to the exalted condition of a complete self-contained subject communing with itself in a quasi-divine manner, founders on the rocks of international politics and human division, and stands revealed as a limited and compromised set of national subjects.

The universality of this subject might, however, still be salvageable if one accepts that those potential allies are being called upon to defeat their fascist enemies in the name of humanity. When ‘our’ supporters insist ‘we’ must defeat ‘our’ enemies, the idea of ‘us’ representing any sort of universal humanity can be saved only if it is accepted that one portion of humanity will defeat another portion of humanity on behalf of all humanity. This is the position of Joris Ivens in the documentary he shot with Robert Capa and John Fernhout during the same period that Auden and Isherwood were travelling in China. The prologue of Ivens’ The 400 Million presents a dichotomy similar to that of Auden’s poem⁸:

⁸Isherwood reports that he and Auden met Ivens with Fernhout and Capa in Hankow (515). Fernhout and Capa, they had met on the voyage from Europe to Hong Kong. Ivens and Fernhout, like Auden in “Spain 1937,” had documented the Spanish Civil War in the film The Spanish Earth the previous year, and were now with Capa set to “make a film about the life of a child soldier, a ‘little red devil’, in one of the mobile units of the Eighth Route Army” (515). Like Auden and Isherwood, the cinematic trio never reached the Communist northwest, making instead The 400

On one side—CHINA—which has enriched the world for 4000 years with its treasures and wisdom. On the other side—the Rulers of JAPAN—determined to capture all China and with the aid of her immense resources seize the world for their empire. China was forced into this war to protect her national independence, freedom and precious culture.

On one side, the Japanese military machine, ally of the Rome-Berlin Axis, brutal and merciless. On the other side, just as in Europe, victims of fascist attack.

Europe and Asia have become the western and eastern front of the same assault on democracy.

Leaving aside problems such as China's questionable status as a potential democracy and Britain and other countries' own imperial appetites, we easily see that Ivens' dichotomy corresponds to the fascist / humanist opposition of "Commentary," and that for Ivens fighting against the fascists amounts to fighting for humanity. The idea that the anti-fascist alliance fought for humanity as a whole is indeed an understanding of the victory over fascism in the Second World War that has become an ideological reflex of the West, particularly the Anglo-American world, in its self-representation internationally. The validity of such a democratic bourgeois world view is debatable, but more pertinent to our reading of "Commentary" are the implications of Auden's representation of the geopolitical situation and of the potential international coalition which must do the messianic work of defeating the fascist enemy.

Two geographical features of that representation have noteworthy ideological dimensions. One is the absence in "Commentary" of references to Russia or the Soviet Union. Clearly any anti-fascist coalition would need to be international, and Auden in the course of the poem alludes to several potential members of such an alliance, including France, the USA, China, and Britain. "Commentary" surveys a wide-ranging

Million. This documentary on KMT-led resistance provides instructive points of comparison to Isherwood's "Travel-Diary" and Auden's "In Time of War," even if The 400 Million remains anti-fascist boosterism and avoids the uncertain irony of Isherwood's travelogue and the ideological complexity of "Commentary."

geography—East Asia, India, Arabian West Asia, Africa, Europe, the USA —and aside from the British dominions and Latin America, the Soviet Union is the only major geopolitical entity which the poem overlooks. Given the leading role the Soviet Union would perform in the defeat of Nazi Germany, its omission from the messianic coalition of “Commentary” is a colossal distortion of the historical situation. As the Second World War was to show “the only effective anti-fascist alliance was one that included the USSR” (Hobsbawn 151).

In the context of 1938, the absence of the Soviet Union in a poem with the historical, political, and ideological motivations of “Commentary” is stunning. Searching for signs that that absence is not absolute, one might take the “dust of all the dead that reddens every sunset” as wistfully suggesting that the true human tradition is *Red*. Or, when the “voice of Man” mingles with “the distant mutter of guerilla fighting,” one might wonder whether that guerilla warfare was a tactic of the Chinese communists and by association proceed to link this muttering to the Soviet Union, the one actually existing Communist state. By 1938, however, the KMT too had adopted guerilla tactics, which in any case Auden probably associated more with Lawrence-inspired Arab nationalism than with 1930s Communism. Finally, one seizes on the reference to Engels’ formula on the relationship of freedom and necessity which in 1938 would have been recognized as a bit of Communist and Soviet orthodoxy. Auden’s sexualization of the formula and his insertion of it into a list of modestly beneficent human activities hardly suggests the certitudes of scientific socialism and the political infallibility of Stalin. Still the Engels quote along with the allusions to Kuo Hsi and Blake in the descriptions of the ‘good guys’ could be said to evoke the Chinese, British, and Communist alliance which was so crucial to the anti-fascist cause. None of these faint suggestions in “Commentary” comes close, however, to compensating

for the deafening silence on the topic of the Soviet Union's place in the poem's global messianic vision.

How to explain that, a year before the shock of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and the joint Nazi-Soviet invasion of Poland did so much damage to Soviet credibility, Auden has already written off the Soviet Union? How to explain that a poem that articulates a messianic hope that is idealized and comprehensively geo-political has no place for the revolutionary state which embodied the messianic hopes of so many? In the overall context of Journey, the absence of the Soviet Union in "Commentary" recalls the sceptical treatment and general absence of Communism in Isherwood's "Travel-Diary." Coming immediately after the sonnet sequence, the absence of the Soviet Union makes the speculative transformation of Marxian thought in the first part of "In Time of War" seem less a synthesis of Marxian and Christian themes than a reabsorption of Marxism into a proto-Christian and implicitly bourgeois world view which Auden can then proceed to commit himself to in "Commentary."

In the context of "Commentary" itself, there is a more important reason for the omission of the Soviet Union. For, despite that fact that the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany were thought of as antagonists, it is obvious that as political cultures they belong on the same side of the poem's organizing opposition between violent authoritarianism and Forsterian humanism. The "Stalinist tyranny in the USSR was at that time, by general consent, at its worst" (Hobsbawm 143), and what could be more apropos of 1930s Soviet politics than Auden's survey of the fascist cause, beginning with "the violent / Who long to calm our guilt with murder," through its intimidating reasoning "*The State is real, the Individual is wicked,*" "*Terror like a frost shall halt the flood of thinking,*" "*Leave Truth to the police and us,*" to its "great" leaders and the *trahsion des clerics*. Yet, though, Stalin's

Soviet Union clearly resembles the fascist states, the international alliance upon which the humanistic Forsterian pole depends just as clearly will have to rely on the Soviet Union to defeat its fascist enemies. The coalition is therefore compromised, not only by its part in the oppression of the proletariat and the colonized, but by its reliance on the Soviet version of the fascistic hatefulness to which it is opposed. Rather than the poem's opposition of bourgeois humanism to totalitarianism, the actual historical situation opposes compromised bourgeois humanist imperialist states along with one big imperialist totalitarian state to a group of fascist states with rival imperialist ambitions. Whatever Auden's ideological positions regarding Communism, Marxism, or Christianity in *Journey*, it would have been hard for him to include references to the Soviet Union in "Commentary" while maintaining the poem's opposition of gentle Forsterian humanism and violent totalitarianism. In the face of anti-fascist Realpolitik, the multifaceted messianism of "Commentary" and of Auden's poetry between 1932 and 1946 is unable to represent, whether out of bad faith, political discretion, or ideological aporia, the Marxist and Soviet versions of the messianic. This in spite of the fact that the period of Auden's messianic attentiveness coincides with an "exceptional and comparatively short-lived" period of sympathy for the Soviet Union over Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1947 (Hobsbawm 143).

The other noteworthy feature of Auden's representation of the international political situation is also geo-ideological. When Bryant calls the geography of "Commentary" a "colonial geography" (168), she identifies an important feature of Auden's own "estranging [. . .] vision of the earth" (*Prose* 1: 681). Even with the continental lacunae noted above, however, the geography of the poem is less 'colonial' than it 'global,' as befits a poem composed after its almost perpetually travelling author's trip around the world. The sweeping geography of "Commentary" is another example of Auden's uncanny capacity to

anticipate ideological and historical developments, for the poem prefigures the imminent “lesson in world geography” (24 Hobsbawm) occasioned by the Second World War. A specifically colonial geography unfolds only towards the very end, immediately after the completion of the poem’s presentation of the messianism of humanity’s “faithful sworn supporters” and of their case for enlightened violent opposition to fascism.

Night falls on China; the great arc of travelling shadow
 Moves over land and ocean, altering life:
 Thibet already silent, the packed Indias cooling,

Inert in the paralysis of caste. And though in Africa
 The vegetation still grows fiercely like the young,
 And in the cities that receive the slanting radiations

The lucky are at work, and most still know they suffer,
 The dark will touch them soon. (687)

Given the westward movement from Chinese night through late Tibetan and early Indian evenings to African afternoon, the lucky should probably be thought of as at work in European cities. Fuller notes the “peroratory character” of these lines, and how “the pace and variety of the busy world is finely conveyed as a backdrop” for the poem’s third speech with its own messianic conclusion. It is significant that the poem’s specifically colonial geography unfolds between the poem’s two positive messianic moments. The perspectives of Forsterian humanism with its fragile hopefulness and humble determination issue onto a geographical interlude that links the great colonial prizes of China, India, and Africa to a fortunate industrious metropolitan Europe whose colonial and class guilt the poem has conscientiously traced. By contrast, earlier the tempting fascist offer of Germany, Italy, and Japan issues onto a geographical survey that, while mentioning China and the Fertile Crescent, pays more attention to England, America, Hungary, France, and the rival parodic kingdoms of Fahrenheit and Celsius. The debate over whether to opt for fascism belongs principally to the Euro-American sphere. In contrast, the viability of the two

messianisms—first, the social messianism of human creativity and decency; second, the enabling messianic inwardness of personal transformation—that the poem counterposes to fascism depends, not just on the political choices of Euro-America, but on the involvement of the countries surveyed in the immense colonial geography linking the poem's two messianic possibilities.

The poem's anti-fascist hope, then, depends upon the potential of countries within both the Euro-American and the colonial spheres to choose Forsterian humanism and individual renovation over fascist totalitarianism. The poem's hope resides in the idea of an alliance of the anti-fascist West and the colonial world, a situation which invests the colonized world with an implicit, if uncertain, messianic potential. One can see in this aspect of *Journey*, not just an acknowledgement of a new reliance of Britain on her colonies, but also a prefiguration of the period of decolonization in which the messianic potential of humanity is projected onto the formerly colonized world of China, India, and Africa. Interestingly, after surveying the colonial geography of the world, Auden does not proceed to speak in the name of colonized people, but rather effects the inward turn of the concluding messianic speech. A similar concluding turn away from the social and political realities of the colonial world to a psychological epiphany occurs in *F6*. In both cases, it is as if Auden and Isherwood recognize the emancipatory and messianic role that the colonial world will be obliged to assume, but unable to imagine the actual fulfilment of this role, they must turn or retreat into an inward, spiritual or psychological, realm.

To a significant extent, post-colonial ideological developments would soon cast much of the former colonial world in this messianic role, as was notably the case with Mao's China, Gandhian India, and post-colonial Africa, in spite of the long complication of the Cold War and the rivalry between the USA and NATO and the Soviet Union and the

Eastern Bloc. For Auden in “Commentary,” that Cold War could only be a dangerous distraction from the messianic future because no messianic hope is invested in the Soviet Union. The redemptive perspective of “Commentary” does not embrace the Soviet Union, but neither does it adopt what Esty calls a “redemptive discourse of Anglocentrism” whose emergence in writers like Forster, Eliot, and Woolf is more or less contemporary with “Commentary.” For Esty, messianic Anglocentrism among writers who were effectively Auden’s elders is principally a “cultural response to fascist aggression,” but is also a response to “imperial contraction” (10). Indeed, “most English intellectuals could see by the 1940s,” that antifascist war and imperial contraction “were not just coincident in time but structurally interrelated” (10). The distinction of Auden in “Commentary” is to have perceived and envisioned this interrelation already in 1938. “Commentary” presents neither Soviet redemptionism of the left-leaning “Auden generation” nor Anglocentric redemptionism of the Bloomsburian patriotism of *Journey*’s dedicatee Forster. In that hour of crisis, Auden and Isherwood turn away from both the Soviet Union and England, and turn not only to the U.S.A., but also to late colonial Africa, India, and China. In 1938 the antifascist redemptionism of “Commentary,” inherent in no single nation, depends on the perilously uncertain messianic choices of both Europeans and Americans, colonizers and colonized. Forcing his vision out of a messianic human future into the crucible of actual history, Auden moves towards the problems of the actual future.

“O Reconcile”

Just as the “*Now in the clutch of crisis and the bloody hour / You must defeat your enemy or perish*” stanza grants access to the implicit politics of the messianic vision of “Commentary,” an earlier stanza is no less crucial to the representation of the Chinese and global political situations. “Here,” reads that earlier stanza, “danger works a civil

reconciliation, / Interior hatreds are resolved upon this foreign foe, / And will-power to resist is growing like a prosperous city" (681). Mendelson objects (and, ironically, in so doing employs a verb that has a numinous significance in Auden) that in this stanza the poem "praises" the "civil reconciliation" even as it "tactfully ignores the enmity between Communists and Nationalists that made reconciliation necessary, and also made it limited and pragmatic" (Early 358). Of the same stanza he writes that Auden "tried to reconcile private intentions and public acts," but the images and logic of the stanza "did not cooperate":

There is nothing "prosperous" about armed resistance, and the lines uneasily recall Auden's less encouraging argument [. . .] that only hatred can unify individuals into purposive groups. Should the foreign foe be defeated, the resolved hatreds would once again unravel in civil strife; which is precisely what happened. Even in the same poem, a few stanzas later, Auden severely qualifies his vision of prosperous unity by observing that thousands are prepared to give up freedom as the price of unity, ready to heed the dictators who urge them to "Leave Truth to the police and us." Millions more, he adds, are almost ready to follow. (199)

But this distorts the civil reconciliation Auden envisions.

It is not armed resistance which is "growing like a prosperous city;" it is "will-power." This optimistically growing will-power is related to the poem's uncertain closing plea to rally "the lost and trembling forces of the will." In the earlier stanza, the will to resist is linked not just to armed conflict, but to the ideal of an eventually "prosperous city," an ideal city which stands in contrast to the devastation, poverty, and injustice of the Shanghai of this poem and to cities like Hong Kong, Macao, Hankou, and Nanking written about elsewhere in Journey. The "prosperous city" is not an incoherent image for "armed resistance;" it is the ideal shining beyond the terms of the "limited and pragmatic" reconciliation of wartime China.

Reconciliation is a particularly important theme in Auden—"O reconcile" exclaims

the prayerful conclusion of 1934's "'Sweet is it', say the doomed,'" a key formal and thematic precursor to "Commentary" ("Five Early Poems" 52). The idea of reconciliation guides Auden's theorizing on almost all social, historical, aesthetic, or psychological matters. For Deane, Auden's persistent attempts in the 1930s to reconcile Christianity and Marxism, such as that of the sonnets of "In Time of War," derives from

the conventional belief in a god whose function is to unite alpha and omega, gather all diversity into himself. [. . .] Auden's favored metaphor of the Just City is derived from that biblical tradition [of the City of God as an ordered equilibrium of parts], however idiosyncratically his social and psychological preoccupations of the thirties moved him to conceive it [. . . his] inclination was to reach always toward a larger synthesis which perhaps only after 1939 he was prepared once again to call God. If "God" is the way in which we designate a principle of totality, inclusion, and balance, then it is probably correct to say that his belief in God was intractable and consistent, the occasion of his 'conversion' merely an acquiescence in traditional ways of expressing that belief. (40)

Auden was like "others of his class and upbringing—whether the decade saw them develop into Christians or into Communists—devoted to 'discourses of totality' (41).

Reconciliation is a methodical and ethical ideal which involves Auden in Hegelian techniques of philosophical synthesis, religious conceptions of God as totality, and the Christian vision of the City of God. Even with all those conceptual, doctrinal, and idealistic overtones ringing in the word "reconciliation," however, the "civil reconciliation" tercet does not ignore the enmity of the KMT and the CCP. Their enmity is directly evoked in the phrase "interior hatreds." This hateful interiority is at once the interiority of the private individual's psyche ("Behind each sociable home-loving eye," XIV reminds us, "The private massacres are taking place; / All Women, Jews, the Rich, the Human Race" (673)), and the interiority of the domestic political situation of China. Private and public hatreds "are resolved" by the Japanese danger. Such psychological and social reflexes are easily recognized, as is their potential for facilitating political control and for creating an illusory

unity. Far from ignoring it, Auden's tercet clarifies the precariousness of this provisional resolution of interior strife, even as the ideal of the "prosperous city" points to the positive hope that a "civil reconciliation" should raise. The idealism of the stanza's "civil reconciliation" encompasses much more than the precarious "United Front" of Chinese Nationalist and Communists. The severe qualification of Auden's vision of "prosperous unity" that Mendelson says occurs after only a "few stanzas," actually occurs forty-nine stanzas later. That particular qualification concerns the fact that not only elsewhere in the world is "every family and every heart [. . .] tempted" by Fascism, but even in China "where the rice-grain nourishes these patient households" already "Thousands believe, and millions are half way to a conviction" that the "brazen" fascist offer is acceptable (684-5). Much more must be said about how the forty-eight intervening stanzas expand the hopeful "civil reconciliation" Auden observed in China.

The first thing to note is that the civil reconciliation was real and praiseworthy. Auden and Isherwood's visit coincided with one of the most hopeful moments in China's long history, not just because of the importance of Chinese resistance to Japan in uniting the modern Chinese nation, but because of possibilities that opened up in Chinese politics and culture in 1938 when Wuhan became China's wartime capital. If it is important to recall the occupation of Shanghai when we read *Journey* and "Commentary," it is even more important to remember wartime Wuhan. Isherwood and Auden saw more of Wuhan than any other place in China. They visited the city twice, from March 7 to March 17 and then again from April 14 to April 29, which is significantly longer than their whoring sojourn in Shanghai from May 25 until June 12. Wuhan is the centre of Auden and Isherwood's Chinese experience. Wuhan was the apocalyptic "city at the end of the world" where they

agreed they would rather be “than anywhere else on earth” (512).⁹

Auden and Isherwood were right. “Hankow in 1938 was surely one of the most exciting cities in the world [. . .] the atmosphere wasn’t just martial; it was giddy” (Frillman 3). To visit Wuhan in 1938 was to be granted a glimpse of a possible non-totalitarian future for China and the world. “The winter of ‘37-’38 worked a miracle in China [. . .] the most complete unity of spirit and motive that China had ever known existed there for a few months” (White 57). What happened in Wuhan in 1938 has no parallel in Chinese history. Wuhan had been at the center of Chinese politics in 1911 and 1927 when the city represented “the Chinese republican revolution in its most liberal anti-imperialistic form” (MacKinnon “Search” 161), but 1938 in Wuhan was unique. “For a rare moment in Chinese history, a unity forged through toleration of political diversity became more important than the politics of control” (167-8). More “than in any Chinese capital before or since, there was public debate, and political experimentation, the flowering of a free press, and an unleashing of enormous creative energies in the arts” (168). Rather than “brutalization, the effect of the war and mass mobilization was liberalization of politics, culture, and social distinctions” (MacKinnon “Tragedy” 939). The city “assumed some of the seedily anarchic qualities of Shanghai, becoming an ideological capital of China, a place through which men and women of all conceivable political persuasions passed en route to somewhere else” (Winchester 207). In such a city, foreign press and diplomats “were not seen as a threat to Chinese sovereignty, but as witnesses to the resistance to Japan” (MacKinnon “Search” 172-3). “Wuhan came to symbolize not just the nation, but the active imagination of a new political future for China” (Esherick 15). Indeed, because of its role

⁹Wuhan is the current name for the tri-city complex of Wuchang, Hanyang, and Hankou. From the fall of Nanking in December 1937 to the fall of Wuhan in October 1938, Hankou or Hankow was effectively the provisional Chinese capital. Different sources refer to Wuhan or to Hankou. For our purposes, the two toponyms are interchangeable.

in Chinese and world history, pluralist anti-imperialist Wuhan should be “the most revered city in all China” (Winchester 196). “The tragedy was that the Hankou experiment was so shortlived” (MacKinnon “Tragedy” 939). Shortlived, and quickly forgotten under the accumulating debris of the decimating Battle of Wuhan, the Japanese capture of the city in October 1938, the Second World War, and the renewed civil war between Communists and Nationalists in 1945, but principally under the catastrophes and propaganda of six disastrous decades of a Chinese Communist regime which cannot tolerate the idea that Nationalist China could have produced anything like Wuhan in 1938.

Wuhan in 1938 was forgotten in the West as well as in China. Western historians have devoted “scant attention” to social and cultural dimensions of the Sino-Japanese War (931); and not “until the 1980s was the memory of wartime Hankou in 1938 revived on either Taiwan or the PRC [sic] [. . .] Remembrance today is focused on the unity and heroics of the ten-month Hankou defense. The openness to foreign influences and toleration of opposing views of the period is celebrated” (942). If the “story of Hankou” needs to be remembered “less as a tragedy than a promise of alternative directions in twentieth-century Chinese history” (942), we also need to remember the reality of Wuhan in 1938 if we are to perceive that the “civil reconciliation” of “Commentary” and the poem’s intermittent flashes of idealism are not utopian, but characteristically Audenesque in their reticence. They must be compared to the giddy hope that had broken out in Wuhan with the establishment of political tolerance, and the optimism that reigned after military successes in early 1938

mised the defenders of Wuhan into the romantic notion that the city could be saved: that high morale and massive numbers could offset the overwhelming fire power and discipline of the Japanese onslaught [. . .] at least until mid-summer, 1938, Chinese commanders, including Chiang Kaishek, were convinced that they could tie up the Japanese outside of Wuhan and produce a stalemate in the war. This was the consensus among the large foreign press

corps reporting to the world on the defense of Wuhan at the time. (932-3)

As Auden and Isherwood were working on Journey back in Europe, any such optimism would fade with the progress of the Japanese campaign to take Wuhan—just as any optimism engendered by the peaceful resolution of the concurrent Munich Crisis remained unconvincing. But when Wuhan fell that October, it is entirely appropriate that what hopes Auden had had for a possible Chinese victory or for the survival of the Wuhan Spirit, though drastically tempered, would not necessarily have been killed, since the political and military reconciliation in China still held uneasily, and would hold until 1945.

In any case, Auden's elaboration of the hopeful idea of the "civil reconciliation" of 1938 in the stanzas that follow is actually part of a non-partisan, almost apolitical representation of the Chinese political situation. For in spite of how succinctly he evokes both the precariousness and the hopefulness of the reconciliation of the CCP and the KMT, and in spite of the reticence with which he acknowledges the idealism such a political reconciliation can occasion, Auden immediately turns away from a representation of this reconciliation as an accomplishment of political parties to the evocation of a much broader, non-partisan, societal and human reconciliation. The reconciliation that Auden presents in the nine tercets following his evocation of a provisional hope-engendering, war-time reconciliation is indeed a "civil" one. It is reconciliation through a recognition, on the part of different humans presented as parts of a social whole, of mutual interest and common implication in a situation. What the danger of the foreign foe and the indiscriminating anger of the "invader" do is force everyone—the rich and poor, the old and young, "the amorous [. . .] the handy and the thoughtful, / Those to whom feeling is a science, those to whom study / Of all that can be added and compared is a consuming love," and others, including the two European authors of Journey—to realize that they all "In all their living

are profoundly implicated” in the “material contest” that has led to destruction of Shanghai. It is just such a broad social and international reconciliation of interested parties which was necessary to the historic anti-fascist coalition—that “astonishing unity of opposites” (Hobsbawm 162)—and which is implicit in Auden’s messianism in “Commentary.”

“Commentary” represents everyone’s realization of one’s implication in a crisis as the starting point of a response to the crisis. Auden then does something less obvious, which in its detachment is hard to follow. Turning attention from the particularities of Japanese aggression and the existential and geopolitical crises of 1938, he converts the example of the destruction of Shanghai into a “local variant” of “the general war / Between the dead and the unborn, the Real and the Pretended, / Which [. . .] / In essence is eternal.” The eternity of this struggle allows Auden to return to the poem’s initial long view of the biological and historical emergence of humankind. This long view reveals that “to the Non-Human / [. . .] / Our colours, creeds and sexes are identical.” The long view also reveals that for all humanity there is at least one unifying issue. This universal human issue is that the objective of the human campaign in humanity’s eternal, general war in the present between the dead and the unborn, the Real and the Pretended, is “Still unachieved.” This common unachieved end is “*Jen*” which, echoing Isherwood’s notions of the Truly Weak and the Truly Strong, Auden calls “the Truly Human” (682). The achievement of *Jen*, or *Ren* in today’s alphabetization, is the objective of the eternal human campaign. Thus, it is *Jen*, and not any provisional outwardly-directed hatred, which “Commentary” presents as the unifying objective of the historical development of mankind and of the actual civil reconciliation of 1938. It is the acknowledgement of the failure to achieve *Jen* that prompts the review of the three epochs of Great Disappointment, the Classical failure of the Roman Empire, the Catholic failure of the Middle Ages, and the current failure of the scientific,

industrial, and colonial developments that began with the Renaissance. It is subsequent to this review that Auden presents the two contrasting contemporary messianic options open to mankind in the face of the Third Great Disappointment and of the continuing failure to achieve *Jen*. One of those options is the brazen offer of the Fascists, by which *everyone* is tempted, even those who have realized their implication in the fascist crisis. The other is the humanistic option sketched by humanity's "faithful sworn supporters." In the argument of "Commentary" and from the poem's most detached philosophical and ethical point of view, *Jen* is the pivotal term. Just as the politically, socially, theologically, and conceptually rich theme of "civil reconciliation" points to the unachieved objective of *Jen*, so the ensuing choice between opposing messianic options is ultimately a choice between means of achieving *Jen*.

Along with the undeconstructible redemptive principle of Justice and a problematic modern version of the ancient wish for political unity (namely, the wish for a united world), *Jen* is one of three principles underlying the messianic vision of "Commentary." The poem may state that all creeds are the same to the non-human, but the differences between creeds are not therefore unimportant to humans, and Auden's creed in "Commentary" rests on the idea that the truly human end of man is *Jen*. *Jen* is that fundamental virtue whose position within Confucian thought and ethics is analogous to the position of Agape within Christianity. The two virtues are in many ways comparable, with one crucial difference being that the Christian Agape involves a relationship to the love of a transcendent God while Confucian *Jen* remains a human phenomenon and virtue. The Western recognition of the role of *Jen* in Chinese thought and civilization has tended to reinforce the Christian idea of a universal and primordial Agape-like virtue as the chief unifying human virtue. In that respect, Auden's identification of the achievement of such a virtue as the end for which

humanity must strive is compatible with the Christian conceptual and rhetorical structures of "Commentary." The purely human nature of *Jen*, however, allows Auden to remain strictly speaking a philosophical humanist even as his thinking inhabits the teleological and eschatological structures of his poem and points towards his reemergent Christianity

Because "Commentary" presents it as the universal end of being human, *Jen*, despite the foreignness of the word, should be something recognizable even for Westerner readers; in so far as Westerners have taken *Jen* as analogous to *Agape*, this has been the case. This is the opposite of the situations observed in the "Travel-Diary" where the Chinese context could not be contained by Western categories and where Isherwood emphasizes the mutual incomprehensibility of different cultures and languages. In "Commentary," the truly human is rendered in Chinese, and *Jen*, the finally essential Chinese content of Journey, turns out to be analogous to the essential content that Christian thinking has always conveyed.

"Commentary" may display more estranging non-Western and Chinese historical and cultural information than Auden's other poems in Journey, but the messianism of "Commentary" depends on a civil, international reconciliation of opposites that leads to the discovery that the East and West meet in the human ideal of *Jen*. However, though its similarities to *Agape* render *Jen* familiar, the foreignness of the word *Jen* does have an immediate and lasting disorienting effect. If *Jen* is like *Agape*, it is an *Agape* made strange. By designating this virtue with the untranslated *Jen* (the only Chinese word other than proper nouns that Auden employs in Journey and probably anywhere in his corpus) and by qualifying *Jen* as the "Truly Human," Auden presents his readers with an estranging view of the essence of being human. This is consistent with Christie's description of the "Occidentalizing" strategies of Auden's sonnets from China whereby Auden's inscription of the signifier 'China' allows him to relativize "Western impositions of value" (152). In so far

as in “Commentary,” *Jen* represents the messianic value *par excellence*, its strange Chinese otherness unsettles and recasts, even as it tends also to reaffirm, a familiar and quintessential Christian virtue like Agape. *Jen*’s status as something to be achieved in the future is paradoxical, since the key virtue of that unforeseeable future turns out to be the foundational, supposedly innate human virtue of a most ancient moral system. *Jen*’s deferral to the future and its strange Chinese otherness are consistent with Derrida’s conception of the messianic as “thinking of the other and of the event to come” (59).

The messianic ideal of the event to come, that is, the idea of the eventual achievement of “*Jen*, the Truly Human,” returns us to the long view of “the general war / Between the dead and the unborn, the Real and the Pretended.” As much as the Sino-Japanese war itself, this general war is the destination of Journey, but the ambiguities of the phrase “Between the dead and the unborn, The Real and the Pretended” tend to nullify the messianic vision with which “Commentary” concludes the book. Because the phrase conveys a sense, not of ideally reconcilable dualities, but of a conflict between eternally opposed and incompatible terms, it threatens everything that is at stake, theologically, politically, socially, and ideologically, in the theme of reconciliation in the poem. As well, the syntax of the phrase confuses key features of the poem’s vision, since the unelaborated parallelism of “the dead and the unborn, the Real and the Pretended” suggests that those two sets of opposed terms are isomorphic in a comprehensible way. Syntactic parallelism aside, however, any analogy between those pairs is not easily grasped, since the pairs are not really analogous at all.

Whereas the contest of the dead and the unborn seems to refer to the idea of a relationship between past and future, the war between the Real and the Pretended seems to refer to the poem’s organizing contest of fascism and humanism. Thus, “the Real” refers to

the idealistic materialist vision of the creativity, humility, and goodness of “our faithful sworn supporters” and “the Pretended” refers to the slogan-ridden intellectually deceitful promises of the fascist pretenders and their clerks. The conflict between fascism and humanism in the poem involves, not a conflict of past and future, but a choice between two options in the present. Still, it can make sense to think of the past, which after all has actually happened, as being more real than a future which may never come to pass. It is not obvious that the humanist and the fascist options should be identified respectively with the past or the future, yet the speech of the fascists with its insistent use of the future tense is utterly centred on the future. In contrast, in the humanists’ speech the past tense dominates, with the future tense occurring only once and negatively—“*Man [. . .] never will be perfect*”—and with the future the speech envisions being evoked obliquely through reference to the medieval European past. In spite of this apparent confirmation that the oppositions of “the Real and the Pretended,” the past and the future, and “the dead and the unborn” are loosely associated with one another, it is impossible to reduce these three oppositions to a strict isomorphism.

Instead, the “between” that governs the two oppositions has several distinct senses. The sense of “between” in the war between the Real and the Pretended would seem primarily to involve either the idea of two contrasting options or the idea of the reciprocal conflictual action of two agents. However, the sense of “between” in ‘the war between the dead and the unborn’ refers not to the possibility of choosing the dead or the unborn or to their impossible reciprocal action, but to the temporal interval where that war occurs. “[Between] the Real and the Pretended” refers us to whom “the “general war” involves and what is being fought over, but “Between the dead and the unborn” refers us primarily to the fact that this eternal war occurs in the present. This notion of the present as occurring

between the past of the dead and the future of the unborn is as fundamental to the rhetoric of the poem as is the idea of a choice between the Realness of humanity and the Pretension of fascism. A similar conception of a present of struggle and choice occurring in-between the past and the future structures rather more magnificently the rhetoric of "Spain 1937."

In "Commentary," however, this commonsensical conception of the present and this rhetoric of struggle are more problematic than they first appear. The problem is neither the idea of a "general war" in the present, after the past and before the future, nor the idea of the present as a time of struggle. The problem is that the dead cannot be confined to the past. For if the present is an on-going general war, with the Sino-Japanese as one local theatre, then surely the present has its dead too, and those dead will spill over into the future, and the future becomes not only the time of the arrival of the unborn, but also a time of the coming of more dead. The future is even now an abode of the dead; it already participates in the pastness that the poem identifies with death. What is more, the dead are essential to the present. The dead speak to "us" to give us strength and to tell us how to live. These are not the rotting corpses evoked by "the unmentionable odour of death" in "September 1, 1939." These are a sanitized dead whose dust prettifies the sunset. For Mendelson, the eloquent dead mask flaws in the poem's argument: "Auden displays a propagandist's tact in putting this noble sentiment [regarding the Unity of the Just and the Free] in the mouths of the dead. Unlike the embarrassingly warlike living, the dead have nothing to argue about, and can recommend unity without being expected to do anything about it themselves. 'O happy the free cities of the dead,' Auden wrote in a lyric. There 'no one need take any trouble any more'" (Early 199). Characteristically, Auden immediately notes, in his December 1938 sonnet on Housman, the temptation of seeking sentimental solace in "the uncritical relations of the dead." Already in 1936's "Autumn Song," he warns against the

claims of the past on the present: “Close behind us on our track, / Dead in hundreds cry Alack, / Arms raised stiffly to reprove / In false attitudes of love” (Collected 139). In “Commentary,” though, the dead offer a version of what Auden later calls “the companionship of our good dead” (694). More than that, in “Commentary” death becomes something antiseptic and anodyne so that Auden can write, implausibly, that “our faithful sworn supporters / [. . .] never noticed death or old age coming on” (Prose 1: 685-6)). Unconvincing as are the representations of the nature of death and the figure of the dead in “Commentary,” they are moments of a larger theme in the poem and in Journey.

The theme of death is already present in the line “Season inherits legally from season” with which “Commentary” opens and after which the poem regularly evokes the idea of man’s death, whether as individual or species, whether through biological catastrophe or the genocidal misanthropy of Genghis Khan. The poem’s final allusion to death, in which “the moon look[s] down / On battlefields and dead men lying, heaped like treasure” (687), is the least abstract and most vivid such allusion, and the most directly relevant to the war which is the book’s occasion. The idea of death, though, has been there not only from the beginning of “Commentary,” but from the beginning of Journey when, with a gesture to Isherwood’s idea of the Test, Auden writes “To-morrow goes to bed / Planning the test for men from Europe” and “no one guesses / Who will be most ashamed, who richer, and who dead” (497). Despite the eventual lapse into sentimentality in Auden’s sanitized vision of the humanistic dead in “Commentary,” the terseness of this initial reference is characteristic of Auden’s treatment of the theme of death in Journey. Perhaps because he is always dealing with someone else’s death, whether it be the death of the unknown “Guilty” or the Unknown Soldier in the Picture Commentary, or the deaths of abstract or anonymous figures in IX, XII, XIV, XVIII, the notion of death in Auden’s parts

of Journey remains somewhat unreal. In all those sonnets, death hardly seems like death at all, and is presented more like the occasion of a new beginning, something that opens hopeful perspectives for the future.

Yet, one cannot finally interpret the thematic and poetic peculiarities of “Commentary” or Journey without measuring them against the grotesqueness of death, the unmastered fear of death, the experience of death as tragedy, and the stark idea of death as an end. In this respect, Isherwood’s “Travel-Diary” is an essential contrast to Auden’s poems. There the possibility of one’s personal death is the important theme. Thus, Auden and Isherwood’s ceremonious departure for the Chinese interior “was slightly sinister—like watching your own military funeral from the gun-carriage itself” (510). Thus, “Auden made me laugh by saying thoughtfully: ‘I suppose if we were over there we’d be dead.’ [. . .] we looked down on War as a bird might [. . .] This is how war must seem to the neutral, unjudging bird—merely the Bad Earth, the tiny, dead patch in the immense flowering field of luxuriant China.” (547). Laughter characterizes Isherwood’s ironic treatment of the theme of death. Death in Auden’s poems is impersonal and unreal, sentimentalized and sanitized, but in Isherwood it is personal and absurd. At a comic supper, they “were told by way of introduction [that a certain Major Yang] ‘does not fear death’” (598), and on another occasion told solemnly that it was the “Chinese Duty” of T.C. Liu to accompany “Auden and myself, if necessary, into the jaws of death” (613). Elsewhere, Isherwood muses satirically about “the ethics of pocketing a pair of jade animals to save them from the fate worse than death” (617); and Charleton assures the young authors in early May that “he would die soon” (590); “[d]rink to the poor old man next Christmas Eve. I shall be dead by then. God Bless.” (592). Perhaps Charleton was already dead, even as Isherwood composed the “Journey’s End” episode, just as Charleton’s quaint Shangri-la had

disappeared forever, while the killing fields around Kiukiang and in the Ku-ling hills filled with corpses during the Japanese advance on Wuhan through the autumn of 1938.

Isherwood's comic treatment of death reaches a crisis as they drive through mountains:

Auden tried to distract our thoughts from the alarming Present by starting a conversation about eighteenth-century poetry. It was no good: we could remember nothing but verses on sudden death [. . .] At every corner we shut our eyes, but the chauffeur only laughed darkly as befitted one of the Lords of Death [. . .] the D.H. Lawrence *Todesfahrt* continued [. . .] 'Oh, my Gard!' exclaimed Mr. Liu, and was abruptly and violently car-sick. (602)

Once again, the whole is in the part, for *Journey* is just such a *Todesfahrt*, and this absurd *mise en abyme* encapsulates several of the book's features: incomprehensible laughter, nausea and the nauseous viscousness of vomit; the question of religious faith; the crisis of the present and the evasiveness of Auden's poetry regarding the reality of death; the aversion to looking directly at death and war.

Eventually, though, Isherwood does have to look, at the old woman whose brains soak "obscenely through a little towel" and at the "terribly mutilated and very dirty" corpses that are the aftermath of the last air-raid he describes (587). The brutal plainness of the description of this last air-raid contrasts to his first sketch of the fireworks of an air-raid:

It was a solemn, apprehensive moment, as if before an eclipse of the sun [. . .] The brilliant moon lit up the Yangtze and the whole darkened city [. . .] The concussions made you catch your breath; the watchers around us on the roof exclaimed softly, breathlessly: 'Look! look! there!' It was as tremendous as Beethoven, but *wrong*—a cosmic offence, an insult to the whole of Nature and the entire earth. Something inside me was flapping about like a fish." (526)

Solemn, tremendous, cosmic, the aesthetics of this air-raid approach the sublime. As with any experience of the sublime, Isherwood at first feels inadequate to it, and we see that his later plain unpoetic presentation of the victims' bodily suffering represents the only proper moral understanding of the 'air-raid sublime.' Some notion of the sublime, of the

experience of things beyond the moral, aesthetic, and intellectual capacities of Auden and Isherwood which they must struggle to comprehend, is essential to understanding Journey. The “Picture Commentary” obliquely approaches the moral and aesthetic problems of the sublime with its ironic photo of a divinely laughing Buddha in the temple at Journey’s ever elusive front line. The several destinations or discoveries of this 1938 journey—the unknowable otherness of China, vast global geographies, endless irony, freedom, excremental formlessness, war, genocide, God, the messianic, death—tend to sublime infinitude, transcendence, tremendousness, otherness, uncontainability. Unlike Agnes Smedley who for the first time “felt at one with the universe” when she was with the Red Army (581), and unlike Alley who seems sublimely at one with the infinite quantifiability of the world, Isherwood cannot find his way into any such cosmic unity or sympathy. The uncertainty of Isherwood’s tone is linked to whatever was desperately flapping like a fish inside him in the face of his first air-raid, and more broadly, his uneasiness and uncertainty is an effect of his incapacity to adequately respond to realities which surpass him.

Similarly, the uncertainty of tone and aesthetic flaws, and the large ideological ambitions of “Commentary” are signs of Auden’s own struggles with the sublime experiences which are the occasion of Journey. Of the peroratory passage beginning “Night falls on China” whose immense colonial geography announces the conclusion of “Commentary” and also finally of Journey, Wright notes that the “sublime imagery [. . .] shows the broadness of Auden’s perspective” (99). Only the sublime breadth of this passage can join the poem’s two positive messianic episodes, the collective social messianism articulated by the good dead and the inward individual messianism Auden hears in the Voice of Man. At the end, Auden does present himself experiencing the cosmic sympathy which eludes Isherwood, so that Auden’s voice and the Voice of Man together

articulate a single sublime messianic vision. The dialogue between the poet and the Voice of Man, between individual and humanity, is a circular, feedback system, in which errors and ironies can be recuperated in a never-ending process of communication. With characteristic reticence, when Auden and mankind turn to the messianic role of the individual, Auden emphasizes neither the individual's messianic self-identity nor his or mankind's sublime magnificence, but the uncertainty and inadequacy of the frail human individual within this process. *Journey's* closing note is not the resonant superhuman heroic of the Truly Weak, but the ironic mock-prophetic of the Truly Strong.

The "lost and trembling" individual of the poem's concluding messianic moment seems to require, but has no transcendent God to whom he or she may turn. The poem has made clear that there is nothing to turn to but "our faithful sworn supporters" among the dead. This reliance on the dead reveals a dimension of the messianic in "Commentary" fundamental to messianism in so far as the messianic involves an essential relationship to the dead and to death. Benjamin writes of the "secret agreement between past generations and the present one" in which the "past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption" (*Illuminations* 256) and in which the living must feel that "*even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins*" (257). Gottlieb too, in her discussion of the messianic in Auden and Arendt, raises the issue of the dead, when she recalls that in "primitive Christianity, the eschatological mode of life does not properly consist in living with some premonition that the end of the world is near but, rather, in living one's life from the extreme perspective of its end: only by drawing the sense of life's end into one's life can one live on" (154-5). In "Commentary," only after a sense of death has been drawn into life and after the dead have "mingl[e]d, fluent with our living" (*Prose* 1: 686) can the poem turn our attention to the messianic potential of the individual.

The messianic hope articulated at the end of Journey in “Commentary” exists therefore under the sign of death. This is not mere morbidity. It is an unavoidable condition of any living hope articulated between “the inevitable increase of the chances of death” (English 212) in “Spain 1937” and “the unmentionable odour of death” in September 1939. The knowledge of death, to a far greater degree than is recognized, marks Auden’s *oeuvre* from beginning to end. How could it be otherwise for a writer whose childhood world was that of the Great War, who came to maturity during *l’entre-deux-guerres*’ trauma-haunted “long bout of war neurosis” (Miller 42), and whose world in 1938 was slipping into the abyss of another world war that his work had prophecized for years? Auden is the greatest English-language poet of the mass murdering, humanity-wrecking, civilizational crisis of the 1930s and 1940s. Death, the war dead, and the dead in general cast a grim pall across his work. In his 1932 essay “Writing,” which Mendelson calls “a manifesto of his private ideology” (Early 1932), Auden argues that writing involves a desperate effort to unite past, present, and future, and that the awareness of death provides the original impetus for the act of writing (Prose: 1 16). This awareness of death would continue to pervade Auden’s writing and thinking. Reflecting on his vocation in “Prologue at Sixty,” he presents the purposiveness of his writing life in direct relation to his eventual death: “Giver-of-Life, translate for me / till I accomplish my corpse at last” (Collected 832). From the late 1930s through the mid-1940s, however, Auden’s death-consciousness is especially acute. This is the period in which Auden became a compulsive writer of epitaphs and elegies—“Epitaph for a Tyrant,” “The Unknown Citizen,” “At the Grave of Henry James,” “In Memory of Ernst Toller,” “In Memory of W.B. Yeats,” “In Memory of Sigmund Freud,” “Lament for a Law-Giver.” This is the mortal epoch of Anxiety’s obsessive thought “Many have perished; more will” (Collected 456-8). This is the time when Freud, whose death in September 1939

occasions an elegiac evocation of the deaths to come, joins those whom “Commentary” presents as “our faithful sworn supporters”:

When there are so many we shall have to mourn,
when grief has been made so public, and exposed
to the critique of a whole epoch
The frailty of our conscience and anguish,

of whom shall we speak? For every day they die
among us, those who were doing us some good,
Who knew it was never enough but
Hoped to improve a little by living. (273)

“In Memory of Sigmund Freud” reworks the messianic vision of the previous fall’s “Commentary.” The elegy’s modest hopefulness rejoins the weak, contingent, messianic human hope which closes *Journey*. Weak and uncertain as it is, that hope is the ultimate discovery of Auden and Isherwood’s *Journey*. Just as XXVII is crucial in Auden’s development of the theme of freedom, so “Commentary” is crucial in Auden’s articulation of the nature of hope, in his exploration of the messianic theme between 1932 and 1946, and in his discovery of the messianic vision that sustains his work from 1939 through 1973. “Commentary,” like *Journey* as a whole, stands mid-way between Auden and Isherwood’s early evocations of the trauma and death of the Great War, and their later responses to the devastation and death of the Second World War. A gauche, unloved poem it may be, but as with *Journey* as a whole, “Commentary” records a revealing moment in Auden’s confrontation of the trauma of war and death in the twentieth century. “Commentary” records too Auden’s discovery of a weak hope whose example might still inspire, but can certainly still instruct—if only because the untimely, precarious, late modernist, late colonial hope that Auden finds in China and in a world on the threshold of global war and genocide offers such a timely and grave historical warning regarding the frailty and deceptiveness of our own hopes in the face of the dangers of our world.

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APPENDIX

In his Scorched Earth (1941), Edgar Snow provides an account of “The Birth of Indusco” and of the anonymous “little book” which Isherwood plagiarizes at the end of “Travel-Diary.” Reading Snow’s account, I noticed similarities of phrasing and argument in his and Isherwood’s texts, and concluded that both authors must have been working from a common original document. After much searching, I found the document in a Columbia University archive. In itself Isherwood’s plagiarism of Alley and the Snows’ little book is straightforward. The 64-page booklet entitled Chinese Industrial Cooperatives is, however, quite elaborate. It consists of two parts and an appendix. The first part, which Isherwood primarily draws on, consists of statistics, citations from Chinese newspapers, quotations from prominent Chinese figures, and photographs of the destruction wrought by the Japanese on Shanghai’s industrial areas. The second part presents a “Plan for a New Economic Offensive” through the establishment of Chinese industrial cooperatives. Isherwood plagiarizes this document as follows.

Where Isherwood has “The Japanese have destroyed seventy per cent of China’s industry” (630), the anonymous booklet has “Japan immobilized nearly 70% of modern industry in China” (2). Where Isherwood has “Already she [Japan] has published schemes for the building of new canals, railways, cotton and silk mills” (632), anonymous has “from Tokyo, Peiping and Tientsin come announcements of plans which...would completely remake China. Projects range all the way from building canals, new cotton and silk mills, iron and coal mines, railways...” (19). Where Isherwood has “Of the 130,000 operatives now employed in Shanghai ninety per cent are working for the Japanese” (632), anonymous has “Today only about 130,000 are back at work—90% of them in Japanese factories!” (9). Where Isherwood has “Even if the Chinese in the Settlement retain some measure of political freedom their operations can only strengthen the Shanghai area as an economic

base for the Japanese war-machine” (632), anonymous has “Even if Chinese in the Settlement should retain some measure of political freedom, their operations in Shanghai can, in effect, only serve to strengthen the Shanghai area as an economic base for Japanese imperialism” (4). Where Isherwood has “And yet, during the first four months of 1938, over 400 new Chinese factories were established in the western district of the Settlement, while less than fifty industrialists moved their plants elsewhere” (632-3), anonymous has “*during the first four months of 1938 over 400 new Chinese factories were established in the western district of the International Settlement alone. During the same period less than 50 Shanghai industrialists moved their plants to the interior of China*” (4) [original italics].

Where Isherwood has

The Chinese Government, as Alley points out, has had great success in developing the agricultural co-operative movement—consumers, marketing, and credit co-operatives. It has thereby strengthened the rural purchasing power. In addition to this the local market has been automatically protected as a result of the blockade enforced by war conditions on the import of foreign goods (633),

anonymous has

the Government has made very marked progress in organizing and supporting the agricultural cooperative movement—consumers, marketing, and credit cooperatives. It has thereby strengthened the rural purchasing power, and improved a market which was anyway given extraordinary “protection” as a result of the automatic blockade enforced by the war. (4)

Where Isherwood has “The enormously reduced Chinese industrial production is quite unable to meet this increased demand. What is now urgently needed is the reorganization of industry on the same basis as the successfully reorganized agriculture. China requires 30,000 industrial co-operatives” (633), anonymous has “an industrial production enormously reduced and incapable of meeting the demands”, “agricultural cooperatives have succeeded”, and “It is urgently necessary, therefore, to adopt emergency measures” (5), while the figure of 30,000 industrial cooperatives comes from page six of the pamphlet.

Where Isherwood has

The planners of the industrial co-operative movement propose the establishment of three “zones of economic defence”. First, the big static units—the heavy industries, equipped with elaborate machinery and employing many workers. These will be engaged chiefly in making munitions. Because of their size they cannot easily be moved, so they should be located far out of reach of the enemy, in the extreme western provinces. Secondly, the medium-sized units, situated between the front and the rear. These should be semi-mobile, and equipped with machine-tools. Thirdly, the ‘guerilla’ units. These co-operatives should use only light, easily portable tools. Their function would be to provide articles of immediate necessity to the military forces” (633),

anonymous has

Industrial Cooperatives can be of three types:

(1) largest units, utilizing heavier machines, each employing many workers, located in the west, southwest, and northwest, performing primarily complementary functions in the Government’s big industries program; (2) smaller units, located between the front and the rear, with machine tools which when necessary can become (3) the smallest units, operating in the front areas. The third or ‘guerilla type’ of cooperative should use only light easily portable tools, and such units would have two special functions: (a) to provide articles of immediate necessity to the military forces. (8)

Where Isherwood has “providing manufactured articles necessary for the farming population. They would thus prevent areas adjacent to the Japanese garrisons from becoming economically colonized by Japanese goods” (633), anonymous has “providing manufactured articles necessary for the farming population, and preventing areas adjacent to the Japanese garrison zones from becoming economically colonized by Japanese goods” (8). Where Isherwood has “Industrial co-operatives would also solve the refugee problem. They could absorb thousands of homeless and workless peasants, and divert the millions of dollars now being spent on refugee camps in the occupied areas, where destitute Chinese are merely kept alive until such time as the Japanese wish to exploit their labour power” (633), anonymous has “Industrial Cooperatives can absorb large numbers of refugees and divert millions of dollars now being spent to maintain refugee camps in the occupied areas

where destitute Chinese are merely kept alive until such time as the Japanese wish to exploit their labor power” (8). And finally, where Isherwood has “The organizers of the movement plan to appeal to the League of Nations, and to the labour parties of friendly foreign States, for technical and financial aid” (634), anonymous has “The Industrial Cooperative Moment [sic] especially seeks financial and technical help from the League of Nations, from Cooperative Societies of the League’s member States, from Labour organizations, relief associations, and various bodies friendly to China” (45-6).