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THE ARCHETYPE OF WANDERER AND THE QUEST MOTIF IN W. H. AUDEN'S POETRY

Motto:

There is a goal, but there is no way;
What we call the way is wandering.

FRANZ KAFKA

Although W. H. Auden (1907–1973) is often numbered among the most eminent masters of English verse in the 20th century, it is not an easy task to assess his merits in the province of poetry. As to prosody, his work has never been considered as revolutionary, though his contribution can be compared to that of George Herbert, a 'metaphysical' 17th century poet. Regarding the philosophical and ideological strata, his poetry has won a considerable acclaim, yet, incomparably lesser than the works of, for instance, T. S. Eliot or W. B. Yeats. All the same, Auden never ceased to have a tremendous impact, political, moral and aesthetic, on his contemporaries as well as on later generations. In 1961, some thirty years after the author of *For the Time Being* began his literary career, in his paper on Auden's poetry, R. G. Cox ranked him next in importance only to Eliot (in spite of the fact that the artist could boast of no poem as central as, for example, *The Wasteland*) and typified him as 'the Picasso of verse'¹. Four years later, after T. S. Eliot's death, Auden had no equals among the living American and English poets. This, however, is not to say that henceforward he was thought of as the best English poet but — as he asserted himself — the best living poet of the English language. And though highly appraised by the critics, he still remained a mere intellectual '*société*' author whose cryptic poetical message, largely elusive and puzzling, would not find its way to the wide masses of the reading public.

Though it may seem to be a question at issue, Auden's poetry is basically characterized by a coherent uniformity as to its body and substance. It is to be noted that his train of thought was, in its main outline, consistent and

¹ R. G. Cox, 'The Poetry of W. H. Auden' in *The Pelican Guide to English Literature*, Baltimore 1979, p. 462.

predominantly focused on a human being in the religious aspect. In 1968 M. K. Spears wrote that (Auden's) 'religious position is not a denial but a fulfilment of his earlier beliefs; the religious values do not contradict the others, but clarify them and take them to another level. It is no accident nor effect of temporary intellectual fashions that his religious approach should be existential, for this type of religious philosophy starts from the same kind of psychological analysis that had formed the perdurable basis of Auden's various attitudes and convictions'².

Generally speaking, the goal of the present paper is to study the archetypal symbol of Wanderer and the Quest motif as they are employed or merely alluded to in the texture of the selected poems. In Auden's verse, the figure of the Quester appears to be one of the most recurrent and pervasive symbols. According to Richard Hoggard 'if we had space to suggest only one picture of Auden, and, if this picture had to be as nearly as possible representative we would show a landscape and a wanderer, a man on a Quest (as in the 'Quest' sonnets). The figure of the Wanderer, the isolated man on search, appears more frequently than any other in Auden's poetry'³. Our objective, therefore, will be to identify the Wanderer symbol, examine its modifications in the selected poems and establish the meaning arising hereby.

The figure of the Wanderer functions as a type of observer or commentator meditating on the metaphysical limbo embodied in the besetting reality, history and time (cf. 'September') and reflecting upon false quests of other 'seekers' (cf. 'Consider'). His mission, as it were, is then to regain the harmony within himself and, thereby, with the Absolute (cf. *For the Time Being*; *The Age of Anxiety*).

Having lost Paradise — Auden seems to say — man has become the eternal Wanderer, and thus, he is impelled to seek the affirmative, to go forward, and with everlasting effort, make the unknown known by filling with answers the blank spaces of his knowledge. The Quester must give account to himself of himself, and of the meaning of his existence. 'Der Wanderer zwischen beiden Welten' — to quote W. Flex — between the finite and the infinite — is driven to overcome this inner split, tormented by an irresistible craving for absoluteness, for another kind of harmony which can lift the curse by which he was separated from God, from Nature, from his fellowmen, and finally from himself. In Auden's eclectic theology, the consequence of the Fall is the archetypal loss of innocence, after which man forfeited his unity and since then has existed only as a set of dissected constituents. For this purpose, the poet utilizes the Jungian concept of personality as divided into: intuition, feeling, thought and sensation (cf. *For the Time Being*; *The Age of Anxiety*), and often historicizes the Myth of the Fall in order to transform the doctrine of the Original Sin into a doctrine of inherited corruption.

² M.K. Spears, *The Poetry of W. H. Auden. The Disenchanted Island*, Oxford 1968, p. 171 — 172.

³ R. Hoggard, in *A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs 1964, p. 108.

It seems apparent that Auden's Quester is not the Nietzschean Wanderer who does not 'like the plains and cannot sit still for long'⁴; he should rather be associated with Marcel's existential *homo viator*, constantly seeking order, overcoming hardships of life, and trying to accomplish the fullness of humanness. But, at the same time, one cannot resist the sensation that there is also something in this archetype of Wanderer of the biblical Adam and Cain, of the Wandering Jew, Ahasuerus — the exiles 'grown used at last/to having lost,/accepting dearth,/the shadow of death'⁵.

Auden's concept of humanity has a dual character. 'The society to which we belong, may ... be legitimately termed a corporate person' — he states in *Secondary Worlds*⁶. His Wanderer is, then, every individual man, but he equally stands for mankind, as we are all adults and children, saints and sinners — the poet implies — and no-one is anybody's superior or judge. We are all our perpetrators and benefactors, yet, we are all one. The Wanderer can thus be defined as a Collective Man or a Common Multiple of Human Kind, the observer and the observed.

This symbolical aspect is particularly accentuated in 'The Wanderer'⁷, a poem of Auden's early phase, where there is no characterized hero but rather a generalized concept of man set on a journey. In the poem, there prevails a climate of "forsakenness" and estrangement reminiscent of the Old English elegy under the same title. Yet, although the critics in the early thirties suggested prominent analogy between the two works, some of them even insinuating indirect imitation, it must be overtly stated that Auden's is not merely a pastiche or a paraphrase of the medieval piece. Certainly, there is some likeness suggestive of the poet's deliberate borrowing (the most salient similarities may be seen in the tone and imagery of the two poems), in spite of the fact that Auden employs Rilkean technique by attempting to express human life in terms of "moralized landscape", one of the most functional concoctions in his poetry. Thus, both heroes of the two respective works have to suffer because they are fated to exile:

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| here waits him in exile | nor twisted gold |
| nor glory of earth, | only his freezing breast |

(OE 'The Wanderer')⁸

⁴ F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Harmondsworth 1985, p. 173.

⁵ W. H. Auden, 'The Exiles'.

⁶ W. H. Auden, *Secondary Worlds*, London 1968, p. 104.

⁷ The poem was originally entitled 'Doom is dark and deeper than any sea-dingle' but in *Collected Poems 1930–44* it is to be found under the title 'Something is bound to happen'. The title 'The Wanderer' first appeared in *Collected Short Poems* (1966), cf. Justin Rappogle, *On Auden: The Pattern of Personae*, London 1970, p. II4. In the Polish edition of W. H. Auden *Poezje*, Kraków 1988, the poem bears the title 'Chorus'.

⁸ From: S. Helsztyński, *Specimens of English Poetry and Prose*, Vol. I, Warszawa 1980, pp. 43–45.

But ever that man goes [...]
A stranger to strangers over undried sea,

(W.H. Auden 'The Wanderer')

Both wanderers also seek attachment and dream of home that they have lost:

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| He seems in his spirit | to see his lord, |
| clasps him and kisses, | lays on his knee |
| his hand and head | as he did long ago |
| in the years of old, | drawing near to the gift throne. |

(OE 'The Wanderer')

And dreams of home,
waving from window, spread of welcome,
Kissing of wife under single sheet;

(W. H. Auden)

On waking, both the wanderers likewise find themselves in an alien and unfriendly world, and this accent appears to be, at least by implication, Christian:

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Then he awakes, | the friendly man; |
| he sees before him | the fallow waves, |
| seabirds bathing, | spreading their feathers, |
| frost and snow falling | mingled with hail. |

(OE 'The Wanderer')

But waking sees
bird-flocks nameless to him, through doorway voices
Of new men making another love.

(W. H. Auden)

In the second section of the poem, the main focus is on the reminiscence of the lost home and, to all intents and purposes, on the lost love. While the anonymous poet laments the loss of this lord and his affection, Auden expresses his desire for order by uniquely contemporized and strikingly ordinary, down-to-earth imagery. The obsessive idea of the world of order governed by Just Men (later expressed in the symbol of the Just City⁹) will first appear in 'Spain' and will find its extension in 'New Year Letter' and other poems whose main thought line originates from Kierkegaardian philosophy. Yet, it must be observed that the theme of quest for order emerged very early in Auden's poetry. Hence, the image of orderly family life ('waving from window, [...]

⁹ "City" is a dominant symbol in Auden's poetry, which signifies civilization and Man's social achievement. The Just City, *civitas Dei*, is to stand for a Christian society as conceived by, for instance, Novalis (cf. *Die Christenheit oder Europa*).

kissing of wife') symbolizes security which the hero has lost, having now to face the hostile surroundings where 'bird-flocks nameless to him' stand for complete alienation. The last stanza, too, echoes the Old English elegy. The two poems are alike ended with a prayer *sui generis*, though Auden fails to specify the addressee, which is probably meant to highlight the mood loneliness and abandonment.

Although, as Spears states 'there is in context a political ambiguity: the wanderer is in one aspect the middle class intellectual, doomed by his political awareness to leave his intellectual and spiritual home and endure hardship and isolation'¹⁰ the poem is by nature decisively religious¹¹. Unlike the hero of the Old English elegy, whose case is exceptional and whose journey is an imposed, and, at the same time, accidental necessity, Auden's hero is destined to wander not because Fate (Wyrd) — with its basic sense "what is to come" — but because Doom "falls upon him"; and this specific word literally denotes "what is laid down" its Anglo-Saxon sense being "judgement" 'with the connotation of divine and probably adverse judgement'¹². Nonetheless, the Old English elegy was not the only source of inspiration for the poet to draw on since the opening line: 'Doom is dark and deeper than any sea-dingle' is a literary interpolation adopted by design from an alliterative prose West Midland homily *Sawles Warde*, dated early 13th century. The homily is based on the common medieval symbolic figure of man as a castle, in which the master or father of the house — Wit (Reason or Intelligense), although supported by the Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Spiritual Strength, Moderation and Rightousness, gets ruined by his wife, an unruly female called Will and the Five Senses, the servants of the castle¹³. This allegory of reason deserting man is expressly suggestive of the idea of the Fall of Man for — as some reviewers claim — Auden's Wanderer has not simply forfeited his security through no fault of his own and, although they refrain from stating it openly, there is an immediate reference to the Original Sin and the Exile.

In 'The Wanderer' Auden demonstrates no consolidated ideology (this, however, he failed to evade in the greater part of *Poems* 1930) and cautiously desists from lecturing any philosophy overtly. In effect, 'The Wanderer' is before all a display of Auden's poetic artistry, in which he skilfully operates with ellipses, understatement and generalization. Hereby, like Eliot, or in some other similar manner, Auden eschews discursive poetry by promoting conceptual rather than emotive imagery, which consists in combing "scraps" of

¹⁰ M. K. Spears, p. 41.

¹¹ Allan Rodway in his *Preface to Auden* refutes Spears' statement by saying that "The Wanderer" (1930) seems simply to use the idea of a compelling quest to symbolize a purely inward exploration, a personal test without any political implications. Whether Auden intended it to have them is unknowable and irrelevant'. London 1984, p. 51.

¹² M. K. Spears, p. 68.

¹³ M. W. Bloomfield, 'W. H. Auden and Sawles Warde', in 'Modern Language Notes', Ohio State University 1948.

scattered sentences, ostensibly in discord with one another, to be transformed into images by the reader himself.

The archetypal figure of Wanderer is fully extended in 'The Quest' cycle which — as L. Elektorowicz rightly suggests — 'might serve as a motto of nearly the whole *oeuvre*' of Auden's later phase¹⁴. The Quest is a recurrent literary theme that can be defined as a journey in search of adventure — as those undertaken by the knight serrant in medieval era — or a heroic expedition in pursuit of a particular object — as the Quests of the Holy Grail or the Golden Fleece. Auden's Quest is, however, of a special kind; it is a journey in which Everyman or the Wanderer seeks spiritual wisdom and tries to find the way to return to the state of innocence. The poet deliberately utilizes this motif in order to evoke an intended poetic effect and to universalize the world presented. In general, he himself typified diverse forms of Quests¹⁵, among which he distinguished: Fairy Tale, Quest for the Grail, Dream Quest, Pilgrim's Progress, Quest for Necessity, Kafka Quest and Quest for Innocence. Accordingly, Auden's can be defined as the last one, in which a hero is singled out and sent on a dangerous mission whose goal is to regain "original" *innocentia* by virtue of strong faith.

Exceptionally personal in tone, 'The Quest' sonnets pursue the prior mood of estrangement and forlornness, and show the poet more alone than ever; moreover, they seem to be intensely enforced by philosophical substances as the whole cycle is characterized by prominent religious commitment with strong echoes of Kierkegaardian thought. The sonnet opening the sequence ('The Door') reflects upon the source of Being, on Mystery as the beginning of all thing ('Out of it steps our future'), which always pertains to the future and is our defence against the past ('A widow with a missionary grin'). However, the Mystery, plainly implicative of Kierkegaardian Absolute, is also the source of our fears and affections because we do not understand its meaning¹⁶:

We¹⁷ pile our all against it when afraid,
And beat upon its panels when we die

The second sonnet seems to unfold the idea and bears implicit connotations of the Creation ('All had been ordered week before the the start'). Although

¹⁴ L. Elektorowicz, 'O poezji W. H. Audena' in *W. H. Audena. Poezje*, Kraków 1988, pp. 282–283.

¹⁵ Cf. *The Sewanee Review* LIX, Summer 1951, pp. 392–425.

¹⁶ A. Rodway epitomizes the Kierkegaardian thought as conceived by Auden in the following way: 'By definition, Kierkegaard argued, the divine is infinitely removed from the human, therefore, though man must obey God's will, he cannot know what is God's will. He must act in blind faith', p. 54.

¹⁷ It must be born in mind that the pronouns that most often appear in Auden's poetry are 'I' and 'We' which are assumed to be an anonymous commentator or an abstraction or a common multiple. (Cf. Stephan Spender in *A Collection of Critical Essays*, p. 36).

the purposively contemporized imagery makes it difficult to identify the whole symbolism of its sections and establish a univocal meaning arising there, the last two stanzas refer indirectly to Man's inability to conceive his condition before and after the Fall.

In theory they were sound on Expectation,
Had there been situations to be in;
Unluckily they were their situation

12b The three following sonnets (III, IV, V) develop the idea of the Quest and show the Wanderer overcoming difficulties on his way to his destination. They also portray the exceptional individuals prompted to abandon the Quest whose journey ends in egoism and isolation, and the 'two friends' of the sonnet III manifestly signify self-love and universal love. In this depiction, the former hurls the Wanderer to the chasm of non-entity and ruin, whereas the latter is deliberately kept deeply inside to die. The third stanza once more recalls and makes explicit the idea of the Fall ('Who would complete without the extra day/The journey that should take no time at all?').

The next piece (IV) appears to be an immediate reference to 'The Wanderer' through reiterating the notion of the desire for attachment and the theme of the guest fo home. Furthermore, it shows pictorially what hampers the Wanderer's progress.

For broken bridges halt him, and dark thickets round
Some ruin where an evil heritage was buried.

Altogether, the poem may be specified as a free meditation on pride (*hubris*?) as the cause of mundane predicament; still, the poet brings in here the motif of hope:

He'd tell the truth for which he thinks himself too young,
That everywhere on his horizon, all the sky,
Is now, as always, only waiting to be told
To be his father's house and speak his mother tongue

The following sonnet (V) emphasizes the Necessity of the Quest and points out to the effects of not undertaking the journey. The Wanderer is also being tempted to give up his search, the consequence of which is that 'every one/Found some temptation fit to govern him, And settled down to master the whole craft/Of being nobody;/. The same theme is resumed in the ensuing piece (VI) which touches upon the incapacity, or, at least, difficulty in reconciling with the world of light and order. Auden introduces here the notion of loneliness as the inevitable human condition. The last stanza attempts to recollect those who went astray, now unable to come back to the Truth:

And when Truth met him and put out her hand,
 He clung in panic to his tall belief
 And shrank away like an ill-treated child.

A depiction of a retreat of mental withdrawal from reality and action as presented in the seventh poem is the world of escapists, the Ivory Tower. The site is a place of isolation; The Wanderer is again tempted to avoid commitment to belief. This is where a "finite" man discovers that absolute faith is an impossibility but to the Knight of faith it is quite clear that the only salutary action he can take is to have recourse to the Absurd. Thus, he recognizes the impossibility and that very instant sinks in the infinite resignation:

O Uncreated Nothing, set me free,
 Now let Thy perfect be identified
 Unending passion of the Night, with Thee.

But the idea of disobedience looms up in the following lines (VIII) as the Wanderer is again urged to give himself up to despair.

The successive piece (IX) is intended, as it were, to be Auden's apology for religion. Here, the Ivory Tower, 'an architecture for the odd', is opposed to a 'well' connotative of faith, yet, the world that the poet pictures in the first two stanzas does not stand for the land of the living but is a lifeless spor of 'abstract speculation'. The 'well' (from the penultimate stanza) could save 'those who dread to drown' ("water" implies here belief and potentiality) but they fear the death of thirst as well. The last section is dedicated to great magicians, who, not by faith, but by logical reasoning are pathetically 'caught in their own spell'. Here, those who were once unable to part with or renounce their self-love, and who do not have sufficient faith to 'leap into the dark' by surrendering to God who is Lowe, now

Long for a natural climate as they sigh
 'Bewahe of Magic' to the passer-by.

The tenth sonnet is addressed to those who either failed or abandoned the Quest; it shows proud and presumptuous wanderers who availed themselves of the fact that the Quest is not 'compulsory' and

stuck half-way to settle in some cave
 with desert lions to domesticity,
 Or turned aside to be absurdly brave,
 And met the ogre and were turned to stone.

The poem also introduces the idea of the birth of a new secular, spiritless civilization in which higher values become petrified and, consequently, de-

formed, in this way, giving rise to the ethics of society of "whited sepulchres" and snobbery. The theme of specific snobbery is taken up in the lines of the following piece (XI) where a Child is sent on a quest by his ambitious 'peasant parents', a theme formerly exploited in *The Ascent of F.6*. Also this poem sees a quester undertaking a task he is not equal to, which in consequence is bound to prove his undoing.

Sonnet XII concentrates upon the essence of 'false' idealism in which one idea (suffering) can equally well be replaced by its opposite of different quality (tempting), and illustrates the mechanisms of the world of ironists. With Auden any attempt to live according to a pattern offered by any ready-made ideology is a falsification of existence and is fundamentally hostile to the nature of man. What follows in the next piece (XIII) is a reflection on those 'turned to stone' who failed to achieve their object and abandoned the Quest, and who now proved accidentally helpful 'for one predestined to attain their wish' — the faults of those who wandered away from the route can now serve as the sign-posts to the Wanderers just setting forth on the journey.

Though the successive poem (XIV) is a deliberate travesty of fairy tales and Grail Quests which habitually provide us with reliable formulae of achieving one's aim, the Wanderer still poses a question whether *via negativa* is the only way to attain the end of the Quest.

And how reliable can any truth be that is got
By observing oneself and then just inserting a Not?

The consecutive piece (XV) shows the Wanderer at a dilemma of reasserting his choice. In its second section, the main focus is on whether the Wanderer's case is really exceptional or whether it be a chance ('Was I doomed in any case)/Or would I not have failed had I believed in Grace?). But the Seeker's, as it is seen in the next sonnet (XVI), is virtually an exceptional case, although he is solely 'the bare man Nothing in the Beggar's Bush'. He can be referred to as a Kierkegaardian Knight of Faith kept in constant tension, tried and tested, and at every moment tempted to fall back into ethical modality, as well as accepting comfort and despair. Besides, he is, in a manner of speaking, the embodiment of the fullness of spirit in touch with life. Later on (XVII), the poet again draws our attention to those who have failed in their attempt and

found it prudent to withdraw
Before official pressure was applied,
Embittered robbers outlawed by the Law,
Lepers in terror of the terrified.

This time, Auden is more specific about what has become of those who abandoned the Quest; whereas in one of the previous passages the reader learns that they got petrified, now, it is seen, that they have turned into 'the

blank and dumb ... marbles'. This is explicitly reminiscent of the "whited sepulchres" theme; these modern Pharisees (orig. Heb. "separated") are presented here as enclosed by 'convention, sunshine and horses' — the telling attributes of their spiritless and comfortable world in which

Successful men know better than to try
To see the face of their Absconded God

'The Adventures' (XVIII) recalls immediately the third part of T. S. Eliot's 'Burnt Norton' where the mystics in the desert 'descend only into the world of perpetual solitude / ... Internal darkness, deprivation / And destitution of all property, / Desiccation of the world of sense, etc.¹⁸, and just like Auden's mystics go *via negativa* 'towards the Dry'. But the poet makes the reader see the straightforward misconception issuing from the clash between the two worlds: the secular and the religious. Seeking God, the mystics suffered and 'dried to death', but finally have themselves become the source of inspiration for the artists and the objects of worship ('Worship not God but me'), as well as the addressee for intercession.

The most ironical in its content, the successive poem (XIX), reflects on the essence of faith and truth. 'Poet, oracle and wit' undoubtedly stand for those who ascribe to themselves the exclusive right to proclaim Truth, although, as the poet states plainly, the truth appears to be 'the angler's lie'. Certainly, the sonnet constitutes a contemplation on human craving for illusion, the illusion of Free Will deeply rooted in narcissistic love, or — as Auden denominates it elsewhere — Eros.

In the last piece (XX), the theme of Mystery is resumed, the Mystery which embodies the source of everything that begins ('out of it steps our future') and ends ('all journeys die here'). The poem succinctly epitomizes the idea of the Quest and expounds its real significance. The Quest eventually shows itself to be an escape from guilt (even though the guilt is, after all, a *felix culpa*), an attempt to return to the state of innocence. Accordingly, the poet introduces here the imagery of childhood the purpose of which is to conclude that any return to genuine innocence (from before the Fall?) is, in effect, impossible, once our childhood is behind us. However, this is not to say that the Quest is pointless and need not be undertaken. The Quest is a necessity — the poet suggests — because without it our Just City, our Good Place, cannot be raised.

As has been observed, in 'The Quest' cycle Auden's concern is not solely with the clinical cognition but also with the pain of existence and the existential *frisson*. The poet considers two options: the individual must either abandon himself to despair, or throw himself entirely on the mercy of God. Auden intentionally seeks to see things in terms of eternity and his final conclusion is

¹⁸ T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, 'Burnt Norton', part III.

that faith, although absurd, appears essential and indispensable in spite of the fact that it brings doubts and suffering to him who believes. Our lack of faith — the poet implies — is our greatest evil, far greater than those deeds that ever deserved to be punished. Faith is not only an aesthetic emotion, nor is it an immediate instinct of the heart, but it is a paradox of life which a Seeker, a Wanderer must recognize.

After long years of spiritual struggle and metaphysical quests, Auden's verse subsequently took on the tonic of quietude and acceptance. In 1960 he published a small book of poetry about his house in Vienna, which, most likely, appears to be an expression of his reconciliation with reality and people, and is the poet's display of felicity and wisdom. *About the House* has an exceptionally universal character. Most of the poems are parables and allegories which serve Auden to square up with the world and life, and constitute a *sui generis* thanksgiving. 'House' and 'rooms' are the dominant symbols in the collection, and the idea is one of the Myth of Foundation. The 'house' is the place where all the quests come to an end, and where the Wanderer finds his peace and happiness. It is a site in which love and friendship prevail, where no anxiety can steal in, and where the Wanderer is protected by a timeless perspective: art and beauty will rule in this world and Divine Law will inspire it.

Auden's Wanderer and the Quest motif, as employed in his poetry, although related to the old tradition of Malory and Spenser, are to a greater extent reminiscent of the type of quest inherent in the religious poetry of T. S. Eliot. Yet, with Auden 'wandering' does not end in "the wasteland", the symbol of corrupt and delusive civilization, as Eliot conceived it. Auden's Quester must live in the strenuous present and make his difficult choices in dreadful freedom, striving for truth in spite of his imperfections. But, to achieve this goal, there is only one medium, one incentive — strong faith in the Absurd. Therefore the poet points to the necessity for Quests since trusting in the Absurd does not consist in awaiting the Saviour impassively, but rather, in seeking *deus absconditus* in the besetting disorder. Auden postulates the Kierkegaardian "leap in the dark" for, as he posits, this is the only way for Just Men, to create a community in perfect order, the Just City. Probably, such is Auden's idea of Paradise, the realm of timelessness without suffering or Evil. For only in the Just City can one reconcile beauty and truth, nature and art, the perfect and the real.

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ARCHETYP WĘDROWCA ORAZ MOTYW POSZUKIWANIA W POEZJI W. H. AUDENA

STRESZCZENIE

Niniejszy artykuł stanowi próbę analizy transformacji archetypicznego symbolu Wędrowca i motywu Poszukiwania w wybranych wierszach wczesnej („Wędrowiec”) i późnej (cykl sonetów pt. „Poszukiwanie”) fazy twórczości W. H. Audena.

Autora pracy interesuje wyłącznie religijno-egzystencjalny aspekt omawianych utworów, toteż bada on przede wszystkim rozwijane przez poetę mity Poszukiwania i Odnalezienia.

Symbol Wędrowca przybiera w studiowanych wierszach rozmaite postacie: zagubionego tułacza, obserwatora i komentatora otaczającej rzeczywistości, a w końcu niezłomnego Rycerza Wiary (symbolu zapożyczonego z filozofii Kierkegaarda). Początkowy cel jego wędrówki — odzyskanie „pierwotnej niewinności” — przeistacza się w cel ostateczny — zbudowanie Miasta Sprawiedliwego, symbolu doskonałości i harmonii.

Wiara i prawda — fundamenty ludzkiej egzystencji — nie są dla Audena wynikiem duchowych spekulacji, lecz posiadają dialektyczny, subiektywny i egzystencjalny charakter. Wytrwanie w wierze, choć dla poety wiara pozostanie zawsze absurdem, stanowi wartość samą w sobie, gdyż pozwala Wędrowcowi pogodzić się ze światem i życiem. Audenowski Tułacz, po latach duchowych zmagani i metafizycznych poszukiwań odnajduje w końcu Dom (tom wierszy „O domu”), a wraz z nim wewnętrzny spokój.

Należy dodać, iż wiersze stanowiące przedmiot badań nie są jedynymi, lecz najbardziej reprezentatywnymi utworami podejmującymi temat wędrówki i poszukiwania.