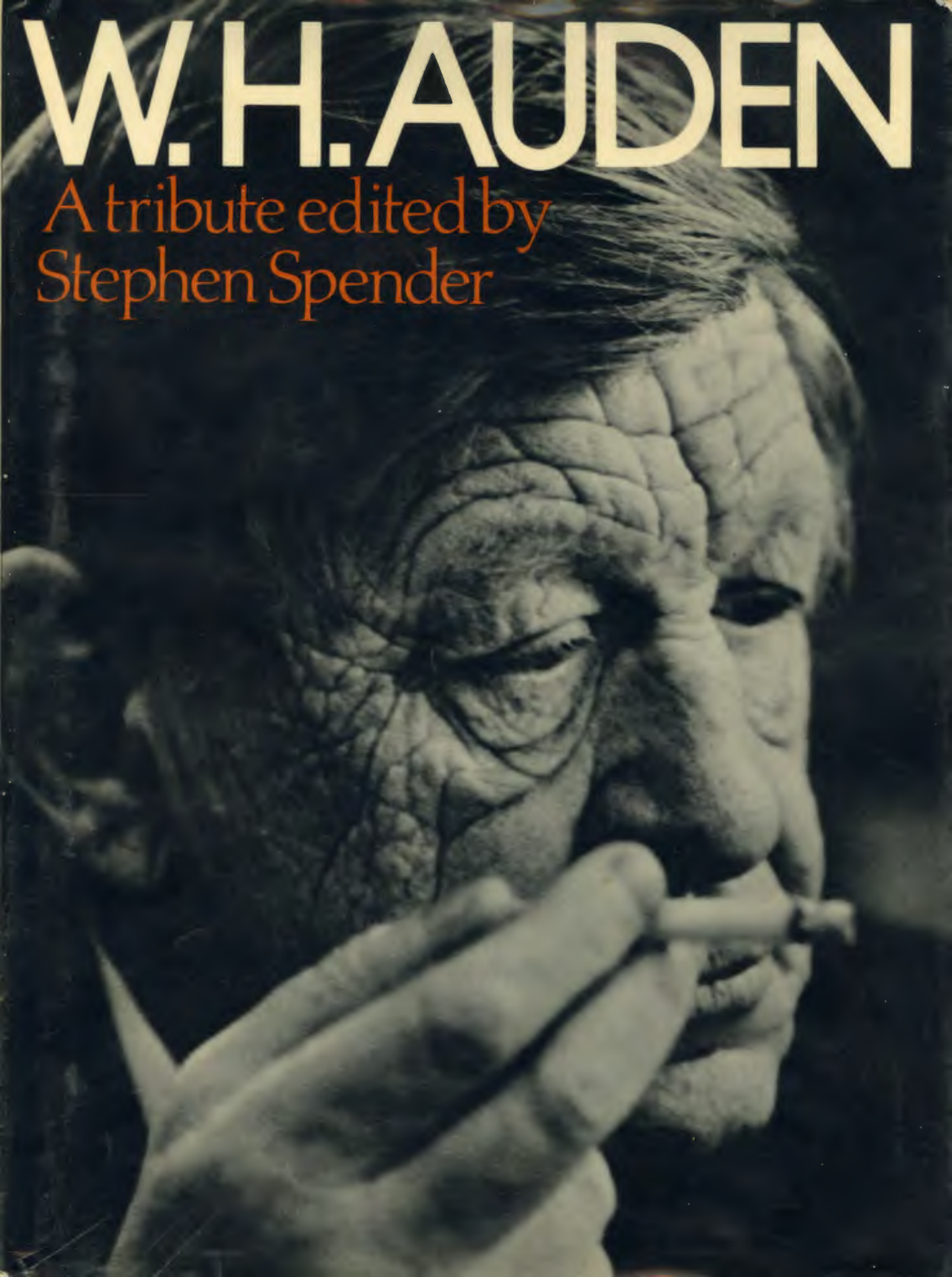


# W.H.AUDEN

*A tribute edited by  
Stephen Spender*



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W. H. AUDEN  
a tribute

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Edited by Stephen Spender

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bours. After so many teas I had by the end of the day eaten thirty-two cakes. Wystan did not behave well. He swallowed, surreptitiously, the remains of a jug of cream in spite of the many sweet bilberries wrapped in wafer-thin pancakes which he had just consumed – all that nonsense about a sweet tooth!

It is a sad but unavoidable record that our last meal consisted of a soup flavoured seemingly with hair-oil and eau-de-Cologne with whites of eggs floating on top. This was followed by salt fish so nauseous that we had to wrap it in paper and later throw it in the sea – all had been meant as a compliment but it was in fact the nastiest meal we had ever had. Be that as it may. We had enjoyed a degree of hospitality I have not known excelled. We walked over the *tún* to the edge of the water where the motor-boat waited, and there we stood, looking back at the assembled family.

Many years later he returned and stood alone on that exact spot gazing across the immense fjörd out towards the arctic sea. He thought of Louis and me and our days there and felt very sad. It was less than a year after Louis' death.

## Cyril Connolly

### Some memories

*Cyril Connolly was the Editor of Horizon magazine from 1939 to 1950, in which Auden published many poems*

Personal song and language . . .

Thanks to which it's possible for the breathing

Still to break bread with the dead. . . .

A few years ago it would have been easier: memories would have come crowding in, it remained only to sift them and bring them up to date with our last meeting, for I still saw him regularly when he came to England. But since he had made his home in Oxford we hardly met, except through Stephen Spender. Age still finds me devoted to my old friends but increasingly reminded that it is a one-way traffic so that I anticipate their rebuffs from an instinct of self-protection. I used to imagine the old as yarning away together or locked in pregnant silence like Tennyson and Carlyle. But age is not like that: the old are diminishing universes racing further and further apart, piling up space between them, unable to cope with the simplest mechanics of meeting. Artists can be touchy, frivolous and unforgiving, and often the only way to catch a glimpse of our old friends is at a memorial service or a literary award. 'O yonge freshe folke' be warned; friendship is for those who strenuously pursue the same goal; cultivate it now and do not put it off 'for when there will be more time' – time there may be but also death, weariness and estrangement.

p. 68 Connolly on old age

(continued from front flap)

“amazing intellectual ebullience” (Rex Warner), “staggering erudition and dogmatically funny prejudices” (Nicolas Nabokov), and “extraordinary facility and love for words” (Hannah Arendt). Among the other distinguished people represented here, Ursula Niebuhr comments on his theological stance; Lincoln Kirstein tells of Auden’s not widely known career in the U.S. Army; and Michael Yates remembers his being “quite outrageously fun.”

One hundred photographs, many of them from family albums and never before published, illustrate every period of Auden’s life, from the age of three to the last weeks before his death. There are also a very inclusive Chronology of events and works, an Introduction and a Valediction by Stephen Spender.

Auden once remarked to his friend Anne Fremantle that “writing is the best means of breaking bread with the dead”—a sharing offered the reader in this record of friendship.

STEPHEN SPENDER, poet and critic, was at one time the co-editor of *Encounter* and has been Professor of English at University College, London, since 1970. The last work he edited, *D. H. Lawrence—Novelist, Poet, Prophet*, was highly praised.

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