

Academic Graffiti

W.H.AUDEN

DRAWINGS BY
FILIPPO SANJUST



Academic Graffiti

BY W.H.AUDEN

Sixty-one clerihews by Mr. Auden, accompanied by
sixty-one pen-and-ink drawings by Filippo Sanjust



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Other books
by W. H. AUDEN

ON THIS ISLAND

POEMS

ANOTHER TIME

THE DOUBLE MAN

LETTERS FROM ICELAND
(with Louis MacNeice)

JOURNEY TO A WAR
(with Christopher Isherwood)

THE DOG BENEATH THE SKIN (a play)
(with Christopher Isherwood)

THE ASCENT OF F-6 (a play)
(with Christopher Isherwood)

ON THE FRONTIER (a play)
(with Christopher Isherwood)

FOR THE TIME BEING

THE SELECTED POETRY OF W. H. AUDEN
(Modern Library)

THE AGE OF ANXIETY

NONES

THE ENCHAFÈD FLOOD (three essays)
(Vintage Books)

THE SHIELD OF ACHILLES

THE MAGIC FLUTE (a libretto)
(with Chester Kallman)

HOMAGE TO CLIO

THE DYER'S HAND (essays)

ABOUT THE HOUSE

THE ORATORS

COLLECTED SHORTER POEMS

SECONDARY WORLDS (essays)

COLLECTED LONGER POEMS

CITY WITHOUT WALLS
and Other Poems

THE ELDER EDDA
(with Paul B. Taylor and Peter H. Salus)

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My First Name, *Wystan*,
Rhymes with *Tristan*,
But—O dear!—I do hope
I'm not quite such a dope.

Academic Graffiti

W. H. AUDEN

Illustrated by Filippo Sanjust



RANDOM HOUSE
New York

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Eighteen of these poems originally appeared
in *The New Yorker* in 1971.

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2 4 6 8 9 7 5 3

In Memoriam
Ogden Nash

Forenote

About half of these clerihews were printed in my volume *Homage to Clio*. I reprint them without shame because I know that my verses are a small matter, compared to Filippo Sanjust's illustrations.

W. H. A.

1

Henry Adams

Was mortally afraid of Madams:

In a disorderly house

He sat quiet as a mouse.



2

St. Thomas Aquinas
Always regarded wine as
A medicinal juice
That helped him to deduce.



3

Johann Sebastian Bach

Was a master of his *Fach*:

Nothing could be more *kluge*

Than his Kunst der Fuge.



4

Thomas Lovell Beddoes
Could never walk through meadows
Without getting the glooms
And thinking of tombs.



5

Ludwig van Beethoven

Believed it proven

That, for mortal dust,

What must be, must.



6

Good Queen Bess
Couldn't have liked it less,
When Burghley and Cecil
Drank out of the same vessel.



7

William Blake

Found Newton hard to take,
And was not enormously taken
With Francis Bacon.



8

Said Robert Bridges,
When badly bitten by midges:
‘They’re only doing their duty
As a testament to my beauty.’



9

Robert Browning
Immediately stopped frowning
And started to blush,
When fawned on by Flush.



10

Martin Buber

Never said 'Thou' to a tuber:

Despite his creed,

He did not feel the need.



11

Lord Byron

Once succumbed to a Siren:

His flesh was weak,

Hers Greek.



12

Among the prosodists, Bysshe¹
Was the syllable-counting old sissy,
Guest².
The accentual pest.

¹Edward Bysshe. Author of *Art of Poetry* (1702)

²Edwin Guest. Author of *History of English Rhythms*
(2 vols; 1836–38)



13

When Arthur Hugh Clough
Was jilted by a piece of fluff,
He sighed 'Quel dommage!',
And wrote *Amours de Voyages*.



14

Dante

Was utterly *enchanté*,

When Beatrice cried in tones that were
peachy:

Noi siamo amici.



15

Hugo De Vries

During a visit to Greece

Composed a pastoral poem,

Xylem & Phloem.



16

Charles Dickens

Could find nothing to say to chickens,

But gossiping with rabbits

Became one of his habits.



17

Desiderius Erasmus

Always avoided chiasmus,

But grew addicted as time wore on

To oxymoron.



18

Fulke Greville

Wrote beautifully at sea level:

With each rising contour his verse

Got progressively worse.



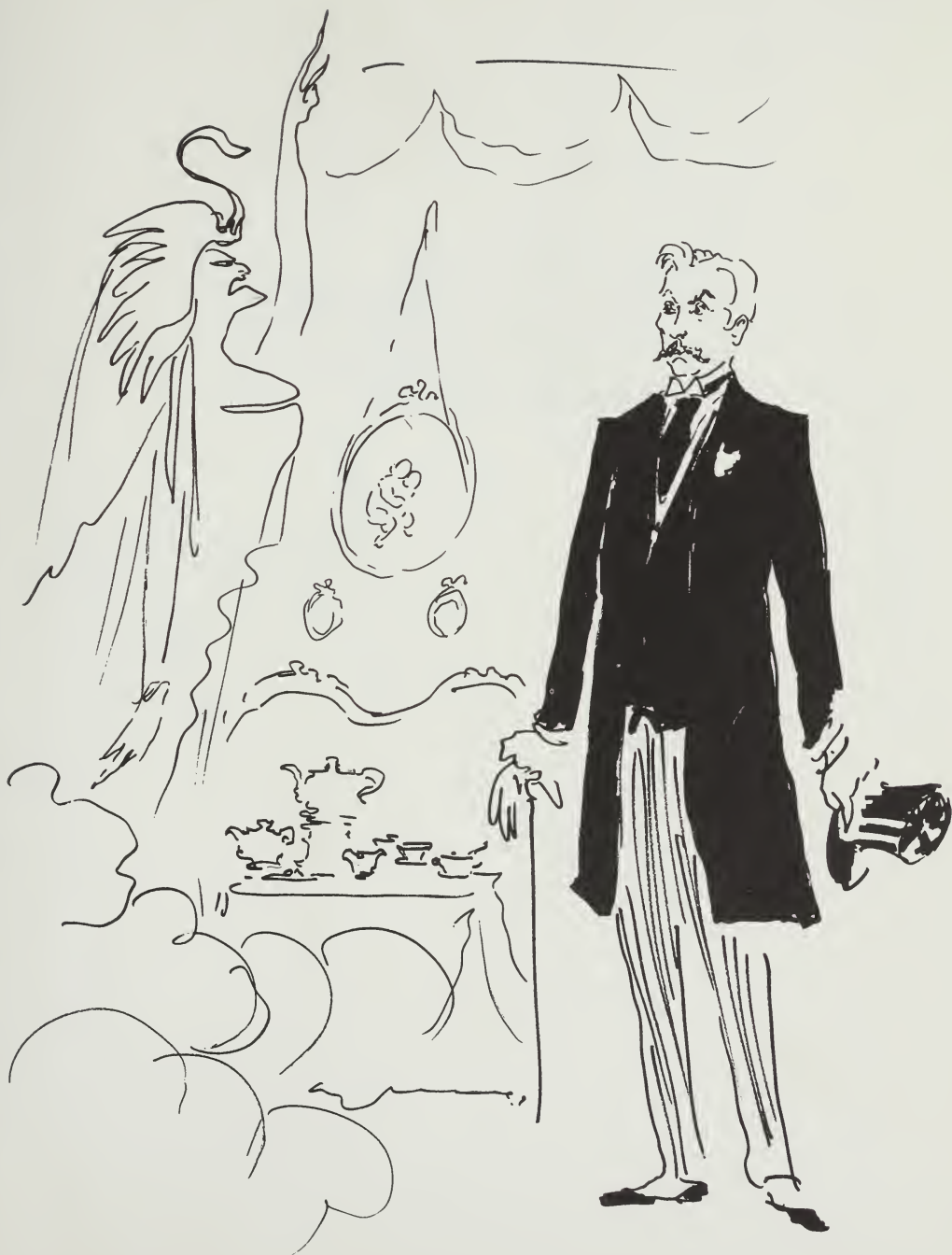
19

The *Geheimrat* in Goethe
Made him all the curter
With *Leute* who were leery
Of his Colour Theory.



20

Sir Rider Haggard,
Was completely staggered
When his bride-to-be
Announced 'I AM SHE!'



21

Georg Friedrich Händel
Was highly respected in Kendal:
It was George Frederick Handel
Who caused all the scandal.



22

Thomas Hardy

Was never tardy

When summoned to fulfill

The Immanent Will.



23

Joseph Haydn
Never read Dryden
Nor did John Dryden
Ever hear Haydn.



24

No one could ever inveigle
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
Into offering the slightest apology
For his *Phenomenology*.



25

George Herbert¹

Once tried ordering sherbet

On Salisbury plain:

He ordered in vain.

¹ 17th-century religious poet; Rector of Bemerton, near Salisbury



26

Robert Herrick¹

Certainly did not write *Eric*:

So far

As we know, it was Dean Farrar.

¹Herrick was a 17th-century poet and gallant.
Eric, or Little by Little by Dean Farrer was a
famous Victorian school story



27

Henry James

Abhorred the word *Dames*,
And always wrote '*Mommas*'
With inverted commas.



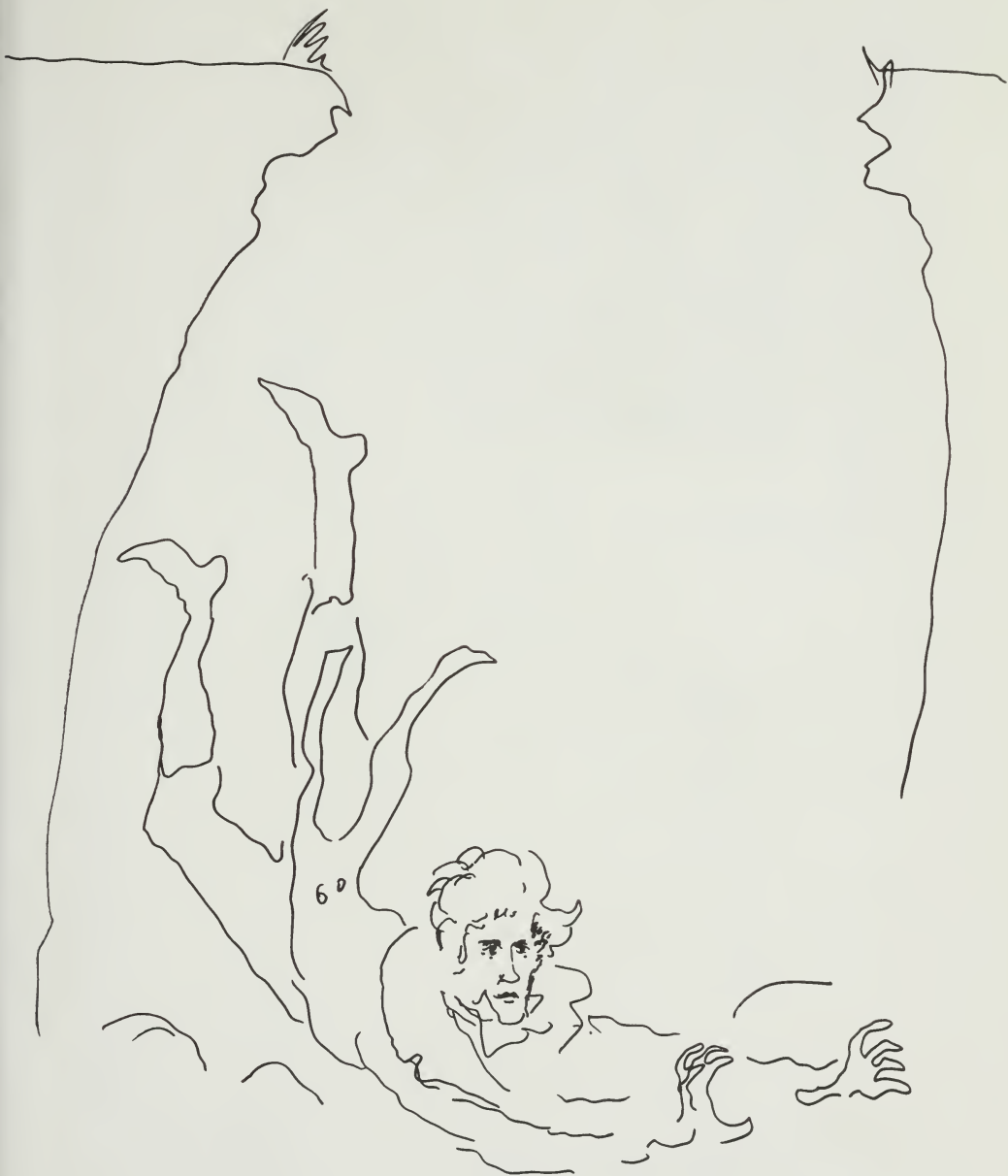
28

When the young Kant
Was told to kiss his aunt,
He obeyed the Categorical Must,
But only just.



29

Søren Kierkegaard
Tried awfully hard
To take The Leap
But fell in a heap.



30

Karl Kraus¹

Always had some grouse
Among his bête noires
Were Viennese choirs.

¹ Austrian satirist, d. 1936



31

Archbishop Laud

Was High, not Broad:

He could never descend

To celebrating at the North End.



32

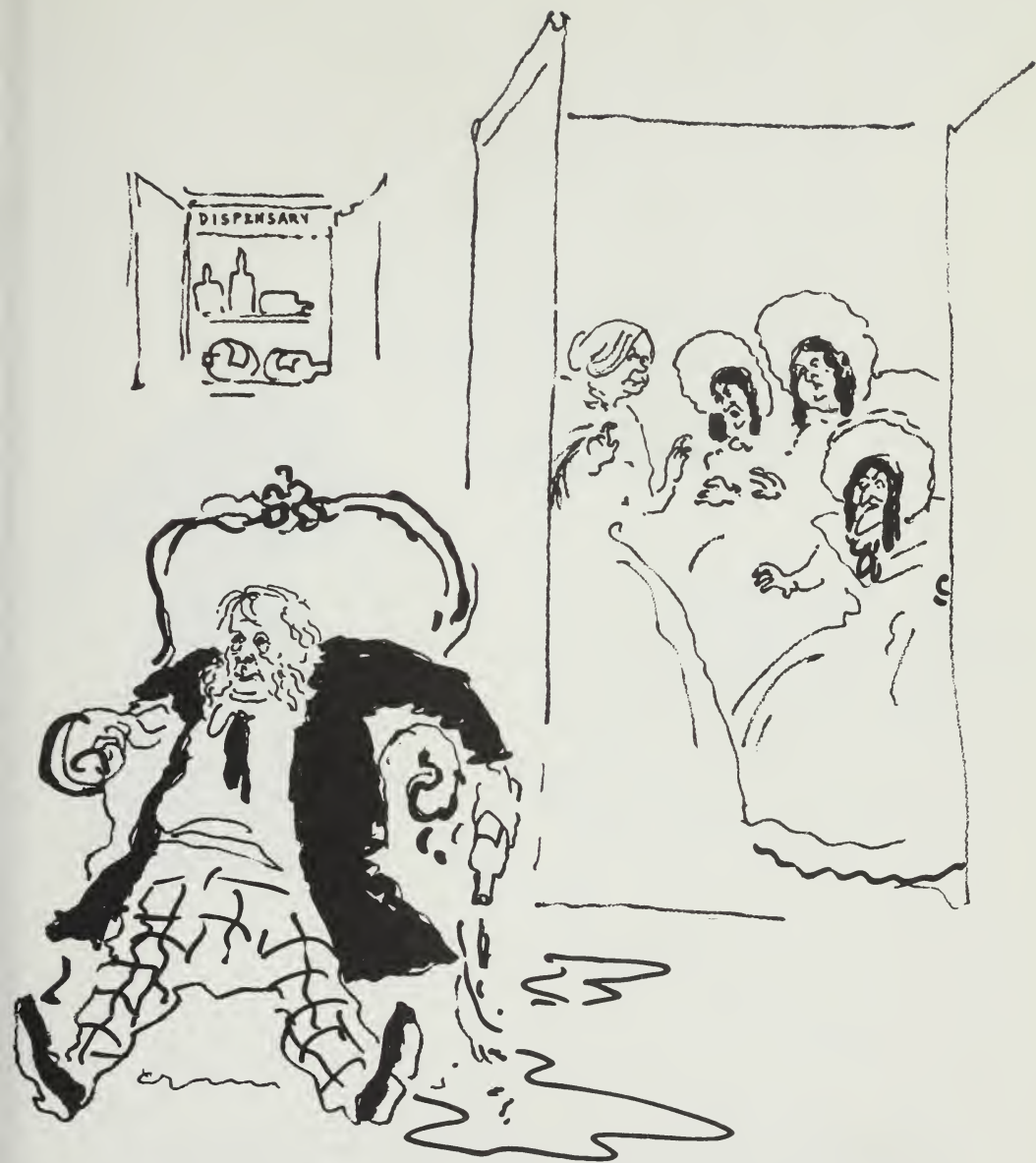
Edward Lear

Was haunted by a fear
While travelling in Albania
Of contracting kleptomania.



33

Joseph Lister,
According to his sister,
Was not an alcoholic:
His vice was carbolic.



34

Mr. Robert Liston¹

Used the saw like a piston:

He was *that* elated,

When he amputated.

¹Robert Liston, (1794–1847). Surgeon in Edinburgh. It was said that he could take off a leg at the thigh in twenty-six seconds. He was also the first surgeon in Great Britain to perform an operation under anaesthesia



35

Luther & Zwingli

Should be treated singly:

L hated the Peasants,

Z the Real Presence.



36

Mallarmé

Had too much to say:

He could never quite

Leave the paper white.



37

Mary, Queen of Scots,
Could tie the most complicated knots,
But she couldn't bake
The simplest cake.



38

Queen Mary (The Bloody)

Had an understudy

Who was a Prot:

She was not.



39

When Karl Marx
Found the phrase 'financial sharks',
He sang a Te Deum
In the British Museum.



40

John Milton

Never stayed in a Hilton
Hotel,

Which was just as well.



41

William Henry Monk¹

Lived in a perpetual blue funk

Of being taken on hikes

By John Bacchus Dykes².

¹W. H. Monk (1823–89) composer of famous hymn-tunes,
e.g. for *Abide with me*

²J. B. Dykes (1823–76) composer of famous hymn-tunes,
e.g. for *Holy, holy, holy*



42

Thomas Moore

Caused a furore

Every time he bellowed his

Irish Melodies.



43

Cardinal Newman

Was being only human

When he dreamed of panning

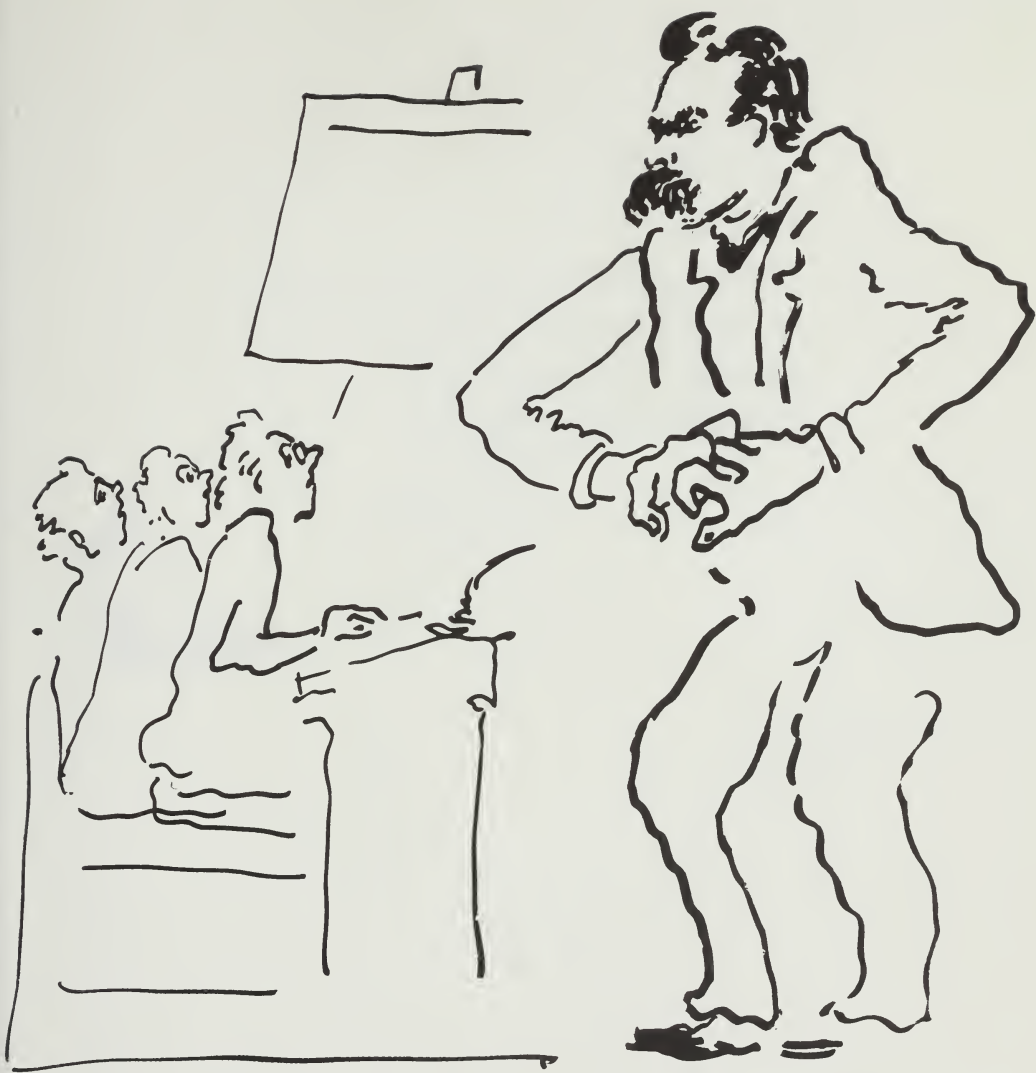
The latest tract by Cardinal Manning.



44

Nietzsche

Had the habit as a teacher
Of cracking his joints
To emphasise his points.



45

Oxbridge philosophers, to be cursory,
Are products of a middle-class nursery:
Their arguments are anent
What Nanny really meant.



46

Louis Pasteur,
So his colleagues aver,
Lived on excellent terms
With most of his germs.



47

Alexander Pope

Never gave up hope

Of finding a motto

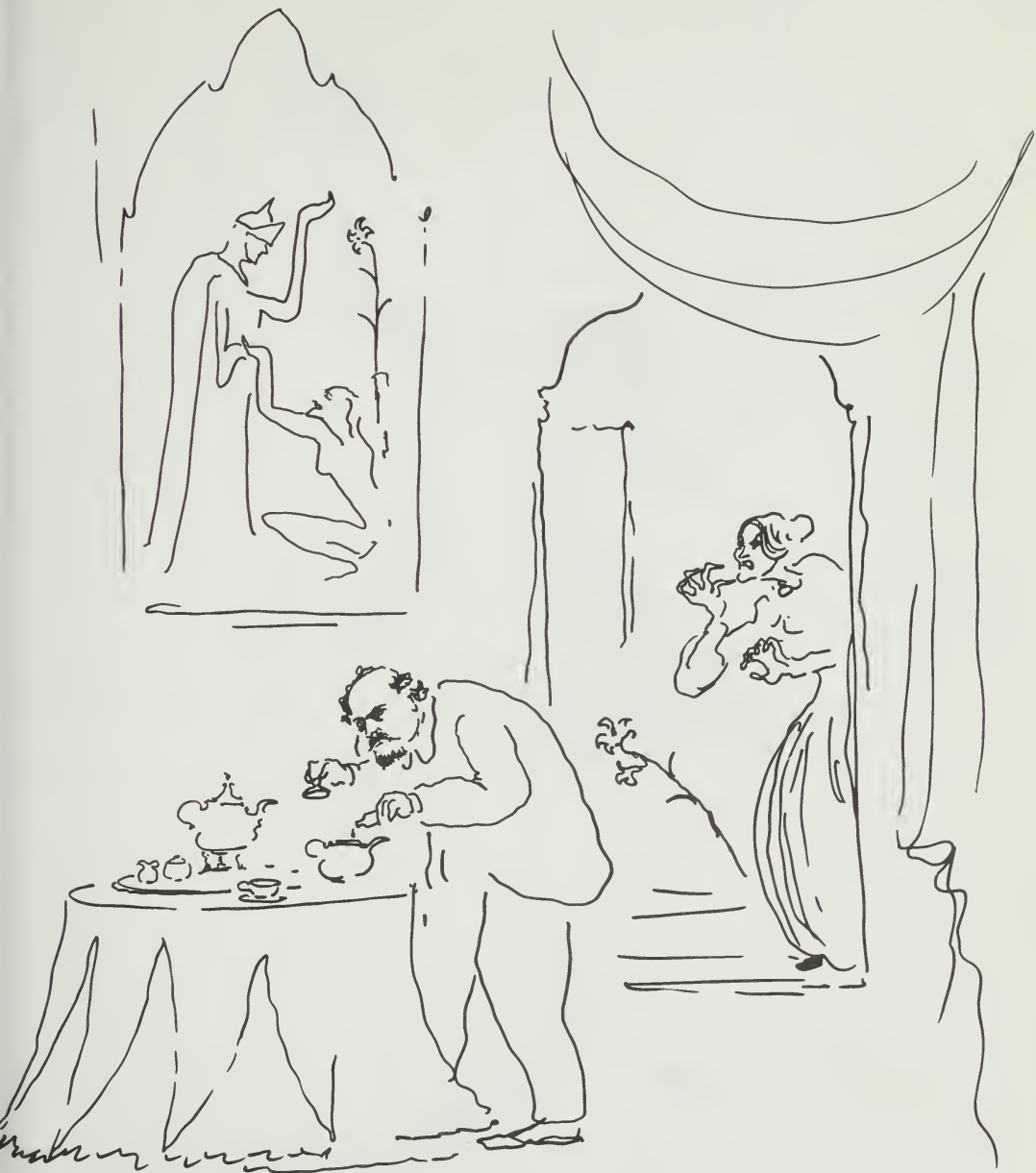
To affix to his Grotto.



48

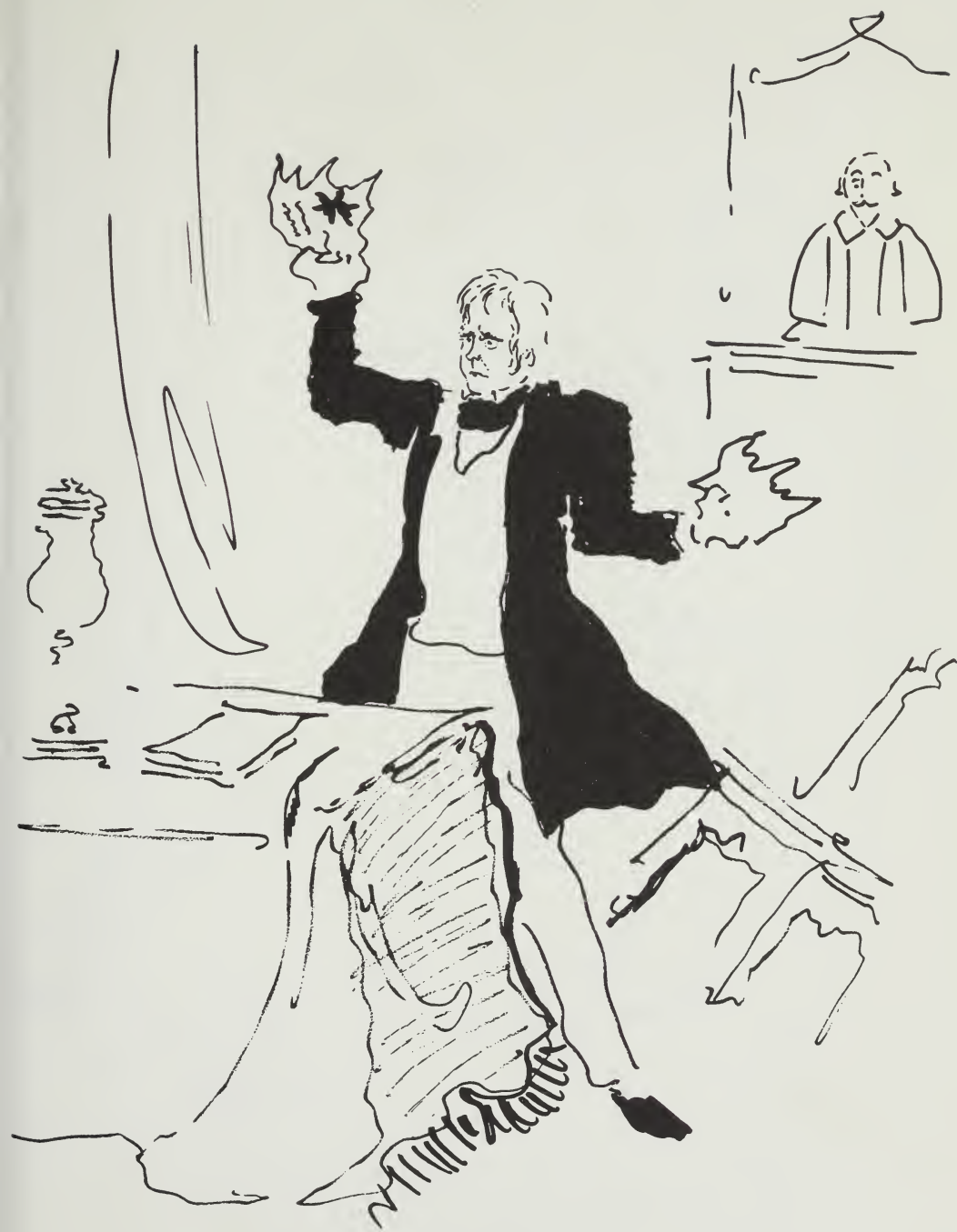
Christina Rosetti

Thought it rather petty,
When her brother, D.G.,
Put laudanum in her tea.



49

When Sir Walter Scott
Made a blot,
He stamped with rage
And started a new page.



50

'*Ma foi!*', exclaimed Stendal,
'*Ce Scarpia n'est pas si mal,*
But he's no Count Mosca,
Unluckily for Tosca.'



51

Adalbert Stifter¹

Was no weight-lifter
He would hire old lags
To carry his bags.

¹ Austrian writer of the Biedermeier period



52

William Makepeace Thackery
Wept into his daiquiri,
When he heard St. John's Wood
Thought he was no good.



53

Thomas the Rhymer
Was probably a social climber:
He should have known Fairy Queens
Were beyond his means.



54

Thomas Traherne¹

Could always discern

The Angel in boys,

Even when they made a noise.

¹ 17th-century mystical poet, forerunner
of Wordsworth



55

Paul Valéry

Earned a meagre salary,
Walking through the *Bois*,
Observing his *Moi*.



56

Good Queen Victoria

In a fit of euphoria

Commanded Disraeli

To blow up the Old Bailey.



57

James Watt

Was the hard-boiled kind of Scot:
He thought any dream
Sheer waste of steam.



58

Oscar Wilde

Was greatly beguiled,

When into the Cafe Royal walked Bosie

Wearing a tea-cosy.



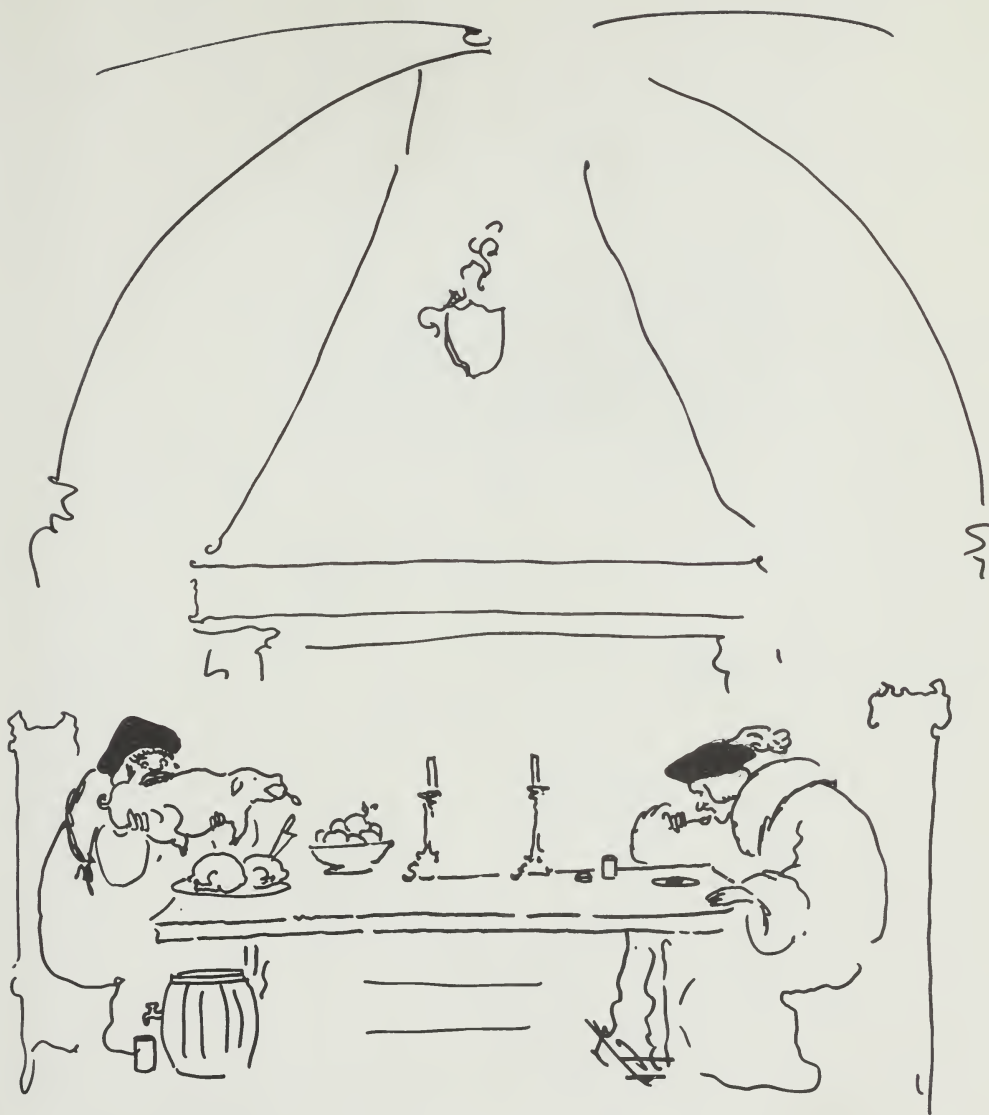
59

Sir Thomas Wyatt

Never went on a diet,

Unlike the Earl of Surrey,

Who ate nothing but curry.



60

Whenever Xantippe
Wasn't feeling too chippy,
She would bawl at Socrates:
'Why aren't you Hippocrates?'



About the Author

WYSTAN HUGH AUDEN was born in York, England, in 1907. He has been a resident of the United States since 1939, and an American citizen since 1946. Educated at Gresham's School, Holt, and at Christ Church, Oxford, he became associated with a small group of young writers in London—among them Stephen Spender and Christopher Isherwood—who were to be recognized as the most promising of the new generation in English letters. He collaborated with Isherwood on several plays, including *The Dog Beneath the Skin* and *The Ascent of F-6* (available as *Two Great Plays* in Vintage Books).

Mr. Auden has been the recipient of a number of awards, among them the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the Bollingen Prize in Poetry, the Guinness Poetry Award and, in 1967, the National Medal for Literature given by the National Book Committee.

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Mr. Auden is the author of several volumes of poetry, including *City Without Walls*, *About the House*, *Homage to Clio*, *The Double Man*, *For the Time Being*, *The Age of Anxiety*, *Nones*, *The Shield of Achilles*, and, with Louis MacNeice, *Letters from Iceland* (reissued by Random House in 1969). His *Selected Poetry* appears in The Modern Library. New editions of *The Orators* and *Collected Shorter Poems* were published in 1967. *Collected Longer Poems* was published in 1969. *The Enchafèd Flood*, three critical essays on the romantic spirit, and a volume of essays, *The Dyer's Hand*, are available in Vintage Books. His most recent volume of essays is *Secondary Worlds*.

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