



World War II resulted in huge loss of life and extensive destruction. The painting on this first slide shows some of the effects of bombing in the London East End.

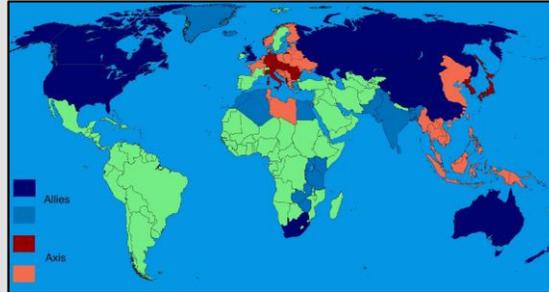


This Luftwaffe photograph shows a Heinkel bomber over London. The bombing was concentrated on the port and rail lines of London. In the right half of the photograph can be seen The Isle of Dogs with its huge docks. These are now the site of Canary Wharf. The rail lines in the lower left are going to London Bridge Station and to Waterloo. The front of the plane is right over the Tower of London.

World War II

After the invasion of Poland, Britain and France presented Germany with an ultimatum, and on September 3, Europe was at war. Japan's invasion of China was countered by a US oil embargo. In response Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and war was declared in the Pacific. In late 1942 the axis powers had expanded to their greatest extent:

By the end of the war, over 60 million people were killed. About three quarters of these were civilians.



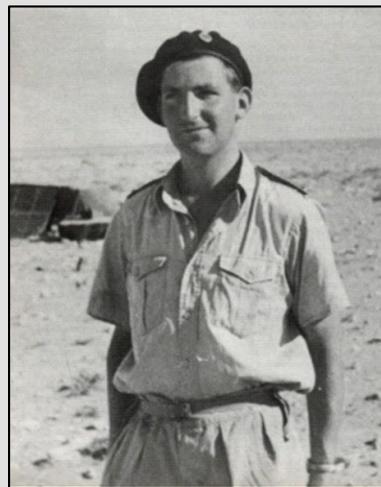
The death toll from World War II was about 3 times that of World War I. It is probably the war with the greatest loss of human life. The Taiping Rebellion in China (1850-1864) may have involved more deaths but it is difficult to estimate exact numbers.

The maps shows the greatest extent of the axis conquests. The focus was on the town of El Alamein. German and Italian forces advancing on Egypt and the Suez Canal were halted in the First Battle of El Alamein (July 1942) and defeated in the subsequent Second Battle (November 1942). This victory of General Montgomery over Field Marshal Rommel was probably the great turning point of the war. The subsequent defeats of Rommel's forces by General Patton in the western desert paved the way for the Allied invasion of Sicily.

In the East the Battle of Midway (June 1942) stemmed the Japanese expansion. Then began the long island-by-island campaign to free the Pacific.

Keith Douglas (1920-1944)

After an unhappy childhood, Douglas came into his own at Oxford University, where he was tutored by Edmund Blunden, one of the poets of the Great War. At the outbreak of war in 1939, he volunteered for the British Army, serving with the Eighth Army in North Africa. He survived the Second Battle of El Alamein but was later killed during the invasion of Normandy.



World War II did not generate as much poetry as World War I. It is difficult to know why. One of the prominent English war-poets was Keith Douglas, who fought in North Africa. Several of his poems deal with the tank battles.




Three weeks gone and the combatants gone
 returning over the nightmare ground
 we found the place again, and found
 the soldier sprawling in the sun.

The frowning barrel of his gun
 overshadowing. As we came on
 that day, he hit my tank with one
 like the entry of a demon.

Read by John Gielgud

The illustration on the left illustrates a destroyed German tank and a victorious British tank. The photograph on the right shows one of the German anti-tank guns, such as mentioned in the Douglas poem *Vergissmeinnicht* (forget-me-not). Douglas was lucky to have lived when such a gun hit his tank. It could not have been a direct hit. The poet is happy that he has survived and the gunner has not, but realizes that human flesh does not last as long as metal and that the enemy was a lover as well as a soldier.

The poem uses both regular and slant rhymes. The latter are likely in homage to Wilfred Owen.



Ezra Pound

Pound left England in 1920 and spent several years in Paris where he befriended Ernest Hemingway and James Joyce. In 1924 he moved to Rapallo in Italy with his wife, Olivia Shakespear, and his mistress, Olga Rudge, a violinist he had met in Paris. He worked on the *Cantos*, translated the works of Confucius and classical Chinese poems, and studied the Social Credit economics of C. H. Douglas.

Portrait by Bill Brandt, 1928

Ezra Pound was not a combatant in the war. Nevertheless, his poetry illustrates the forces at play leading up to the war. Most importantly it demonstrates how poets can become so terribly mistaken and so lacking in compassion.

Al Poco Giorno



In 1931 Pound wrote a piece for solo violin based on a poem by Dante written in 1296. This poem was a sestina, a verse form invented by the Provençal poet Arnaut Daniel. This form uses a complex sequence of rhymes that repeat in different order over 39 lines.

Al poco giorno e al gran cerchio d'ombra
son giunto, lasso!, ed al bianchir de' colli,
quando si perde lo color ne l'erba;

I have come, alas, to the great circle of shadow,
to the short day and the whitening hills,
when the colour is all lost from the grass



Portrait of Dante, 1495
Sandro Botticelli

Before I approach the evils of Ezra Pound, I should first illustrate his uncanny ability to create beauty. This piece for solo violin, composed in 1931 for his mistress Olga Rudge, is a beautiful melding of poetry and music. It is based upon a sestina by Dante – we shall return to this form later in this session. The violinist is Nathan Rubin. The recording was made in 2003. Pound was fascinated both by Provençal poetry, which he translated extensively, and by Dante, whose cantos he was imitating.



Annunciation
Fra Angelico
Fresco in Convent
of San Marco
circa 1445

With usura hath no man a house of good stone
each block cut smooth and well fitting
that design might cover their face



1958

So we come to Canto 45 – the *Usura* canto. Typically the word “usury” is used to describe the lending of money at interest rates far above what is considered reasonable. Nevertheless, the word actually means any lending of money for gain. It is prohibited by Hindu, Jewish, Christian and Islamic scripture. At the end of the Middle Ages, the secular and religious princes of Europe needed money for their projects, and the rules against usury were relaxed. Banks were established, money was lent, and interest was charged. The oldest surviving bank in the world is the Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena which was founded in 1472. (The *paschi* were pastures in Maremma, which gave the bank its basic income.) Although interest is now acceptable in most societies, it remains prohibited in Islam. Currently orthodox Muslim businessmen are unable to borrow money – arrangements have to be made for someone to invest in their activity and share in their profits rather than be paid interest.

Pound considered that usury was the source of all the ills in the modern world. In his *Usura* canto he claims that all the great art of the early Renaissance was created by patrons who built what they wanted and commissioned artists to make beautiful things, all without borrowing money. Pound’s basic claim is that a dwelling built on borrowed money would never be beautifully decorated because it could be at any time reclaimed by the bank. This is particularly true of frescoes which are an integral part of the building. Usury thus prevents the creation of paradise on a church wall.

There are two main arguments against Pound’s vilification of usury. One is that art has survived and has remained creative in our present world, where loans and interest determine the making and the spending of money. Another is that the patrons of Renaissance art were for the most part either Church magnates, who lived off tithes extorted from the poor, or warlords who conquered and exploited the lands they governed. Ludovico Gonzaga was initially a *condottiero* – a hired soldier out for plunder. He commissioned Andrea Mantegna to decorate his palace in Mantua from 1466-1474.

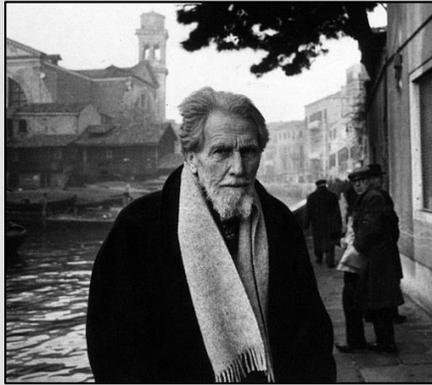
The poem mentions many of the great artists of the early Renaissance: Pietro Lombardo, Duccio di Buoninsegna, Piero della Francesca, Giovanni Bellini, Sandro Botticelli, who painted *La Calunnia* (slander), Fra Angelico (illustrated in the slide), Ambrogio de Predis, and Hans Memling. He also mentions the churches of St Trophime in Arles and of Saint Hilaire in Poitiers.

“Adamo me fecit” (Adam made me) refers to a signed column in the Church of San Zeno in Verona. This is an early example of an artist signing his work.

Pound’s 1958 recital of the poem is venomous. He attributes to *Usura* the loss of great art, and the debauching of Eleusis, the site where the great mysteries of Ancient Greece were celebrated, the place where divine inspiration came from. The poem is basically an overblown invective against money, the root of all evil.

And Pound believed that money-lending Jews were the main source of this evil. During the war he supported the fascist government of Mussolini. He made radio-broadcasts railing against the Jews, and inveighing against the Allied governments who had been suborned to the Jewish cause.

Pound was transferred back to Washington in November, 1945, where he was arraigned on charges of treason. Many of his colleagues spoke out in his defense. He was ultimately considered unfit for trial and confined to St. Elizabeth's Psychiatric Hospital. The *Pisan Cantos* were published in 1946 and Pound was awarded the first Bollingen Poetry Prize. In 1958 the original indictment was dismissed and Pound was free. He returned to Italy, where he died in 1972.



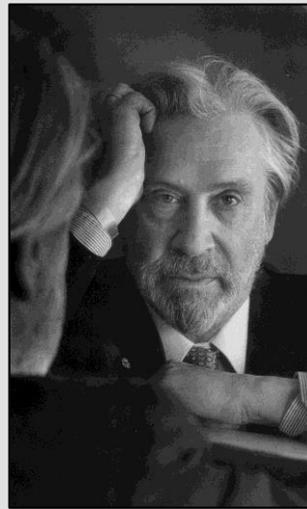
Ezra Pound in Venice
Walter Mori, 1963

The world did not know what to do with Ezra Pound. Should he have been executed for treason? Was he mad or just an evil anti-Semite? Can we consider his poems beautiful even though his actions were execrable?

Anthony Hecht (1923-2004)

Hecht was born to a prosperous New York family with Jewish-German roots. He was drafted into the US army in 1943, and saw combat during the invasion of Europe. He participated in the liberation of Flossenburg, one of the camps associated with Buchenwald. After the war he studied literature at Kenyon College, becoming a professor of poetry at the University of Rochester and later Georgetown University. His poetry was elegant, erudite and passionate.

Photograph by
Michael Germana, 1990



The next poet we shall consider wrote powerfully about the evils that were unleashed by war and by anti-Semitism.

Janusz Korczak and the Children

Korczak (1878-1942) was the Polish-Jewish pediatrician, author and educator who ran the Jewish orphanage in the Warsaw ghetto. In August, 1942, German soldiers took the 196 children (ranging in age from 2 to 13 years) from the orphanage and transported them to their death in Treblinka. Korczak refused the Nazi offer of sanctuary on the “Aryan side,” and stayed with the children.



Yad Vashem Korczak Memorial

The first poem *The Book of Yolek* concerns one of the children of the Jewish orphanage in Warsaw. These children were all murdered in Treblinka. The title refers to the story of Yolek in the same way that one mentions the books of the Bible – the Book of Job, the Book of Psalms. There is a lesson to be learned.

The epigraph to the poem is a quotation from Luther’s translation of the Bible – “We have a law and by our law he ought to die.” (John 19:7 in the KJV). This is what the Jewish priests said of Jesus who called himself the Son of God. This quotation has many levels. It is one of the reasons for the virulent hatred of Jews – that their priests had urged the death of Christ. It also states that human laws do sometimes over-reach themselves. Just because it is the law does not make it right. The poem argues that the law must not, like the racial laws of Nazi Germany, contravene what is just. In religious terms, human law must obey divine law. The problem is that we may not fully understand divine law.



Illustration in a 14th Century Songbook

Arnaut Daniel

Daniel was a Provençal troubadour poet (about 1170-1220) who wrote in *La Langue d’Oc* (language that uses “oc” for “yes”). He invented the *sestina*, and was called *il miglior fabbro* (the better craftsman) by Dante (an epithet also used by T.S. Eliot for Ezra Pound in the dedication of *The Waste Land*). During the end of his life, he witnessed the Albigensian Crusade against the Cathar heretics in southern France. Many of his poems were translated by Ezra Pound.

Hecht’s poem uses the sestina form invented by Arnaut Daniel. The form was only occasionally used in English until the late 19th Century when poets became more adventurous. Many poets of the 20th Century have tried their hand at the form. Its strict rules serve as a challenge to the poet and give the poem strength and seriousness.

The Book of Yolek The dowsed coals fume and hiss after your **meal**
 Of grilled brook trout, and you saunter off for a **walk**
 Down the fern trail. It doesn't matter where **to**,
 Just so you're weeks and worlds away from **home**,
 And among midsummer hills have set up **camp**
 In the deep bronze glories of declining **day**.

meal		day	to (1942)	camp	home	walk
walk		meal	day	to	camp	home
to		camp	home	walk	meal	day
home		walk	meal	day	to (tattoo)	camp
camp		home	walk	meal	day	to (too)
day		to	camp	home	walk	meal

Prepare to receive him in your **home** some **day**.
 Though they killed him in the **camp** they sent him **to**,
 He will **walk** in as you're sitting down to a **meal**.

The basic rules of the sestina are:

- six stanzas of six lines each followed by an envoi of three lines.
- the words at the end of each line are paired across the six stanzas
- the first stanza sets the end-words that will be used in later stanzas
- after the first stanza, the end-words of the first and second lines of one stanza are the same as those of the sixth and first line of the preceding stanza, the third and fourth lines the same as the fifth and second, and the fifth and sixth the same as the fourth and third.
- the envoi must use all the different end-words

The rules are more easily diagrammed than stated. It is perhaps also true that justice is more easily intuited than written down in laws.

Hecht’s poem begins with a description of a summer campsite. The poem is written in the second-person – it directly involves you; it is your campsite. We all have probably had an experience of summer camping.

The second stanza is a memory of a camp during childhood and a frightening experience. And then the story of Yolek comes to mind – Yolek who went to a very different “camp.” And never again can you enjoy camping, or any other activity, without Yolek coming to mind.

The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was an 18th-Century intellectual cultural movement that promoted reason and science over the tradition and superstition. The philosopher Immanuel Kant proposed the motto of the age by quoting the Roman poet Horace *Sapere aude!* (Dare to know!). Kant also proposed that morality derives from ourselves rather than from the Church. One of the major figures of the Enlightenment was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1842), poet, novelist, playwright and scientist, who lived much of his life in Weimar. On his deathbed, his last words were *Mehr licht!* (More Light!)



Time Unveiling Truth
Gianbattista Tiepolo, 1750

Hecht's next poem is a sermon of the Enlightenment and how easy it is to lose sight of its principles. The title of the poem quotes from Goethe's last words – "More light!" The poem is dedicated to Heinrich Blücher, a German philosopher who fled Nazi Germany and was a professor at Bard College, and his wife Hannah Arendt, the German-Jewish writer who famously wrote about the "banality of evil" in her book on the trial of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963). Some people have criticized the Enlightenment for enshrining reason in the place of revelation and taking away the moral primacy of the Church. This does not recognize that that the Enlightenment also promoted a healthy skepticism about reason – one that is lost when people blindly follow the lies of charismatic leaders.



The Oxford Martyrs

The Anglican Bishops, Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, were convicted of heresy and burned at the stake in 1555 during Queen Mary's counter-reformation. As the fire began, Latimer is reported as saying

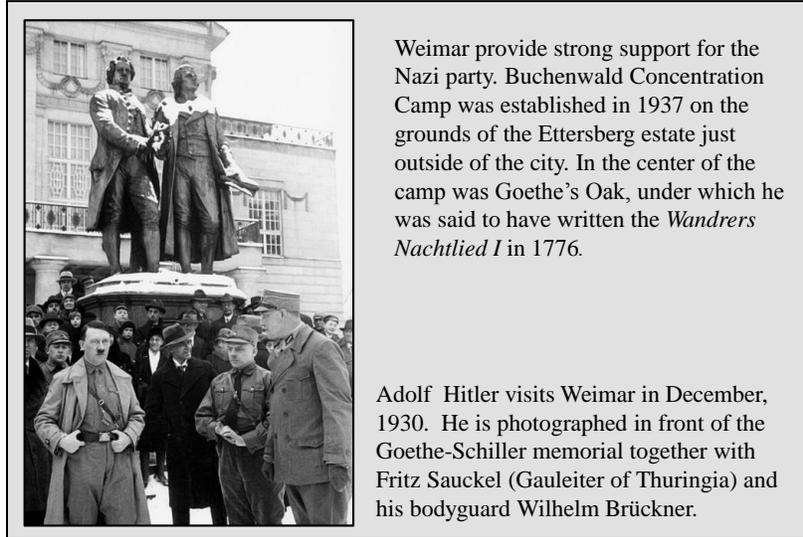
"Be of good cheer, Master Ridley, and play the man, for we shall this day light such a candle in England as I trust by God's grace shall never be put out."

Martyrs' Memorial
Oxford



The poem begins with Oxford martyrs – the Protestant bishops burnt at the stake during the Counter-Reformation in England. The memorial in Oxford is close to but not at the exact site of the burnings, indicated by a simple cobble marker in the street.

Religious violence is perhaps the most frightening of all since it claims to be the will of God, which cannot be addressed by human reason.



Weimar provide strong support for the Nazi party. Buchenwald Concentration Camp was established in 1937 on the grounds of the Ettersberg estate just outside of the city. In the center of the camp was Goethe's Oak, under which he was said to have written the *Wandrer's Nachtlied I* in 1776.

Adolf Hitler visits Weimar in December, 1930. He is photographed in front of the Goethe-Schiller memorial together with Fritz Sauckel (Gauleiter of Thuringia) and his bodyguard Wilhelm Brückner.

The poem continues with a story of an atrocity committed at the Buchenwald Concentration Camp. The horror is compounded by the fact that Buchenwald was built on a site made famous by Goethe – that darkness descended in a place where once the Enlightenment had reigned.

Goethe lived much of his later life in Weimar. A monument to Goethe and Schiller stands outside the city's theatre. Weimar was the city where the elected assembly of the German Republic (called the Weimar Republic) first met after World War I. It also became a Nazi stronghold.

Wandrer's Nachtlied I

Der du von dem Himmel bist,
 Alles Leid und Schmerzen stillest,
 Den, der doppelt elend ist,
 Doppelt mit Erquickung füllest;
 Ach, ich bin des Treibens müde!
 Was soll all der Schmerz und Lust?
 Süßer Friede,
 Komm, ach komm in meine Brust!

Thou that from the heavens art,
 Every pain and sorrow stillest,
 And the doubly wretched heart
 Doubly with refreshment fillest,
 I am weary with contending!
 Why this pain and desire?
 Peace descending
 Come ah, come into my breast!



No prayers or incense rose up in those hours
Which grew to be years, and every day came mute
Ghosts from the ovens, sifting through crisp air,
And settled upon his eyes in a black soot.

The German Concentration Camps often had mottoes that mocked those that they imprisoned: *Arbeit macht frei* (Work sets you free) at Auschwitz and *Jedem das Seine* (To each his own) at Buchenwald.

**Fear and Trembling,
Søren Kierkegaard, 1843**

... when Isaac again saw Abraham's face it was changed, his glance was wild, his form was horror. He seized Isaac by the throat, threw him to the ground, and said, "Stupid boy, dost thou then suppose that I am thy father? I am an idolater. Dost thou suppose that this is God's bidding? No, it is my desire." Then Isaac trembled and cried out in his terror, "O God in heaven, have compassion upon me. God of Abraham, have compassion upon me. If I have no father upon earth, be Thou my father!" But Abraham in a low voice said to himself, "O Lord in heaven, I thank Thee. After all it is better for him to believe that I am a monster, rather than that he should lose faith in Thee."



The next of Hecht's poems is a long meditation on the story of Abraham and Isaac. This is one of the great foundational narratives of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It assesses how much man can love God by how much he is willing to sacrifice for that love. The true terror of the story was explored by Kierkegaard in the beginning of *Fear and Trembling* wherein he imagines various versions of the story. In the one quoted, Abraham pretends to Isaac that the sacrifice is his own desire rather than God's bidding, thus ensuring Isaac's faith in God.

The story of Abraham and Isaac is a recurrent subject in the poetry of the 20th Century. We have already considered the poem by Wilfred Owen, *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*.

Sacrifice

Peace be to us both, to father
 Abraham,
 To me, elected the shorn stunned
 lamb of God—
 We were sentenced, and reprieved
 by the same Voice—
 And to all our seed, by this terror
 sanctified,
 To be numbered even as the stars
 at the small price
 Of an old scapegoated and
 thicket-baffled ram.



Abraham and Isaac, Rembrandt, 1635

Hecht first presents the story from the point of view of Abraham. This is followed by Isaac's version. Then Hecht retells a story from World War II. A German soldier, fleeing the advancing Allied troops, threatens to shoot the son of a farmer in the North of France unless he divulge where he has hidden his bicycle. The farmer refuses, claiming that there is no bicycle. The son is spared, but afterwards the family lives together "in agonized, unviolated silence." Given the story of Abraham and Isaac this perhaps characterizes the relationship between God and Man.

Alliterative Verse

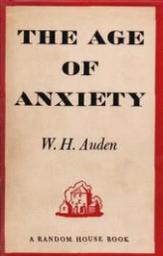
Saxon and Old English verse used alliteration rather than rhyme as its major mnemonic device:

- (i) Each line was composed of two halves (*hemistichs*) separated by a pause (*caesura*). Each hemistich has two stressed syllables.
- (ii) Alliteration occurs between the first stressed syllable in each hemistich. The second stressed syllable in the first hemistich often alliterates as well, but the second stressed syllable in the second hemistich does not.

W. H. Auden uses alliterative verse in his long poem *The Age of Anxiety*. This example repeats the news headlines on the radio

Now the **n**ews. **N**ight raids on
Five cities. **F**ires started.
Pressure **a**pplied by **p**incer movement
 In **t**hreatening **t**hrust. **T**hird Division
 En**l**arges beachhead. **L**ucky charm
Saves **s**niper. **S**abotage hinted

We shall next consider an excerpt from Auden's *The Age of Anxiety*. This is Auden's longest work. Its title has become a byword for modern times, but the poem is not popular. Much of the poem is written according to the rules of Old-English alliterative verse. This form, based on German, Norse and Saxon poetry, was used in the famous epic poem *Beowulf*, which describes how its eponymous hero defeated the monster Grendel. Although alliteration is a common technique in all English poetry, the formal rules of the Old-English form were not used again until the late 19th century. The 20th Century brought a revival of the form both in translations of Old English poems (e. g. Ezra Pound's *The Seafarer*, 1911) and in new poems (e. g. W.H. Auden's *The Wanderer*, 1930). Alliteration is common the headlines of the news, and Auden's poem uses this when describing a radio broadcast near the beginning of the poem

<p>The Age of Anxiety</p>	<p>His pure I Must give account of and greet his Me, That field of force where he feels he thinks, His past present, presupposing death, Must ask what he is in order to be And make meaning by omission and stress, Avid of elseness. All that exists Matters to man; he minds what happens And feels he is at fault, a fallen soul With power to place, to explain every What in his world but why he is neither God nor good, this guilt his insoluble Final fact, infusing his private Nexus of needs, his noted aims With incomprehensible comprehensive dread At not being what he knows that before This world was he was willed to become.</p>
	
<p>Leonard Bernstein Symphony 2 The Age of Anxiety.</p>	

The Age of Anxiety was described by Auden as a “Baroque Eclogue.” An eclogue (“selection”) usually means a dramatic poem in which shepherds or other country folk discuss the state of the world. Virgil wrote his eclogues in 38 BCE. Many modern poets have written eclogues (e.g. Louis MacNeice and Seamus Heaney). Auden's book length poem is by far the longest. Why he called it “baroque” is not clear – perhaps this is related to the poem's forcefulness or exuberance, both characteristics of baroque art and music.

The poem begins on All Souls Night (Halloween) in a bar in New York during World War II. There are four characters: Quant, a “tired old widower who would never be more than a clerk in a shipping office near the Battery;” Malin, a Medical Intelligence Officer in the Canadian Air Force; Rosetta, a buyer for a big department-store; and Emble, a handsome young naval recruit. We begin with their thoughts. As the radio gives concludes the news they begin to talk to each other. Their conversation then begins to discuss the seven ages of man – from infancy to senility. They drink a lot, and imagine different aspects of life. They leave the bar and stagger over to Rosetta's apartment. After more drinking, the older men leave, and the young man passes out on Rosetta's bed.

The excerpt is from Malin's speech about the nature of man at the end of the prologue – it is the theme on which the conversation on the seven ages of man is based. In reply to Malin's speech, Quant says "Set him to song, the surly old dodger" Emble adds "Relate his lies to his longing for truth" and Rosetta concludes "Question his crimes till his clues confess"

Like Freud, Auden considered the self to have different parts. The ego (his pure I) must somehow make sense of the emotions and desires of the id (Me). In addition Auden feels a general sense of original sin. Man is able to understand God and good but fails to live up to them. He is filled with anxiety

At not being what he knows that before
This world was he was willed to become

Bernstein based his 2nd Symphony (1949, revised 1965) on Auden's poem. A part of the second movement seems to me to portray Malin's speech. The pianist is Lukas Foss.



The final poem of this session is by the same poet that opened the session – Keith Douglas. He asks to be remembered when he dies, but he asks that the memory be simplified – the details do not matter, all that is important is whether he was

substance or nothing: of the world
deserving mention or charitable oblivion

Douglas' poem was written while he was in training before he had experienced battle.

The rhyme scheme is quite formal. The first and last stanzas are rhyming couplets with an exact rhyme – they give a sense of finality to the idea of death. The other stanzas have three lines. These are set up in pairs with each of the lines of one pair rhyming with the other: reality and its image, history and its memory.

The illustration shows what is perhaps the greatest of war memorials, erected to the US soldiers who died on Omaha Beach on D-Day (June 6, 1944). The stainless steel sculpture by Anilore Banon is in three parts:

The Wings of Hope: So that the spirit which carried these men on 6th June 1944, continues to inspire us, reminding us that together it is always possible to change the future.

Rise of Freedom: So that the example of those who rose up against barbarity, helps us remain standing strong against all forms on inhumanity.

The Wings of Fraternity: So that the surge of brotherhood always reminds of our responsibility towards others as well as ourselves. On 6th June 1944, these men were more than soldiers, they were our brothers.

(description by the sculptor)



What thou lov'st well shall not be reft from thee. The illustration is a painting by Giorgio Morandi from Bologna. The play of light on simple objects was what he loved best. He continued to paint his mystical still lifes until he died in 1964. All that exists matters to man. Simplify me when I'm dead.