

ass to be meaningful, forget it; I'd rather be monotonous"). More interestingly perhaps, he—like two of the others—felt very uneasy about the paternalistic, even repressively tolerant, atmosphere in the plant:

"Somehow I have the feeling, and I don't like the feeling, 'you're being had'. . . they make it easy for you to swallow a hard pill. In the States, even though it's dirty and even though it's noisy, there you don't have to swallow anything. I mean you just come back and say, 'Hey, I don't know where you're coming from; I don't like it; get off my back.'"

He positively valued the Detroit situation of a clear "frontier of control", continuously and sometimes bitterly renegotiated between a traditional, aggressive management and the strong countervailing power of shop-floor unionism—something he felt conspicuously absent at Saab-Scania. As another worker put it:

"Even given all these situations where workers have participation in what's going on on the floor, it's still a situation of benevolence by the corporation . . . something that is done for

you . . . we are taking care of your problems, which tends to demean you as a man."

Well-intentioned managers can often be heard complaining about the attitude of their workforce; they appear surprised, even hurt, that workers respond to schemes designed to make work more interesting, or to give them more participation, with lack of enthusiasm or even hostility, and with a reaffirmation of instrumentalism. But do workers like Rodriguez really belong to the extrinsic-instrumental camp? Their hard-headed attitude to pay, working conditions, and the level of effort required of them suggests that they do. Yet many of their comments suggest that to label them—to dismiss them—as merely instrumental would be to do scant justice to a complex, ambiguous reality, and would miss the yearning for independence and control which they express. Workers should be given more credit for their canny recognition of the realities of their situation—"participation" and job enrichment do not add up to meaningful control—and for viewing with caution changes which remove genuine, albeit limited and essentially defensive, forms of control painfully won from management over many years.

Up & Down the City Road

Deciding How People Live—By DUNCAN MITCHELL

THE POST-NATIONALISTIC AGE of Europe has emphasised local patriotism at precisely the time when the forces corroding regional differences have been strongest. State-run radio and television and a high degree of geographical mobility, especially of school-teachers, have reduced what in earlier times were stark differences in accent and pronunciation: BBC English may not have been imitated but it has rubbed off the sharp edges of regional accents and standardised vocabularies. The general growth of uniformity and standardisation especially of consumer goods has reduced differences in dress and behaviour. Do not our high streets look remarkably like one another as we pass by M and S, Liptons, Tesco and Woolworths?

Yet despite this process there are growing signs of a deliberate emphasis on local and regional differences: Scottish and Welsh nationalism are obvious examples, Cornish self-consciousness less so. More particularly there is pride in belonging to a particular city or district. Liverpool since World War II has acquired distinctiveness, largely

associated with football and entertainment; Newcastle's geordies aggressively adhere to a sub-culture almost unique of its kind. The same is true in Europe as a whole although the roots of local patriotism are often deeper and of more fundamental import. Italians, while recognising both their nationality and membership of the European Community, retain a powerful sense of being say Milanese or Bolognese. At the small-town level the commune may display a local patriotism as intense as it is fascinating—annually the people of Gubbio meet the citizens of San Sepulcro to compete in full medieval splendour at crossbow shooting—or even within a city as when in September the four quarters of Arezzo, again in the costume of the *quattrocento*, compete in the *Giost*. To some extent the same may be noticed in other European towns and cities where such local patriotism goes further than say the resentment of a Toulousain of Paris and the centralisation of power.

When considering our own urban life, town planning, provision of housing and general development we do well to heed local patriotism, and for this reason alone John Ardagh's *A Tale of Five Cities*¹ is timely. His discussion of life in provincial Europe

¹ *A Tale of Five Cities*. By JOHN ARDAGH. Secker & Warburg. £8.95.

today provides a journalist's description of Stuttgart, Bologna, Newcastle, Toulouse and Ljubljana. Its judgments of necessity are very subjective but his experienced eye has identified significant differences and at different levels of urban life: politico-administrative as well as social and cultural. For him life in Ljubljana is clearly more agreeable than life in Newcastle, but he admires the bourgeois orderliness of Stuttgart with its work-ethic and reliability while also enjoying the elegance of Bologna's citizens and the chattiness of the Toulousains.

The more one considers his descriptions the more it is clear that most people, outside the great metropolitan capitals, do think of themselves as belonging to a city or town—and size does not appear to have much to do with it. Some cities are particularly conscious of themselves in opposition; despite its greater size Plymouth is resentful of Exeter, of its county capital status and its University. Others have a self-identity because of a dominant industry or special institutions; Bradford living on wool and closing down for Wakes week is a case in point. The popularity of local history since the war may be another indicator of this, as well as the growth of civic societies and heritage schemes.

Since so much urban development is controlled centrally, although to differing degrees in various European countries, the importance of local interests, both economic and cultural, and of local aspirations and capabilities is frequently underestimated. If it is true that the relative independence of Newcastle and its environment, with built-in Labour Party dominance, could with advantage be encouraged, it is nevertheless the case that different kinds of administrative machinery would be required, and not only adequate financial provision for the city but also suitable remuneration for elected leaders, if corruption is to be avoided. In Toulouse the rivalry between *préfecture* and *mairie* can be inhibiting to satisfactory development, especially when administrative ability is strong in the one and weak in the other; in such an eventuality local patriotism may exacerbate rivalry to the city's detriment. When a good relationship obtains much benefit can accrue quickly.

COMPARISON OF European cities may be neither easy nor indeed useful beyond a point but it can provide a perspective for viewing our own problems. Thus if industrialisation took place later in France than in Britain so also did its urbanisation, and its problems are only sometimes similar to ours. By and large, apart from the great

metropolitan cities of Paris, Marseille and Lyons, the French have not had to face the kind of inner city problems that beset us here, while the RAF provided many German cities with a *tabula rasa*. Old housing stock, antiquated industries, and useless dockside organisation unrelated to modern industrial and commercial enterprise provide a backcloth to the dramatic changes needed for regeneration.

Serious as the situation is, British planners have much to be proud of. American students are astonished when they learn the story of Britain's New Towns, whose success is largely unsung, and the successful attempts to create and maintain Green Belts also arouse admiration. Yet as David McKay and Andrew Cox point out in *The Politics of Urban Change*,² disillusion with the effects of more than a generation of State intervention in housing, land-use and other aspects of urban life has become more and more apparent. Their analysis of this discontent leads them to argue not that there is too much government intervention, but rather that policies have often been insensitively developed, misguided, misdirected. Land-use policies have led to an inner-city decay contrasting unfavourably with suburban development on the one hand and New Town centres on the other. Land value policies have not checked the ridiculously high valuations of central sites. Trans-

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² *The Politics of Urban Change*. By DAVID H. MCKAY and ANDREW W. COX. Croom Helm, £11.50, paper £5.50.

port policies have not reduced traffic congestion or checked the damage heavy vehicles do to buildings. Local interests and feelings about the kind of urban milieu held to be desirable are largely ignored.

SOME INDICATION of the feeling generated in the UK may be obtained from the more critical and enthusiastic literature being published on environmental pollution, housing problems, and poverty. *Who Needs Housing?*³ is frankly partisan, the strident note of criticism having angry and bitter overtones. Jane and Roy Darke, both university lecturers, assume the Marxist standpoint to be unassailable, and blandly assert not only that capitalism is generally acknowledged to be confronting a crisis but that it is responsible for this country's major housing problem: allocation. This is not argued but stated, although a knowledge of housing on the continent in other capitalist countries might have given rise to some questioning of their assumptions. Why Britain should have a diminishing private rented sector and France and Germany not, and the differences between the problems faced by these three capitalist societies are not touched on. It is sufficient for the Darkes that Marx's dictum about the housing problem (made over a century ago) should form the basis of their discussion. But it leads them to be highly selective. They concentrate on "the underclass of the deprived" but fail to say precisely who they are. It may be argued that they are not restricted to the poor. Not only the disabled may be included but also better-off middle-class people who own an unsuitable property and cannot find an alternative. The lack of flats suitably equipped for the elderly and disabled and suitably sited on level ground within easy access of shops and social amenities—that is to say for preference in the centre of a town, and available for renting or purchase—is becoming critical. This is not so much a result of capitalism as of entrenched attitudes with respect to private house property; indeed, a thoroughgoing capitalist society might be able to make this provision. People cannot purchase or rent what is not available to them.

Enthusiasm and concern are allowed to generate tendentious statements such as: "people in Britain have less control over their own lives than the urban poor in the shanty-towns of Latin America." A moment's thought would remind the authors that Brazil, for instance, where extreme poverty obtains in the hillside dwellings outside Rio de Janeiro, is a

³ *Who Needs Housing?* By JANE DARKE and ROY DARKE. Macmillan, £7.95, paper £2.95.

⁴ *The Crisis of the Inner City*. Edited by MARTIN LONEY and MARK ALLEN. Macmillan, £10, paper £3.95.

capitalist country to a degree that Britain, with its many controls, is not. Moreover, their churlish treatment of housing associations, voluntary enterprises and hence doubtless suspect, fails to indicate either the success of this movement or its great potentialities. The Darke book is almost entirely critical of this movement, pointing to corruption and fraud, the difficulties facing co-ownership societies, and so forth. But the facts are more interesting. Are these authors aware that in many instances young couples are glad to form a co-ownership scheme for five years, building up their savings and then after this minimum period taking a substantial premium payment which provides them with a deposit on a house they may purchase as individuals? And why should there not be a variety of housing and types of tenure and ownership? Surely it is by provision of alternatives that different needs are most likely to be met.

To do justice to the authors, they are aware of more extreme Marxist positions than they hold and are critical of the cynicism reflected by statements that grass-roots action over housing issues is "atheoretical and unrelated to wider objectives in the class struggle", and that "any improvement in working-class conditions . . . is counter-productive in terms of sapping revolutionary fervour." All of which makes it regrettable that they do not see how existing institutions and voluntary effort can be further used to make the provision they desire. This is not to say that the Marxist critique of urban policies should not be taken seriously, as David McKay and Andrew Cox do in *The Politics of Urban Change*.

Martin Loney and Mark Allen, in *The Crisis of the Inner City*,⁴ attempt to put differing views, and they present Conservative, Labour, and Marxist discussions of the problems of the inner city, respectively represented by Peter Walker, formerly Secretary of State for the Environment, Alex Lyon, Labour M.P. for York, and two Marxists, Bob Davis and Judith Green, both researchers in the North-East. This book provides a useful introduction to the subject, discussing the initiative taken by Peter Walker and developed by Peter Shore in tackling the inner city areas.

IN THE IMMEDIATE post-war period, when I was engaged in sociological research into an aspect of Liverpool's problems, the task facing the planners appeared immense. Resources were very limited, the need for action was urgent. Even allowing for these conditions it is disappointing that it has taken so long for basic sociological research findings to percolate through to inform planning policies; much of the work done in the 1950s is only now beginning to bear fruit. The uprooting of inner city populations, often selectively, and their

resettlement on distant housing estates, often of poor quality and devoid of the most elementary social amenities, merely transferred some problems, at the same time exacerbating them and creating new ones. Much of the sharp rise in delinquency rates among juveniles in the 1960s may be laid at the door of local authorities insensitive to environmental influences.

The view that new housing would remove all troubles was a very one-sided attitude. The modern criminologist⁵ focuses less on bad housing than on sub-cultural and environmental factors, and the kinds of juvenile sub-cultures and organisations that developed on many of these large impersonal housing estates with high densities of teenagers are a well-known feature of the decade following their construction. The subsequent development of high-rise accommodation in central areas of cities proved to be no adequate alternative and has produced its own problems. It is to the credit of the Labour Government of 1974 that a better-considered policy was devised, the temptation to go for new housing starts resisted, and local authorities encouraged to provide new housing of lasting worth and better design. But of course such a policy takes time to implement. On the other hand the granting of greater security of tenure to occupants of furnished accommodation was one factor in hastening the demise of the private landlord and so reducing the quantity of housing to let in the private sector. It is difficult to be rid of ideological elements in policy-making, and consequently a comprehensive and integrated policy is still awaited.

MEANWHILE, NEW FACTORS had to be considered, for the problems of the inner city areas were compounded as fresh waves of immigrants arrived. Between 1951 and 1956 the non-white population of Britain grew from 75,000 to over 600,000, the vast majority settling in the inner city areas and mostly in poor and deteriorating housing.

If much of the response to this phenomenon was reflected in the demand for more immigration controls, less concern was expressed for the economic and social welfare of these families. Some educational provision was made, and problems arising from language difficulties led to provision of compensatory education, but urban programmes to cope with housing got off to a fitful start. Areas of special treatment were designated, thus limiting the commitment of the central government, but the whole programme was vague and indeed misguided in that major factors contributing to inner city blight were largely ignored. Chief among the reasons for this was ignorance of local differences

⁵ *Social Sources of Delinquency*. By RUTH R. KORNHAUSER. University of Chicago Press, £11.20, \$16.00.

on the part of central government.

The needs of one city were not necessarily the same as another's, and the reasons for decline differed. Liverpool's problems stemmed from a declining mercantile and trans-Atlantic passenger trade and the closing of the exchanges, to say nothing of the diminishing demand for ship-building; Coventry's problems were housing and the provision of factories dependent on electrical power and semi-skilled labour. As Liverpool declined Southampton developed, the growth of the motor industry advanced the fortunes of Luton and Oxford, but the great northern ports on both coasts suffered progressively. The rapidly shifting patterns of industrial investment were changing the economic basis of urban life.

A general inattention to the location of industry was noticeable and if one ministry possessed some ideas on the subject they hardly penetrated the Home Office, which emerged strangely enough as the department responsible for implementing Harold Wilson's Urban Programme of positive discrimination. The Community Development Project which resulted was based on the assumption that those living in areas of multiple deprivation could be "lifted out" of their poverty by means of "self-help" and by measures specifically discriminatory in their interests. It is not without irony that this programme was initiated by the

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party favouring planning, for it clearly followed as an expedient, prompted by the unforeseen but rising tide of criticism (of which one element was Enoch Powell's famous speech of April 1968, about the Tiber foaming with blood, warning the country of the dangers of continued immigration). It did not arise from a well-thought-out policy based on research into the inter-dependencies of urban problems; a possibility that presents itself again today but only after great delay and considerable disaster.

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT consisted of teams working with the local authorities. There were twelve in all, funded 75% by the Home Office and 25% by the local authority; research aspects of each scheme being paid for wholly by Government and guided by the Centre for Environmental Studies. The groups were not representative of local political party interests, nor for that matter of non-party interests. They were intended to make clear the needs of citizens and to bring such needs to the attention of local government, for it was intended that central government finance should be used in response to genuine local need.

The result should have been expected. CDP

organisation soon found itself at loggerheads with local government. The designated areas of deprivation appeared to members of the teams as often no more deprived than surrounding areas; the needs of people demanded a broader strategy; the nature of deprivation was perceived quite rightly to be mainly connected with industrial and commercial investment, and all this led to teams being highly critical of the manner in which local authorities allocated resources. Furthermore, the resistance offered by local government proved to be too frustrating. Reports by the teams were therefore couched in strong terms, critical in fundamental ways of both political policies and administrative procedures as Paul Lawless describes in his *Urban Deprivation and Government Initiative*,⁶ for as he puts it "no British urban experiment has come up with so many radical and politically unacceptable proposals." Yet paradoxically this initiative has had far-reaching influences on attitudes towards the causes and amelioration of urban deprivation.

The reports, later studied with care by Peter Walker and his officials, bring out the local differences. In 1970 the first four schemes—located in Coventry, Glyncoffwg (West Glamorgan), Liverpool, and London's Southwark—showed the differential effects of the growing depression. Later, the remaining eight schemes were set under way in Batley, Canning Town in Newham, Cleator Moor in Cumbria, Newcastle, Oldham, Paisley, Saltley (Birmingham) and Tynemouth. Populations varied greatly, some being under 10,000 and others over 40,000. Cleator Moor displayed the effects of a declining iron-ore mining industry in a semi-rural area, while the Vauxhall district of Liverpool was experiencing residential and road developments against a background of reduced dockside work.

The teams were engaged in active research designed both to promote communication between social services and to stimulate self-help among the inhabitants, but the programme was conceived too much in terms of social welfare and social work. What escaped the attention of the teams' mentors in the Home Office was that industrial shrinkage in both primary and secondary industries, which had not been replaced, was the prime cause of urban deprivation, resulting as it had in large numbers of poor, unemployed, and largely unskilled people. This is Britain's main national problem—changes in the structure of industry are resisted in the long term by employers and investment agencies, and in the short term by the local labour force. The current steel crisis is a case in point—highlighting the problem as well as replicating it.

The kind of solution required must necessarily entail central government intervention in collaboration with labour organisations and local authorities.

⁶ *Urban Deprivation and Government Initiative*. By PAUL LAWLESS. Faber and Faber, £8.95.

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Probably this can only be effectively accomplished on a regional basis, but quite clearly new methods, and above all new attitudes are required. The French system (the departmental *préfet* representing central government and its financing potentiality, and the local *maire* with a veto) is one possible arrangement designed to this end, but there are others.

HOW FAR DO THE PLANNERS determine the way we live in our towns and cities? Many people hold that the role of the planner is purely regulatory with respect to location, appearance and use of land and buildings; an impartial service, politically neutral. Perhaps this is a view that appeals to professional planners, but with respect to the inner city areas with their depressed and deprived communities this may no longer be possible; major decisions with far-reaching political implications will have to be made.

Today we have two broad approaches to the problem of inner city areas. The first argues that resources should not be wasted on declining areas, but invested where the best returns can be expected; labour will then be encouraged to move where it can be rewarded. However, the evidence points to great immobilities of labour precisely in these traditional working-class areas. The second argues for direct intervention to establish prosperous economies within the inner city areas, either attracting new investment by making infrastructure improvements, or else improving social amenities for the inhabitants with housing, re-training programmes and welfare facilities. This, however, is expensive and the results uncertain in relation to the goals.

Robin Thompson and Andrew Thornley ably discuss this in *The Crisis of the Inner City*. Can the planner act as a catalyst within the context of more local initiative? Given special powers local authorities could take out shares in local firms, support workers' co-operatives, or even promote municipal enterprises as has already happened in Greater Manchester. Such local economic strategy would, they maintain, advance economic stability in inner city areas, providing the prime condition for other successful initiatives. We may well ask if suitable administrators, possessing business acumen, can be found in local government for such a task, although they might be recruited on a consultancy basis to work in conjunction with planners. The authors recognise the limited experience of such pioneering work but do not offer a solution.

MCKAY AND COX are more sure that the task requires considerable national intervention, and find the solution in a revitalisation of political

parties. They advance some interesting ideas about past failures to come to grips with the problem. In the three spheres of land-use planning, transport, and inner city policies, party politics and ideology have played little part in shaping urban policy. The explanations for this, they say, are various. Firstly, there are spheres of "valence issues", those issues on which everyone is agreed. They do not arouse the fierce and conflicting feelings of race relations or nationalisation. Secondly, there are spheres where political parties believe the technicalities involved are too great to permit adequate discussion, and hence officials tend to determine policy. But they add that "some spheres of urban policy have been profoundly influenced by party ideology, whilst others have not." Housing has certainly been "a political football", but land-use planning, urban transport, and inner city policies are relative newcomers on the political scene; none of them appeared in party manifestos until after the last War. They appear technical but are fundamental with respect to resource allocation and should be a major item in political thinking.

As it is, the field is left open to pressure groups protesting about this and that. In this respect middle-class protest movements are more successful than those by poorer folk, even when national organisations like Shelter and the Child Poverty Action Group have intervened. Moreover, protest

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movements have been most successful where government has failed to formulate policies in terms of welfare and other criteria of distribution, which is the case in these three spheres. Perhaps, say McKay and Cox, protest movements flourish because political parties fail to respond to the demands and needs of citizens by offering realistic alternatives.

To be fair, it should be remembered that in June 1977 the Labour Government issued a White Paper entitled *Policy for the Inner Cities* (Cmnd 6845) which did recognise that semi-skilled and unskilled men are over-represented in Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow, that populations have declined there in the previous decade as elsewhere, and that this decline was accompanied not only by physical decay but also by social distress. The White Paper argued for a housing policy to be geared to employment opportunity and mobility, rate support grants to be adjusted to take account of inner city needs, and so forth. It also suggested increasing the powers of local government. So there are not only signs of an integrated programme but an acknowledgment of the importance of the local authority bearing major responsibility for it. Provided local political parties are active in thinking clearly about the issues and willing to accept expert advice from outside government, such a move could be hopeful.

In their conclusions about a national urban policy, McKay and Cox advance the view that there are two broad requirements: "the integration of a wide range of domestic policies and careful evaluated purposeful policy-making." This implies, they say, acceptance of the need for a planned society, and planning, they add, is not equivalent to socialism. Indeed the contrary, for many would argue that "corporatism" puts economic growth first and other priorities (e.g. "equality") second. Past experience is not encouraging, for whenever political parties have been active in urban policy they have been "inflexible and unresponsive, clinging to outmoded ideological precepts which have little relevance to the stated purposes of policies." It

is recognition of this which prompts them to talk about the need to revitalise the party role. The present lack of clear support for the political parties in the UK may well spring from being out of touch with what people want and from their appeal to ideological positions which may have had some relevance to social structures in the past, but have little relevance today. They point to recent tax revolts in Denmark and California as indicators of the importance of both regional interests and middle-class populism. In short we need more and better political education to improve the quality of life in our cities and towns.

THE LITERATURE ON living in cities has greatly increased. There is a lot of thought as well as a lot of ill-digested ideas reflected in it. Sociology, social administration, social work, economic and physical planning as well as architecture have made contributions to it. The time has come for well-thought-out political policies to be formulated. The 1980s will probably decide the issues but if some sense of urgency is not apparent, the increasing discomfort, even distress, may give rise to that *ressentiment* which can give tacit support to extremism like that of the Red Brigades and their fascist counterparts in Italy, for these flourish in large cities where a local sense of community is breaking down and deep divisions can be exploited, as in Milan and Turin.

Writing about Newcastle, John Ardagh points out that Tyneside like the rest of Britain is a beneficiary of North Sea Oil and living standards have been rising there. But will the money from oil be spent on intelligent investment such as renewal of inner city areas? This, he says, is the major question for Britain at the end of the 1970s. He may be right. It is salutary, however, to note the words of an economic planner for that region: "It's a race against time, as many industries are growing daily more obsolete. Up here, we have to run to stand still."

ENCOUNTERS

Auden, at Home & Abroad

By Charles Osborne



WHEN I FIRST encountered Wystan Auden he had not fully developed that extraordinary network of lines which connected up the remotest outposts of his features. I remember thinking that at

moments he looked like Danny Kaye. Looking back now, however, at photographs of Wystan in the fifties, I can see more than a little of Jonathan Miller as well. I already knew many survivors from the English literary scene of the thirties, and now, within the period of a few months, I found myself meeting several characters from the pre-war Berlin which Wystan had known: Herr Issyvoov himself, as well as Jean Ross—Isherwood's "Sally Bowles"—and Gerald Hamilton ("Mr Norris"). Wystan was not only comparatively unlined—he was still in his forties—but also had not yet begun to affect that geriatric shuffle which characterised his last years and into which he grew slowly. The slippers, however, were already in evidence, though not invariably.

I was working for *The London Magazine* which was edited by John Lehmann who had founded it in 1954 (and named it after a literary magazine of the 1820s), and I thought it would be a good idea to interview Wystan at some length (as they say nowadays, "in depth" or, even worse, "in-depth") for the magazine. Wystan was agreeable, but for some reason the interview never got off the ground, and when John sold the magazine to Alan Ross in

CHARLES OSBORNE's personal memoir forms the epilogue to his biography of "W. H. Auden", to be published this spring by Eyre Methuen in London and Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in New York.

1961, and I remained with it as Assistant Editor, I had only the notes of a number of conversations consisting almost entirely of gossip: not even literary gossip, most of it, but operatic. Wystan was going to the opera frequently in Vienna at the time, and spoke with passionate enthusiasm of many of the new young singers he had heard there. He seemed to know a lot about their private lives, which impressed me, but I thought I might surprise him with the news I had recently heard, that a certain soprano was having an affair with a well-known conductor in Vienna. "Don't be silly", Wystan said, "there are two good reasons why that's highly unlikely: one, she's black, and two, she hasn't got a cock."

The interview was never completed: after sessions at the house in Kirchstetten and the apartment in New York (both, I think, in 1962), I decided to abandon it because the copious notes I had made were mostly indecipherable, and also because, unless pressure was being applied by a deadline imposed by a commissioning editor, my natural sloth usually prevented me from completing most projects. One day, I showed Wystan a roneoed copy of *The Gentle Planet*, a collection of poems I had written in the early fifties. There were twenty poems, and he instantly dismissed sixteen of them as being "not properly finished." Three he thought were good, and one, a short poem of three stanzas, he made me rewrite. "The first two lines", he said, "'The poet's vacant / and engaging smile' promise one a poem about a poet's vacant and engaging smile, and then you go traipsing off into a pallid imitation of some minor Georgian." He struck out the rest of the poem, and handed it back to me. "Describe the smile, interpret it, if you like. But just do that, and nothing else. And it hasn't got a title. I like poems to have titles. Call it 'The Smile.' And keep it metrically regular. All those weak endings must go." He jabbed a finger at "betrayal", "shadow" and "reflection." "You can get rid of those for a start." I went away and did what I was told. Next time I saw him, I showed him "The Smile", and he read it through twice. "There you are", he said. "It's perfect now. It's small, but it's perfect. Well, almost. If you change the punctuation in the last stanza, and turn some of those commas into full stops, to get a more *staccato* effect, that would do it." I changed the punctuation:

*The poet's vacant
and engaging smile
is even falser now
than once it was.*