

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. W.S. Merwin, "The End of More Than Just a Book," review of *A Scattering of Salts*, by James Merrill, in *Critical Essays on James Merrill*, ed. Guy Rotella (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1996), 73; J.D. McClatchy, *Twenty Questions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 156; Helen Vendler, "Chronicles of Love and Loss," review of *A Scattering of Salts*, by James Merrill, *New York Review of Books*, May 11, 1995, 46; Stephen Yenser, "Metamorphoses," *Poetry* 166, no. 6 (1995): 333.
2. Keller also considers Wallace Stevens and John Ashbery, Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop, and William Carlos Williams and Robert Creeley. What makes the relationship between Auden and Merrill unusual, Keller argues, is that "instead of an early absorption and imitation followed by increasing divergence from Auden's example, as has been the pattern in the preceding pairs, in Merrill's work the polarized impulses toward continuity and discontinuity are more simultaneously and continuously balanced." *Re-Making It New: Contemporary American Poetry and the Modernist Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 187.
3. Richard R. Bozorth, *Auden's Games of Knowledge: Poetry and the Meanings of Homosexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 3.
4. James Merrill, *Collected Prose*, ed. J.D. McClatchy and Stephen Yenser (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 347. All subsequent citations to this volume are indicated as *Prose* within the text.
5. W.H. Auden, "A Talk with W.H. Auden," interview by Michael André, *Unmuzzled Ox* 1, no. 3 (Summer 1972): 9.
6. Commentators have noticed how closely Merrill approximates the voice of the "real" Auden in *Sandover*, even while he seriously distorts some of his views. Robert Mazzocco writes: "Not a few of the gibes of WHA (Auden), wonderful though they are, reminded me of the kind I'd heard more than once at St. Mark's Place in the Village." "The Right Stuff," in *A Reader's Guide to James Merrill's The Changing Light at Sandover*, ed. Robert Polito (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 216. Lamenting the substandard quality of Auden's posthumous compositions, William Harmon remarks: "It is

- bad when poets do not talk like themselves; it is worse when superhuman spirits talk without intelligence or dignity." "The Metaphors and Metamorphoses of M," *Parnassus: Poetry in Review* 8 (1980): 39. Keller also acknowledges that portions of Merrill's poem contain "criticisms of Auden's work," which she attributes to the younger poet's "unconscious competitive desire to diminish [his predecessor's] achievements" (Keller, *Re-Making It New*, 223).
7. See discussions of Merrill's revisionary treatment of other literary figures in *Sandover* in Robert Polito, "Tradition and an Individual Talent," in *A Reader's Guide to James Merrill's The Changing Light at Sandover*, ed. Polito, 31–63; and Jeff Westover, "Writing on the Sur(face) of the Past: Convivial Visions and Revisions in the Poetry of James Merrill," in *Critical Essays on James Merrill*, ed. Rotella, 215–30. Mark Bauer's *This Composite Voice* (New York: Routledge, 2003) is an extended inquiry into the poetic relationship between Merrill and William Butler Yeats.
 8. James Merrill, *The Changing Light at Sandover* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 8. All other citations of this volume are indicated as *CLS* within the text.
 9. Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 79.
 10. Peter Sacks, "The Divine Translation: Elegiac Aspects of *The Changing Light at Sandover*," in *James Merrill: Essays in Criticism*, ed. David Lehman and Charles Berger (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 159.
 11. W.H. Auden, "Craft Interview with W.H. Auden," in *The Craft of Poetry: Interviews from the New York Quarterly*, ed. William Packard (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 8.
 12. Lawrence Lipking, *The Life of the Poet: Beginning and Ending Poetic Careers* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 139.
 13. James Merrill, interview by Helen Vendler, *James Merrill: Voices from Sandover* (Princeton: Films for the Humanities, 1994), film.
 14. James Merrill to Peter Salus, postcard, November 11, 1971, Berg Collection of English and American Literature, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations. Eventually Merrill did contribute a poem called "Table Talk." For a discussion of the poem, see Aidan Wasley, "Auden and Poetic Inheritance," *Raritan* 19, no. 2 (1999): 152–57.
 15. Sacks, "The Divine Translation," 184. See also Sacks's entry, authored with T.V.F. Brogan and Stephen F. Fogle, on "Elegy" in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*: "Often involving questions of initiation and continuity, inheritance and vocation, the elegy has been a favored form not only for mourning deceased poets but also for formulating ambitions and shaping poetic genealogies. As such it is a genre deeply implicated in the making of literary history." In *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex

- Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 324.
16. Peter Edgerly Firchow, *W.H. Auden: Contexts for Poetry* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002), 69.
 17. James Merrill to Kimon Friar, May 1, 1982, James Ingram Merrill Papers, Washington University Libraries.
 18. Elizabeth Bishop, "A Brief Reminiscence and a Tribute," *Harvard Advocate* 108, nos. 2/3 (1974): 47–48.
 19. Many other young American poets found Auden intimidating. In her diaries Sylvia Plath recalls the "trembling audacity" with which she showed him some of her poems. Bishop herself thought Auden looked "nice" but too "scary" to make her want to approach him. Tennessee Williams once made the mistake of asking the poet to evaluate some of his own attempts at verse: "I forget his precise response, but it was negative and the encounter was rather chilling." *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath, 1950–1962*, ed. Karen V. Kukil (New York: Random House, 2000), 180; Elizabeth Bishop, *One Art: Letters Selected and Edited*, ed. Robert Giroux (New York: Farrar, Straus Giroux, 1994), 177; Tennessee Williams, "W.H. Auden: A Few Reminiscences," *Harvard Advocate* 108, nos. 2/3 (1974): 59.
 20. Throughout his thirteen-year editorship of the series, Auden served as a sort of gatekeeper to the literary world, helping to launch the careers of many promising younger poets, including Adrienne Rich, W.S. Merwin, James Wright, Daniel Hoffman, John Ashbery, and John Hollander.
 21. Thekla Clark, *Wystan and Chester: A Personal Memoir of W.H. Auden and Chester Kallman* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 56.
 22. David Jackson provides a brief account of this visit, and a couple of other encounters with Auden, in "Three Pictures of W.H. Auden," in *The View from Christopher Street*, ed. Michael Denny, Charles Ortleb, and Thomas Steele (London: Chatto & Windus, 1984), 289–90.
 23. James Merrill to Judith Moffett, August 24, 1968, Berg Collection, The New York Public Library. A guest book from the Kirchstetten house, now at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, contains Merrill's note "Thanksgiving for a visit" inscribed under the dates August 15–20, 1968.
 24. James Merrill to Chester Kallman, January 12, 1969, James Merrill Papers, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin.
 25. W.H. Auden to James Merrill, October 8, 1969, Berg Collection, The New York Public Library.
 26. James Merrill to Elizabeth Bishop, November 30, 1972, Elizabeth Bishop Papers, Special Collections, Vassar College Libraries.

27. Keller, *Re-Making It New*, 185. Merrill's letter to David Tacium describes the evening in some detail, making note of Auden's "noisy interruption" (a sudden sound of a buzz-saw) during Mona Van Duyn's reading of "In Memory of W.B. Yeats." James Merrill to David Tacium, October 26, 1983, Berg Collection, The New York Public Library.
28. Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 83.
29. According to Guillory, those can include outright declarations, allusions, echoes, as well as "allegorically laden figures of *prosopopeia*." *Poetic Authority: Spenser, Milton, and Literary History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), x.
30. David Bergman, *Gaiety Transfigured: Gay Self-Representation in American Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 30.
31. Edmund White, *The Burning Library: Essays*, ed. David Bergman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 70.
32. Quoted in Bergman, *Gaiety Transfigured*, 46.
33. T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1960), 4–11.
34. T.S. Eliot, "Reflections on Contemporary Poetry [IV]," *Egoist* 6, no. 3 (July 1919): 39 (Eliot's emphasis).
35. Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 27.
36. See Stephen Guy-Bray's preface to *Loving in Verse: Poetic Influence as Erotic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006): "There is a long tradition among poets of presenting their predecessors and contemporaries as inspiring love as well as poetry. I see these declarations across time and across texts of love as paradigmatic representations of poetic influence; I am interested in how this sort of writing positions the two poets as a male couple and in seeing these declarations of love across time and across texts as a form of loving in verse" (xii). Guy-Bray also suggests that Eliot's "Reflections on Contemporary Poetry" can be seen as "one of the first works in what we now call queer theory" (*Ibid.*, 88).
37. Langdon Hammer, *Hart Crane and Allen Tate: Janus-Faced Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 136. For a more extensive discussion of Eliot's review, see Gregory S. Jay, *T.S. Eliot and the Poetics of Literary History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 73–79.
38. T.S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1934), 15.
39. T.S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), 32–34.
40. Bergman, *Gaiety Transfigured*, 30.

41. *Ibid.*, 37.
42. Bloom laid out his theory in *The Anxiety of Influence*, followed by three other titles published by the end of the decade. Throughout the 1970s, Bloom also maintained epistolary contact with Merrill, on occasion offering the poet his scholarly insights on *Sandover's* ongoing revelations.
43. Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 70; Harold Bloom, *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 3 (Bloom's emphasis).
44. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, 2nd ed., (1973; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 11.
45. *Ibid.*, xxii.
46. Harold Bloom, *The Breaking of the Vessels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 119.
47. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, xxiii (Bloom's emphases).
48. For more on Eliot and Bloom, see Jay, T.S. *Eliot and the Poetics of Literary History*, 68–79; and Guy-Bray, *Loving in Verse*, 87–96.
49. Thomas E. Yingling, *Hart Crane and the Homosexual Text: New Thresholds, New Anatomies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 22.
50. In Christopher Hennessy, *Outside the Lines: Talking with Contemporary Gay Poets* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 87.
51. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 48.
52. *Ibid.*, 50.
53. In the first installment of *No Man's Land*, Gilbert and Gubar propose the term “female affiliation complex” as a default position from which a twentieth-century female writer can situate herself vis-à-vis both parental and maternal tradition: “Unlike ‘influence,’ then, which connotes an influx or pouring-in of external power, and ‘authorship,’ which stands for an originatory primacy, the concept of affiliation carries with it possibilities of both choice and continuity. Choice: one may consciously or not decide with whom to affiliate—align or join—oneself. Continuity: one is thereby linked into a constructed genealogical order which has its own quasi-familial inevitability.” *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, vol. 1: *The War of the Words* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 170, 171.
54. Jeredith Merrin, *An Enabling Humility: Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, and the Uses of Tradition* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 2. The careers of Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop lend themselves particularly well to these more nuanced understandings of poetic influence. As Merrin remarks, “both Moore and Bishop . . . find ways to debunk the potentially debilitating Romantic

myth of imaginatively feminized nature, while Moore's relation to [Sir Thomas] Browne and Bishop's relation to [George] Herbert obviously show us a different, less intensely agonistic, portrait of male influence" (Ibid., 123–24). Betsy Erkkila also seeks to "reclaim women's literature and women's literary history as a site of dissension, contingency, and ongoing struggle rather than a separate space of some untroubled and essentially cooperative accord between women." *The Wicked Sisters: Women Poets, Literary History, and Discord* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4. Erkkila's chapter on Moore and Bishop is particularly illuminating. See also Cristanne Miller's discussion, in her book on Moore, of "an alternative kind of authority that depends precisely on lack of self-assertion, the foregrounding of a questioning attitude, and an equalizing, constantly shifting access to the positions of expert and judge. While appearing to belittle herself, she instead shifts the terms of value by which one judges what is worth hearing, what empowers readers and previous speakers as well as what empowers herself." *Marianne Moore: Questions of Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 5.

55. Robert K. Martin, *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry*, 2nd expanded ed. (1979; Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998), 236 n.
56. Martin's notion of gay poetic relationships is very much in keeping with the pattern of social interaction in the homosexual demimonde of the early twentieth century. John Loughery describes the master/apprentice relationship as the crucial mode of generational interaction between gay men in the 1930s, what he calls (using Stuart Loomis's phrase) the "wisdom of the aunts": "This vital cultural transmission often included a bit of instruction about responsibilities in the decades to come. In other words, how nice to be young, but of course time moves on, and the help you receive today is to be extended to others in later years. The comely twenty-year-old taken out to dinner by his friend of forty-five or sixty, introduced to other gay men (thus easing his fear of isolation, of freakishness), brought to the theater, or taught how to camp or deal with the police or employers or how not to drop hairpins, was made aware that he, in turn, should 'give something back' when the time came. The older man paid the bill at the restaurant, made the introductions, provided the useful tips—in what might have been a sexual or a platonic relationship, or something in-between—in a manner fundamentally different, in this instance, from the male-female pattern. Part of the younger man's repayment to the aunts was tied to the notion that he would someday assume the same role for others." *The Other Side of Silence: Men's Lives and Gay Identities: A Twentieth-Century History* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1998), 73.
57. Gregory Woods, *Articulate Flesh: Male Homoeroticism and Modern Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 196.

58. Bergman, *Gaiety Transfigured*, 45.
59. *Ibid.*, 48.
60. John Emil Vincent, *Queer Lyrics: Difficulty and Closure in American Poetry* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 88.
61. Claude J. Summers, "W.H. Auden," in *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage: A Reader's Companion to the Writers and their Works, from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Claude J. Summers (New York: Henry Holt, 1995), 65.
62. Kathryn R. Kent, *Making Girls into Women: American Women's Writing and the Rise of Lesbian Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). In her two chapters on Moore and Bishop, Kent describes Bishop's disagreements with Moore concerning how language shapes gender and sexual identities, as well as Moore's own transformations through her encounters with Bishop. Kent's reading of the two poets provides, as she claims, "a queer, identificatory theory of influence [that] enables us to appreciate the historically specific nature of Moore and Bishop's subjectivities and their intimacy, while illuminating the differences between their poetic projects" (*Ibid.*, 234).
63. In this respect, Merrill reminds us of Richard Howard, another "pupil" of Auden, who in his work, as David Bergman argues, "construct[s] a cultural and historical matrix in which his own depersonalized work may be located and against which it can resonate" (Bergman, *Gaiety Transfigured*, 59). There is something akin between Merrill's metacommentary on literary tradition in *The Changing Light at Sandover* and Howard's meditation on poetic possession in a 2004 interview: "When you *really* read something, you can allow it to enter you and become you, and it's thrilling. There's a realm, not the unconscious exactly, because it's verbal. . . . Those things that you read that touch you, that shape you, you then can give back. Sometimes there are figures that are very powerful like Auden or Stevens, and you feel you have to write their poems until you can get free of them. It happened with Yeats and Roethke. Those late Roethke poems are all in the meters and voice of W.B. Yeats. That's a sort of terrible thing for us and it was terrible for him. In a sense, one really hopes to be taken over by the material you read; it gives you everything. It also is something that has to be transcended. But it's just wonderful when you know it's happening and you feel you're in the hands of something else. Influence, though, is deeper than imitation, and unmoderated. You can't control it in the same way." "A Conversation with Richard Howard," interview by Priscilla Becker, *Crossroads*, April 21, 2004, <http://www.poetrysociety.org/journal/articles/howard.htm> (accessed August 26, 2005).
64. White, *The Burning Library*, 159.
65. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 85.

66. Alan Sinfield, *On Sexuality and Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 189.
67. Martin, *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry*, 163.
68. Harold Bloom, introduction to *Modern Critical Views: James Merrill*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1985), 2. Critics have been reluctant to apply Bloom's model of poetic influence to Merrill's ironic "take" on literary tradition. Philip Kuberski writes: "Merrill's poem dramatizes poetic influence, verging on possession, and yet it does not follow the tragic logic of Bloom's violent battle of souls over the integrity of a single 'proper name' and its canon. Where Bloom's theory is governed by the classically Western and oedipal version of creation through conflict, Merrill's poem becomes a masque that stages the education of earthly souls in the ways of heaven through a succession of costumes that leads finally to the disappearance of the 'self.'" "The Metaphysics of Postmodern Death: Mailer's *Ancient Evenings* and Merrill's *The Changing Light at Sandover*," *ELH* 56, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 244. Jeff Westover briefly considers Merrill's picture of poetic influence as an example of Bloom's revisionary ratio *apophrades*, "the dismal or unlucky days upon which the dead return to inhabit their former house," but concludes that "despite the fact that he occasionally measures the success of his poetry against what he considers to be the failures of his influential forerunners, Merrill insists on maintaining a place for those poets at the inviting table that his own poem embodies" (In *Critical Essays on James Merrill*, ed. Rotella, 220). Mark Bauer chronicles Merrill's revisionary struggles with W.B. Yeats, whom he calls his "most demanding precursor" (Bauer, *This Composite Voice*, 109). Bauer's study is perhaps the most thorough application of Bloom's theory of influence to Merrill's poem, though even he admits that Merrill both makes use of and calls into question Bloom's model in his "consistent campaign of belittlement" of Yeats throughout *The Changing Light at Sandover* (Ibid., 138).
69. Scholars in the position to make canonical statements have been rather generous to Merrill's trilogy. The second volume of David Perkins's *A History of Modern Poetry* (1987) devotes a whole chapter to Merrill's achievement, bestowing liberal praise on *The Changing Light at Sandover* and making prudent attempts at canonical placement alongside Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and Hart Crane's *The Bridge*. Merrill also enjoys a prominent status in Jay Parini and Brett C. Miller's *The Columbia History of American Poetry* (1993), where he and John Ashbery are the subject of a separate chapter by John Shoptaw. In *The Western Canon*, Harold Bloom declares Merrill one of the "three American presences of our moment," the other two being John Ashbery and Thomas Pynchon. *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994), 527.
70. Stephen Yenser, *The Consuming Myth: The Work of James Merrill* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 217.

CHAPTER I LIMITS OF RETICENCE

1. Auden's homosexuality receives increasingly more prominent treatment in biographies by Charles Osborne (1979), Humphrey Carpenter (1981), and Richard Davenport-Hines (1995). Gregory Woods offers a critical survey of homoerotic themes in some of Auden's short lyrics and longer poems, concluding that "Auden's testimony to his own sexual orientation was visible all the time, to the perceptive, behind his expedient homage to what Isherwood referred to as the heterosexual dictatorship" (Woods, *Articulate Flesh*, 194). Richard R. Bozorth offers an analysis of how Auden's poetry, especially the lyrical and narrative poems he composed in the 1920–40 period, "embodies a process of homosexual self-interrogation" (Bozorth, *Auden's Games of Knowledge*, 3). Robert L. Caserio describes the impact of writers like Edward Carpenter, Frederick Rolfe (Baron Corvo), W. Somerset Maugham, and T.E. Lawrence on the development of Auden's conception of homosexuality: "If Auden doesn't speak loudly about his homosexuality, or speak loudly for it, the cause might be his aim to speak differently from earlier gay ways of speaking up." "Letters and Island: W.H. Auden and Generational Differences among Gay Modernists," in *W.H. Auden: A Legacy*, ed. David G. Izzo (West Cornwall: Locust Hill, 2002), 198.
2. Edward Mendelson, *Early Auden* (New York: The Viking Press, 1981), 101.
3. For the former, see Bozorth, *Auden's Games of Knowledge*, 190–95. For the latter, see Anthony Hecht, *The Hidden Law: The Poetry of W.H. Auden* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 103–09.
4. Bishop, "A Brief Reminiscence and a Tribute," 47.
5. W.H. Auden, *The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings 1927–1939*, ed. Edward Mendelson (London: Faber & Faber, 1977), 190.
6. *Ibid.*, 193.
7. *Ibid.*, 195.
8. Caserio, "Letters and Island," 202.
9. Edward Carpenter, *Intermediate Types Among Primitive Folk: A Study of Social Evolution* (1919; New York: Arno Press, 1975), 59–60.
10. Peter Edgerly Firchow traces the influence of Layard's 1930 anthropological essays "Malekula: Flying Tricksters, Ghosts, Gods, and Epileptics" and "Shamanism: An Analysis Based on Comparison with the Flying Tricksters of Malekula" on the queer-inflected symbolism in Auden's *The Orators*. The latter essay, based on Layard's observations of primitive societies in the New Hebrides (today Vanuatu), reports that "shamans, while by no means exclusively homosexual, do often practice homosexual acts at the command of their spirits, and they are, in any event, so Layard speculates, probably descended from homosexual epileptics" (Firchow, *W.H. Auden: Contexts for Poetry*, 115).

11. Auden, *The English Auden*, 199.
12. Ibid.
13. Harold Norse, *Memoirs of a Bastard Angel* (New York: William Morrow, 1989), 79.
14. Duncan was disappointed by Auden's refusal to have his homosexuality acknowledged in public, but he understood the poet's predicament. In the same passage of "The Homosexual in Society" in which he quotes Auden's response, he includes John Crowe Ransom's letter of rejection of his own poem "Toward an African Elegy" (originally accepted for publication in *The Kenyon Review*) on the grounds that it is "an advertisement or a notice of overt homosexuality." "The Homosexual in Society," in *Twentieth-Century American Poetics: Poets on the Art of Poetry*, ed. Dana Gioia, David Mason, and Meg Schoerke (New York: McGraw Hill, 2004), 228–29.
15. Edmund Wilson, *Letters on Literature and Politics 1912–1972* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977), 430.
16. W.H. Auden, *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Vintage International, 1976), 343.
17. Alan Ansen, *The Table Talk of W.H. Auden*, ed. Nicholas Jenkins (Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1990), 80.
18. Quoted in Richard Davenport-Hines, *Auden* (London: William Heinemann, 1995), 212.
19. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 584.
20. Auden, *Forewords and Afterwords* (New York: Random House, 1973), 99.
21. Although Duncan levels his criticism against the period's homophobic attitudes, he also uses the occasion to attack what he calls "the homosexual elite" for professing "a cult of homosexual superiority to heterosexual values." He calls them "modern ghouls . . . stuck up cult-wise in the mystic light of their special cemetery literature," and "Zionists of homosexuality [who] have laid claim to a Palestine of their own." Duncan wants to convince gay writers and critics that, while acknowledging their sexual difference, they should pursue commonalities with the mainstream society (Duncan, "The Homosexual in Society," 225–34).
22. Auden, *Forewords and Afterwords*, 99.
23. Ibid., 99–100.
24. Auden provides a more detailed exposition of the Vision of Eros in portions of "The Protestant Mystics" (Auden, *Forewords and Afterwords*, 63–68). In a poem he wrote at the same time as the Shakespeare introduction, Auden calls sex "The most enticing of mysteries" (Auden, *Collected Poems*, 852).
25. Quoted in Davenport-Hines, *Auden*, 316.
26. Auden, *Forewords and Afterwords*, 451.
27. W.H. Auden, "Veni, Vici, VD," review of *The Dark Fields of Venus: From a Doctor's Logbook*, by Basile Yanovsky, *New York Review of Books* 20, no. 2 (February 22, 1973): 34.

28. W.H. Auden, *Nones* (New York: Random House, 1951), 11; Auden, *Collected Poems*, 540.
29. James Fenton, "Auden's Shakespeare," *New York Review of Books* 47, no. 5 (March 23, 2000): 26.
30. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 831.
31. Quoted in Robert Craft, *Stravinsky: Chronicle of a Friendship, 1948–1971* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 395 (Auden's emphasis).
32. For other discussions of the role of homosexuality in Merrill's love poetry, see relevant sections in Eric Murphy Selinger, *What Is It Then Between Us? Traditions of Love in American Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998) and Peter Nickowitz, *Rhetoric and Sexuality: The Poetry of Hart Crane, Elizabeth Bishop, and James Merrill* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). See also Timothy Materer's two essays on Merrill's use of personal life motifs in his poems, "Confession and Autobiography in James Merrill's Early Poetry," *Twentieth Century Literature* 48, no. 2 (Summer 2002), 150–73; and "James Merrill's Polyphonic Muse," *Contemporary Literature* 47, no. 2 (Summer 2006), 207–35.
33. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 856.
34. W.H. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays* (New York: Random House, 1956), 16.
35. W.H. Auden, *The Complete Works of W.H. Auden: Prose*, vol. 2: *Prose, 1939–1948*, ed. Edward Mendelson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 48.
36. James Merrill to Judith Moffett, April 23, 1970, Berg Collection, The New York Public Library.
37. Auden, *Forewords and Afterwords*, 230 n.
38. James Merrill, *Collected Poems*, ed. J.D. McClatchy and Stephen Yenser (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 66. All subsequent citations to this volume are indicated as *Poems* within the text.
39. Mona Van Duyn, "Sunbursts, Garlands, Creatures, Men," review of *A Country of A Thousand Years of Peace*, by James Merrill, in *Critical Essays on James Merrill*, ed. Rotella, 30.
40. Woods, *Articulate Flesh*, 81.
41. Jacob Stockinger, "Homotextuality: A Proposal," in *The Gay Academic*, ed. Louie Crew (Palm Springs: ETC Publications, 1978), 143.
42. Michael P. Brown, *Closet Space: Geographies of Metaphor from the Body to the Globe* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 1.
43. In 1981 Merrill commented: "Interior spaces, the shape and correlation of rooms in a house, have always appealed to me. . . . This fondness for given arrangements might explain how instinctively I took to quatrains, to octaves and sestets, when I began to write poems. 'Stanza' is after all the Italian word for 'room'" (*Prose*, 3).
44. Stockinger, "Homotextuality," 143–44.

45. Yenser, *The Consuming Myth*, 114.
46. Merrill also produced English translations of Cavafy's poems "The Afternoon Sun," "On an Italian Shore," and "Days of 1908," all of which are included in his *Collected Poems*.
47. Paul Welch, "Homosexuality in America: The 'Gay' World Takes to the City Streets," *Life* 56, no. 26 (June 26, 1964): 66–80.
48. For a fuller description of the article, see Lee Edelman, *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 151–54.
49. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 518.
50. Keller, *Re-Making It New*, 211.
51. Robert von Hallberg, "Poetry, Politics, and Intellectuals," in *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, vol. 8, *Poetry and Criticism 1940–1995*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 125.
52. David Kalstone observes that Merrill's style displays "alertness to the meanings which lurk in apparently casual words and phrases. . . . When Merrill uses an idiom, he turns it over curiously, as if prospecting for ore." *Five Temperaments: Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Lowell, James Merrill, Adrienne Rich, John Ashbery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 80. Helen Vendler states: "Often, perhaps even too often, Merrill refuses the potential transparency of the written word, and reminds his readers that this is writing they are reading, not a window they are privileged to see through." *The Music of What Happens: Poems, Poets, Critics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 345. Vernon Shetley comments on the tension between public and private modes of expression in the poet's work: "Merrill's lyric poetry met, and meets, its audience on the ground of a shared skepticism about the possibility, or the desirability, of seeing through appearances to the real." Merrill, he adds, investigates the self "not merely through inauthentic experience but through inauthentic language as well." *After the Death of Poetry: Poet and Audience in Contemporary America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 100.
53. James Merrill to Cid Corman, July 26, 1949, James Merrill Papers, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center.
54. James Merrill, draft version of "Up and Down," James Ingram Merrill Papers, Washington University Libraries.
55. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 248–49.
56. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 619.
57. James Merrill, draft version of "Up and Down," James Ingram Merrill Papers, Washington University Libraries.
58. James Merrill to Judith Moffett, September 23, 1968, Berg Collection, The New York Public Library.
59. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 619.
60. Robert von Hallberg, *American Poetry and Culture 1945–1980* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 111.

61. Mark Booth, “*Campe-Toi!* On the Origins and Definitions of Camp,” in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 69.
62. After what he had deemed to be Helen Vendler’s excessively revealing review of *Braving the Elements* in the *New York Times Book Review*, Merrill wrote to Elizabeth Bishop: “I hope I’m not turning into a Gay culture-hero.” James Merrill to Elizabeth Bishop, October 20, 1972, Elizabeth Bishop Papers, Vassar College Libraries.
63. Bergman, *Gaiety Transfigured*, 119.
64. Merrill’s decision not to reveal his HIV-positive status before his death in 1995 can be explained by his upper-class background, his adherence to conventional notions of privacy, and his fear of exposing something as personal as his own dying, especially from the disease still at that time widely associated with homosexual acts, to public scrutiny. But predominantly, as J.D. McClatchy notes, “He didn’t want to become a spokesman, a hero, a case study. He didn’t want to run away with the AIDS circus, in the company of a menagerie of less than minor talents hoisting the banner. He didn’t want to have himself be the object of anyone’s pity or praise because he was ill. Above all, he didn’t want to be put on display, to be shown and thereby made ‘monstrous.’” J.D. McClatchy, “Two Deaths, Two Lives,” in *Loss Within Loss: Artists in the Age of AIDS*, ed. Edmund White (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 225.

CHAPTER 2 WRESTLING WITH THE CANON

1. Throughout *The Changing Light at Sandover*, Merrill uses lowercase type to indicate passages spoken by himself and Jackson and uppercase type for passages spelled out on the Ouija board.
2. Wayne Koestenbaum describes Merrill’s poem as an example of male literary collaboration: “James Merrill, using his lover David Jackson as medium and implicit collaborator, cajoled spirits of the air to fill a poetic trilogy *The Changing Light at Sandover*.” *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 176. Merrill himself portrays Jackson’s contribution in the following terms: “His single fault as a novelist was an unwillingness either to revise or to plan ahead in more than the vaguest terms. As time passed and book after book didn’t quite get accepted by a publisher, David stopped writing. The untended garden turned to peat, to tar, and eventually fueled our séances at the Ouija board” (*Prose*, 522).
3. Following its official ending, however, the Ouija board trilogy continues on a smaller scale with two poems, “From the Cutting-Room Floor,” published in *Late Settings* (1985), and Merrill’s wistful farewell to the world of unverifiable spirits “Nine Lives,” included in *A Scattering of Salts* (1995).

4. Kuberski, "The Metaphysics of Postmodern Death," 245.
5. In the interview with J.D. McClatchy, Merrill actually describes himself as "a perfect magpie" (*Prose*, 107).
6. For more about the relationship between twentieth-century poetry and the occult, see Timothy Materer, *Modernist Alchemy: Poetry and the Occult* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Helen Sword, *Ghostwriting Modernism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); and Devin Johnston, *Precipitations: Contemporary American Poetry as Occult Practice* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2002).
7. Alan Sinfield, *Cultural Politics – Queer Reading* (London: Routledge, 1994), 64.
8. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon, 1962), 87.
9. Dean says: "In the form of polymorphous infantile sexuality, perversion precedes the norm, and therefore normal sexuality—that is, reproductive genital heterosexuality—represents a deviation or falling away from perversion." *Beyond Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 234–35 (Dean's emphasis).
10. Henry Ablove, *Deep Gossip* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 1–20. Ablove quotes Freud's well-known "Letter to an American Mother," written in response to a woman concerned about her son's homosexual tendencies: "Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation; it cannot be classified as an illness; we consider it to be a variation of the sexual function, produced by a certain arrest of sexual development. Many highly respectable individuals of ancient and modern times have been homosexuals, several of the greatest men among them (Plato, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, etc.). It is a great injustice to persecute homosexuals as a crime—and a cruelty, too" (*Ibid.*, 1–2).
11. Irving Bieber, *Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study of Male Homosexuals* (New York: Basic Books, 1962), 275–302.
12. Lee Dorian, *The Anatomy of a Homosexual* (New York: L.S. Publications, 1965), 127.
13. Quoted in Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 37.
14. D.L. Macdonald, "Merrill and Freud: The Psychopathology of Eternal Life," *Mosaic* 14 (1986): 161. In his essay Macdonald discusses aspects of *Sandover* alongside Freud's "Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)," which links his homosexual patient Daniel Paul Schreber's redeemer fantasies with his struggle for parental acceptance.
15. In *A Different Person*, we learn that Tom is a fictional version of Merrill's Hungarian-born psychoanalyst Dr. Thomas Detre.
16. In response to C.A. Buckley's question about the childlessness motif in "The Book of Ephraim," Merrill says: "I think there's a kind of genetic imperative we all feel. Even happily married couples who decide not to have children have a terribly hard time to go through.

- With me it didn't clear away. I never had a mother in mind for a child, but by my mid-thirties I was still thinking if I am going to be a father now is the time to do something about it." "Exploring *The Changing Light at Sandover*," interview by C.A. Buckley, *Twentieth-Century Literature* 38, no. 4 (1992): 418.
17. Freud was unimpressed by scientific efforts to "cure" homosexuality. See his comments on the Steinach operation that entailed the removal and exchange of a specimen's sex-glands, in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (36, 116–17).
 18. Merrill must have been familiar with the groundbreaking defense of homosexuality published in 1951, Donald Webster Cory's *The Homosexual in America*. A self-identified gay man (though writing under a pseudonym), Cory embraces Freud's view of homosexuality as a form of psychosexual disorder that should be left untreated: "A person who accepts the fact that he cannot change into a heterosexual, and who from that point accepts himself for what he is, will have taken the first important step toward ceasing the struggle against himself, toward enjoying his homosexual relationships rather than fighting them, and toward building his life around a realistic program for the future." *The Homosexual in America: A Subjective Approach* (1951; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975), 190.
 19. Lionel Trilling reports that at his seventieth birthday celebration Freud disclaimed the title of "discoverer of the unconscious" and stated "the poets and philosophers before me discovered the unconscious. What I discovered was the scientific method by which the unconscious can be studied." *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1953), 32.
 20. Tom Burke, "The New Homosexuality," *Esquire*, December 1969, 306.
 21. John D'Emilio, *The World Turned: Essays on Gay History, Politics and Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 24.
 22. C.A. Tripp, *The Homosexual Matrix* (New York: Signet, 1975), 253.
 23. Dennis Altman, *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* (New York: Outerbridge and Dienstfrey, 1971), 174.
 24. Joseph Epstein, "Homo/Hetero: The Struggle for Sexual Identity," *Harper's Magazine*, September 1970, 51.
 25. Michael Warner, introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xxv.
 26. Edmund White, "The Inverted Type: Homosexuality as a Theme in James Merrill's Prophetic Books," in *Literary Visions of Homosexuality*, ed. Stuart Kellogg (New York: Haworth Press, 1983), 48.
 27. Thom Gunn, "A Heroic Enterprise," in *A Reader's Guide to James Merrill's The Changing Light at Sandover*, ed. Polito, 157.
 28. The plausibility of gay marriage, though not yet its legality, was a matter of intense public debate throughout the 1970s, with the main point of dispute being whether homosexuals pose a threat to the

traditional notion of the family or whether they can settle down and live together in imitation of the conventional structures of monogamous relationships. In *Gay Decades*, Leigh W. Rutledge quotes the full-page ad, purchased by Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign, in the March 20, 1977 edition of the *Miami Herald*: "Homosexuality is nothing new. Cultures throughout history have dealt with homosexuals almost universally with disdain, abhorrence, disgust—even death. . . . The recruitment of our children is absolutely necessary for the survival and growth of homosexuality. Since homosexuals cannot reproduce, they must recruit, must freshen their ranks. And who better qualifies as a likely recruit than a teenage boy or girl who is surging with sexual awareness." *Gay Decades. From Stonewall to the Present: The People and Events that Shaped Gay Lives* (New York: Plume, 1992), 103.

29. When during the composition of *Mirabell* Merrill sent this portion to Harold Bloom, the Yale critic suggested that the poet consult G. Wilson Knight's 1962 study *The Christian Renaissance*. Harold Bloom to James Merrill, March 31, 1977, James Ingram Merrill Papers, Washington University Libraries. In his book, Knight all but equates artistic genius with same-sex desire as he surveys the presence of homosexual and bisexual motifs in canonical Christian writings, as well as in major works of Western literary tradition, including Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Byron, Shelley, Tennyson, and Eliot. However, given the homophobic nature of the era, Knight has no choice but to couch his rhetoric in the vocabulary of heterosexual normativity: "We who live normal and respectable lives must accord to such men our sympathy. If they are diseased they are at least diseased with a disease that proves more vital than health, leading to lives and works which the race will not willingly let die." *The Christian Renaissance: Interpretations of Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe and New Discussions of Oscar Wilde and the Gospel of Thomas* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1962), 287.
30. Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 52.
31. It is debatable whether Plato actually agreed with the definitions of same-sex desire he put in the mouths of the characters in his dialogues; in the *Laws*, he refers to same-sex desire as unnatural. But the general agreement is that sexual conventions during Plato's lifetime were still by and large more flexible than they have been in the Western world in the past two thousand years. As Plato's dialogues suggest, and as many scholars have demonstrated, sexual relations between adult males were tolerated and in some situations encouraged in ancient Greece. See especially David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
32. Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 25.

33. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1961), 30.
34. Auden, *Forewords and Afterwords*, 102.
35. *Ibid.*, 68.
36. Martin, *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry*, 122.
37. Nealon writes: "Before Stonewall, literary and mass-cultural writing in the United States reflects neither an immersion in 'pathology' nor an inevitable movement in the direction of what we now call 'lesbian and gay culture': neither inversion nor ethnicity, that is, in any pure form. What such texts do illuminate is the tension between them, which manifests itself in an overwhelming desire to *feel historical*, to convert the harrowing privacy of the inversion model into some more encompassing narrative of collective life." *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion Before Stonewall* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001). 8. In his study, Nealon examines the work of Hart Crane, Willa Cather, as well as muscle magazines and lesbian pulp novels.
38. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, 3.
39. James Merrill, "The Plato Club," *Paris Review* 34, no. 122 (Spring 1992): 14–84. Merrill's transcription notebooks from the 1980s and even the early 1990s indicate that he regularly used the Ouija board to get in touch with his imaginary friends in the afterlife. Among many literary figures with whom he holds chitchats about his completed poem, recent scientific discoveries, and current political events are: Hans Lodeizen, Marius Bewley, Gertrude Stein, Alice B. Toklas, Marianne Moore, Robert Frost, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Robert Lowell, and Elizabeth Bishop.
40. Wayne Koestenbaum notes the importance of the word "perhaps" to homosexual discourse: "In a 1922 volume of short stories about unmarried and implicitly homosexual men and women, George Moore used 'perhaps' to signify indecision about gender and sexual preference: 'neither man nor woman, just a perhaps,' sighs one of Moore's celibates" (Koestenbaum, *Double Talk*, 128). Koestenbaum quotes the sentence as part of his discussion of Ezra Pound's marginal comment "damn per'apsez" on the draft version of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, next to the Mr. Eugenides passage.
41. John Loughery, *The Other Side of Silence: Men's Lives and Gay Identities: A Twentieth-Century History* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1998), 184.
42. Ellis, a nineteenth-century collaborator of John Addington Symonds, has an assured place in the history of homosexual discourse as the author of *Sexual Inversion* (1896) one of the first attempts to provide an objective explanation to the phenomenon of same-sex desire as a natural type of human behavior. Ellis's study was eventually superseded by Freud's theories of primary bisexuality, but it had something of a revival during the gay and lesbian liberation period of the 1970s.

43. With respect to the opening portions of “Song of Myself” Matthiessen declares: “Readers with a distaste for loosely defined mysticism have plenty of grounds for objection in the way the poet’s belief in divine inspiration is clothed in imagery that obscures all the distinctions between body and soul by portraying the soul as merely the sexual agent. Moreover, in the passivity of the poet’s body there is a quality vaguely pathological and homosexual. This is in keeping with the regressive, infantile fluidity, imaginatively polyperverse, which breaks down all mature barriers, a little further in ‘Song of Myself,’ to declare that he is ‘maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man.’ Nevertheless, this fluidity of sexual sympathy made possible Whitman’s receptivity to life. The ability to live spontaneously on primitive levels, whose every existence was denied by the educated mind of his time, wiped out arbitrary conventions and yielded a broader experience than of any of his contemporaries. And Whitman did not simply exhibit pathological symptoms; he created poetry.” *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941; reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 535–36. For more on Matthiessen’s homosexuality and his writings on American literature, see Bergman, *Gaiety Transfigured*, 85–102.
44. Many advances were made in the field of American and British poetry. Martin’s *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry* looks at the pervasiveness of the gay impulse in American poetry from Walt Whitman to Hart Crane, as well as some post-World War II poets including Merrill (through *Braving the Elements*). Gregory Woods’s *Articulate Flesh* (1978) concentrates on three major themes—the male body, men of war, and childless fathers—and looks specifically at the poetry of Lawrence, Crane, Auden, Ginsberg, and Gunn. Soon after Merrill completed his trilogy, Stephen Coote put out *The Penguin Book of Homosexual Verse*, which includes writings by Homer, Sappho, Pindar, Theocritus, Catullus, Horace, Martial, Michelangelo, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Waller, Gray, Goethe, Byron, Tennyson, Thoreau, Whitman, Dickinson, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Housman, Cavafy, Stein, Owen, Auden (“Uncle Henry”), Duncan, Spicer, Rich, but not Merrill. A later anthology, *Gay & Lesbian Poetry in Our Time* (1988), edited by Carl Morse and Joan Larkin, contains three poems by Auden and two by Merrill. J.D. McClatchy’s selection *Love Speaks Its Name* (2001), for the Everyman’s Library Pocket Poets Series, features several poems by Auden and Merrill.
45. Gregory Woods, *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 2.
46. Gore Vidal, “Interview with Gore Vidal,” interview by Dennis Altman, in *The View from Christopher Street*, ed. Michael Denny, Charles Ortleb, and Thomas Steele (London: Chatto & Windus, 1984), 296.

47. Nealon, *Foundlings*, 5.
48. Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose* (New York: The Library of America, 1982), 982 n.
49. *Ibid.*, 981.
50. Thomas E. Yingling, "Homosexuality and Utopian Discourse in American Poetry," in *Breaking Bounds: Whitman and American Cultural Studies*, ed. Betsy Erkkila and Jay Grossman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 141.
51. *Ibid.*, 141.
52. Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, 656. In a footnote, Whitman cites the following anecdote: "When Champollion, on his death-bed, handed to the printer the revised proof of his 'Egyptian Grammar,' he said gayly, 'Be careful of this—it is my *carte de visite* to posterity.'"
53. For more about the Mattachine Society and the disputes that accompanied its eventual demise, see John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual in the United States 1940–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
54. Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1908), 128. The word "Uranian" derives from Karl Heinrich Ulrichs's 1862 term for male homosexuality "Uraning." As Donald Webster Cory reports, "Ulrichs found inspiration for his etymology in the planet Uranus, which, of all the planets visible to the naked eye, is furthest from the sun and therefore nearest to heaven; love for one's own sex was likewise the most heavenly of physical passions, he contended" (Cory, *The Homosexual in America*, 106).
55. Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, 109.
56. Timothy Materer, *James Merrill's Apocalypse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 115.
57. E.M. Forster, *Two Cheers for Democracy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951), 68.
58. Quoted in Sherill Tippins, *February House: The Story of W.H. Auden, Carson McCullers, Jane and Paul Bowles, Benjamin Britten, and Gypsy Rose Lee, Under One Roof in Wartime America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 56. It is worth noting that during one of his Ouija board sessions in the mid-1980s, long after *The Changing Light at Sandover* had been completed, Merrill and Jackson say to the ghosts of Auden and Isherwood: "You two really showed us how to live" (James Merrill, black notebook, page 311, James Ingram Merrill Papers, Washington University Libraries).
59. Forster, *Two Cheers for Democracy*, 73–74. In his coming-out article, published in the *New York Times Magazine* in 1971, Merle Miller quotes passages from "What I Believe" to demonstrate Forster's centrality to gay men both prior to and following the publication of

- Maurice*. Merle Miller, *On Being Different: What It Means To Be a Homosexual* (New York: Random House, 1971), 3.
60. Forster, *Two Cheers for Democracy*, 9.
 61. *Ibid.*, 11.
 62. Lionel Trilling, *E.M. Forster* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 12.
 63. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 195.
 64. Christopher Yu, *Nothing to Admire: The Politics of Poetic Satire From Dryden to Merrill* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 10–11.
 65. Yenser, *The Consuming Myth*, 271.

CHAPTER 3 DISINCARNATE SPIRIT

1. Edmund White, *The Farewell Symphony* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 414.
2. James Longenbach, *Modern Poetry after Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 161.
3. In 1948 Auden dismissed Yeats's *A Vision*: "How *could* Yeats, with his great aesthetic appreciation of aristocracy, ancestral houses, ceremonious tradition, take up something so essentially lower-middle class—or should I say Southern Californian—so ineluctably associated with suburban villas and clearly unattractive faces?" (Auden, *The Complete Works of W.H. Auden: Prose*, vol. 2, 385).
4. Quoted in Davenport-Hines, *Auden*, 343.
5. Washington University Library holds a page in Merrill's handwriting entitled "Very Brief Word from WHA on Ouija Board, 29.ix.73," which contains a full transcript of the initial communication with Auden. Here "WHA" indeed compares the afterlife to "a new machine" and mentions a box in Oxford that "must be burned." In passages not included in the trilogy, Auden also discovers himself "in the buff" and reveals his undying love for Chester Kallman: "I have loved none but C" (James Ingram Merrill Papers, Washington University Libraries).
6. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*, 458.
7. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 241–42.
8. This assertion takes one step further the statement Auden made in a *Paris Review* interview published in 1974 (another instance of the poet speaking from beyond the grave): "it's a poet's role to maintain the sacredness of language." W.H. Auden, "The Art of Poetry XVII: W.H. Auden," interview by Michael Newman, *Paris Review* 15, no. 57 (1974): 41.
9. *Ibid.*, 35–36.
10. Davenport-Hines, *Auden*, 78.
11. I.A. Richards, *Science and Poetry* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, Co., 1935), 29.

12. *Ibid.*, 31.
13. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*, 68.
14. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World. Lowell Lectures, 1925* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), 127.
15. Matthew Arnold, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. John Bryson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), 654.
16. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*, 78–79.
17. Auden, *The Complete Works of W.H Auden: Prose*, vol. 2, 34.
18. *Ibid.*, 34–35.
19. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 877.
20. See especially “Luddites? or, There Is Only One Culture,” in which Leavis discusses “the university as a focus of consciousness and human responsibility” and “a guarantor of a real performance of the critical function—that critical function which is a creative one.” *Lectures in America* (New York: Pantheon, 1969), 23.
21. Auden, “The Art of Poetry,” 68.
22. In his later years, Auden subscribed to *Scientific American* and even composed a few poems based on the essays he found there. In December of 1972, the magazine published an article by molecular biologist Gunther S. Stent on “Prematurity and Uniqueness in Scientific Discovery,” part of which addresses similarities between scientific inventions and artistic creations. Auden wrote a letter to the editors in praise of the article which, in his view, “demonstrates so convincingly that scientific research and artistic fabrication have much more in common than most people suppose.” But he remained true to his dualistic stance when, in the same letter, he points out a difference between the two pursuits: “Every good work of art exhibits two qualities, Nowness and Permanence. . . . This means that in the history of Art, there is Change but no Progress. Mozart does not supersede Monteverdi in the way that I suppose one must say that the Copernican picture of the universe superseded the Ptolemaic.” Letter to the Editors, *Scientific American* 228, no. 3 (March 1973): 8.
23. As Mendelson notes, Auden even contemplated writing an anonymous attack on the book, as he told Alan Ansen, from “the standpoint of a representative of the Homintern.” Edward Mendelson, *Later Auden* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 268.
24. W.H. Auden, foreword to *An Armada of Thirty Whales*, by Daniel G. Hoffman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), unpaginated.
25. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 672.
26. *Ibid.*, 741.
27. *Ibid.*, 810–11.
28. *Ibid.*, 844.
29. *Ibid.*, 883.
30. *Ibid.*, 891.

31. Auden, *Forewords and Afterwords*, 524.
32. W.H. Auden, "Progress Is the Mother of Problems (G.K. Chesterton)," review of *The Ancient Concept of Progress*, by E.R. Dodds, *New York Review of Books* 20, no. 11 (June 28, 1973): 20.
33. W.H. Auden, *A Certain World: A Commonplace Book* (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), 333 (Auden's emphasis).
34. W.H. Auden, *Secondary Worlds* (New York: Random House, 1968), 126.
35. Brian McHale, *The Obligation toward the Difficult Whole: Postmodernist Long Poems* (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 24.
36. Other titles Merrill mentions in different conversations include Arthur Young's *Reflexive Universe: Evolution of Consciousness* (1976), Lewis Thomas's *The Lives of a Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher* (1974), and Julian Jaynes's *The Origins of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (1976).
37. Isaac Asimov, *The Intelligent Man's Guide to Science* (New York: Basic Books Inc. Publishers, 1960), 3.
38. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870s*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazdale (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1990), 84.
39. Merrill shows genuine attraction to the idea of reconciliation between humanistic and scientific worldviews in his interview with Ross Labrie: "I think science is a visionary landscape in the twentieth century and was even in the nineteenth. If as you say we are myth starved, we certainly are starved for the scientific myths. These are constantly bursting out in front of us in fascinating forms, and I suppose the point would be to show or to somehow open the possibility that the classical myths and the scientific myths are really one and the same" (*Prose*, 100).
40. Auden, *The Complete Works of W.H. Auden: Prose*, vol. 1: *Prose and Travel Books in Prose and Verse, 1926–1938*, ed. Edward Mendelson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 386. The second statement quoted in Craft, *Stravinsky: Chronicle of a Friendship*, 259.
41. Robert Mazzocco, "The Right Stuff," in *A Reader's Guide to James Merrill's The Changing Light at Sandover*, ed. Polito, 220.
42. Yenser, *The Consuming Myth*, 272–73; Don Adams, *James Merrill's Poetic Quest* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), 106, 128; Materer, *James Merrill's Apocalypse*, 111–12.
43. See Harry Hay, "A Separate People Whose Time Has Come," in *Gay Spirit: Myth and Meaning*, ed. Mark Thompson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 279–91.
44. Toby Johnson, *Gay Spirituality: The Role of Gay Identity in the Transformation of Human Consciousness* (Los Angeles: Alyson, 2000), 7, 25.
45. Merrill wrote in a notebook entry: "His subject is Man, his tragic fate and heroic defiance in the face of extinction"—Bruce Chatwin on Malraux. Why do I so loathe this kind of talk? I heard it first, I think,

- from Kimon [Friar] and took it even then with distrust. Meanwhile, it emerges ever more vividly that we ourselves have all along been contriving that tragic fate: extinction is nothing if not manmade" (*Prose*, 34).
46. Bruce Bawer, "A Summoning of Spirits: James Merrill and *Sandover*," review of *The Changing Light at Sandover*, by James Merrill, *New Criterion* 2 (June 1984): 39–40; Vernon Shetley, *After the Death of Poetry*, 101; Denis Donoghue, "What the Ouija Board Said," in *A Reader's Guide to James Merrill's The Changing Light at Sandover*, ed. Polito, 181; Michael Harrington, "Paradise or Disintegration," in *ibid.*, 205.
 47. Merrill, "Exploring *The Changing Light at Sandover*," 421.
 48. A copy of Merrill's will, stored among his friend John Malcolm Brinnin's papers at the University of Delaware Library, indicates a donation to the Union of Concerned Scientists, a nonprofit organization that since 1969 has promoted a responsible use of scientific research to address urgent environmental and socioeconomic problems, including overpopulation.
 49. Merrill, "Exploring *The Changing Light at Sandover*," 423.
 50. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 2.
 51. See Rutledge, *Gay Decades. From Stonewall to the Present*, 22.
 52. Vidal, "Interview with Gore Vidal," 297.
 53. Edelman, *No Future*, 3.
 54. Auden, *The Complete Works of W.H. Auden: Prose*, vol. 1, 99.
 55. J.D. McClatchy, "On *Water Street*," in *James Merrill: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Lehman and Berger, 168.
 56. Yenser, *The Consuming Myth*, 90; John Keats, *The Poems of John Keats*, ed. H.W. Garrod (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 44.
 57. Merrill, "Exploring *The Changing Light at Sandover*," 416.
 58. Quoted in John Fuller, *W.H. Auden: A Commentary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 371.
 59. Judith Moffett writes: "If intelligence and thought are combatants, then a probing, analytical mind like Auden's must be allied with Gabriel. Michael represents the sensitive, perceptive intelligence that does not investigate or evaluate ideas but ignores them or takes them in entire, the sort revealed in Merrill's poetry as his own." *James Merrill: An Introduction to the Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 209.

CHAPTER 4 POSSESSION

1. Leslie Brisman, "Merrill's Yeats," in *Modern Critical Views: James Merrill*, ed. Bloom, 198.
2. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Inferno*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 7.
3. *Ibid.*, 35.

4. Bloom states as much: "Yet there was a great age before the Flood, when influence was generous (or poets in their innermost natures thought it so), an age that goes all the way from Homer to Shakespeare. At the heart of this matrix of generous influence is Dante and his relation to his precursor Virgil, who moved his ephebe only to love and emulation and not to anxiety" (Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, 122). As Bloom notes, however, Dante's relationship with Virgil is not completely free of revisionary impulses and sublimated elements of anxiety. In his introduction to the second edition of *The Anxiety of Influence* he remarks that the presence of anxiety is not to be confined to post-Enlightenment writers and that "influence-anxieties are embedded in the agonistic basis of all imaginative literature" (Ibid, xxiv).
5. Several factors allow us to interpret Auden's role in *Sandover* as equivalent to that of Virgil in Dante's poem. For one thing, Merrill himself suggests this possibility: "Without being Dante, can I think of them [Auden and Maria] as Virgil and Beatrice?" he said to Helen Vendler in 1979 (*Prose*, 87). In the Ouija board trilogy, Wystan renounces his Christian faith, instructs JM and DJ about the workings of the universe, and delivers a long speech on literary tradition. On account of his wisdom and acuity, JM honors Wystan as "a mine of sense" (*CLS*, 129), a much-admired predecessor who facilitates his progress through the realm of the dead. He serves as an embodiment of intellect and reason, while Maria Mitsotáki, the poem's fitting Beatrice, symbolizes feeling and revelation. For more extensive commentaries on *Sandover's* similarities with Dante's poem, see Rachel Jacoff, "Merrill and Dante," in *James Merrill: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Lehman and Berger, 145–58; and Andrea Mariani, "From Polylinguism to Metalinguism: Dante's Language in Merrill's Trilogy," in *Critical Essays on James Merrill*, ed. Rotella, 190–214.
6. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 202–03.
7. Longinus, "On the Sublime," in *Critical Theory since Plato*, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971), 86.
8. Harold Bloom, *The Ringers in the Tower* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 210. Since in the lines that precede this passage Auden reflects on poetry's role in society, it is also possible that while working on this part of the "New Year Letter" he was consulting Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*, in which we find this Longinian passage: "Even in modern times, no living poet ever arrived at the fulness of his fame; the jury which sits in judgment upon a poet, belonging as he does to all time, must be composed of his peers; it must be impaneled by Time from the selectest wise of many generations." *A Defence of Poetry*, ed. John E. Jordan (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1965), 38.
9. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*, 79–80.
10. Ibid., 80.

11. W.H. Auden, preface to *Nineteenth-Century British Minor Poets*, ed. W.H. Auden (New York: Delacorte, 1966), 16.
12. This is the subject of Walter Jackson Bate's celebrated study of post-Renaissance poetry in English: "We could, in fact, argue that the remorseless deepening of self-consciousness, before the rich and intimidating legacy of the past, has become the greatest single problem that modern art (art, that is to say, since the later seventeenth century) has had to face, and that it will become increasingly so in the future. . . . Given the massive achievement in the past, they [i.e., modern artists] may have no further way to proceed except toward progressive refinement, nuance, indirection, and finally, through the continued pressure for difference, into the various forms of anti-art." *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 4, 10.
13. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 204.
14. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 6.
15. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 312.
16. Auden, *The Complete Works of W.H. Auden: Prose*, vol. 2, 92.
17. Auden's foreword to Adrienne Rich's Yale-prize winning first book of poetry *A Change of World* is often criticized for its patronizing tone with respect to the young female poet. But it also sheds light on Auden's reflections, in the same period, on an individual poet's relationship with literary tradition. Here Auden seems to assume that it is impossible to be completely "original" with respect to the past—"he who today climbs the Matterhorn, though he be the greatest climber who ever lived, must tread in Whymper's footsteps." But as a way of easing the burden he again personalizes the concept of poetic influence, beginning his introduction with an analogy between a poem and a person (we want them handsome and intelligent, not plain and stupid, he says), praising Rich for not concealing her "family tree," and approvingly noting that her poems "respect their elders but are not cowed by them." Foreword to *A Change of World*, by Adrienne Rich, in *Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1993), 277–79.
18. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 892.
19. James Fenton, "Auden's Enchantment," *New York Review of Books* 47, no. 6 (April 13, 2000): 64.
20. Firchow, *W.H. Auden: Contexts for Poetry*, 248, 17 n. Luke, who found the journal "conspicuously lying on the sitting-room floor" in Auden's house, entertains the possibility that the poet might have placed it there on purpose to be found after his death. See David Luke, "Gerhart Meyer and the Vision of Eros: A Note on Auden's 1929 Journal," in W.H. Auden, *The Language of Learning and the Language of Love: Uncollected Writing, New Interpretations*, ed. Katherine Bucknell and Nicholas Jenkins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 103.

21. Quoted in Mendelson, *Early Auden*, 67. For more substantial descriptions of the journal, now stored at the Berg Collection of English and American Literature of The New York Public Library, see Humphrey Carpenter, *W.H. Auden: A Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 97–101; and Bozorth, *Auden's Games of Knowledge*, 54–87.
22. Auden, *A Certain World*, vii.
23. Quoted in Fuller, *W.H. Auden: A Commentary*, 484.
24. Auden, *Forewords and Afterwords*, 423.
25. Orlan Fox, "Friday Nights," in *W.H. Auden: A Tribute*, ed. Stephen Spender (New York: Macmillan, 1975), 175.
26. Auden, "The Art of Poetry," 45.
27. Quoted in Craft, *Stravinsky: Chronicle of a Friendship*, 396.
28. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*, 42.
29. Woods, *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition*, 386.
30. T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts*, ed. Valerie Eliot (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 1.
31. James Merrill, "The Changing Light at Sandover: A Conversation with James Merrill," interview by Robert Polito, *Pequod* 31 (1990): 11.
32. John Ashbery, *Other Traditions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 70.
33. Randall Jarrell, *The Third Book of Criticism* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969), 134.
34. Randall Jarrell, *Auden, Kipling & Co.: Essays and Reviews 1935–1964* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1980), 145.
35. These comments were made respectively by Thom Gunn, Philip Larkin, John Updike, and Denis Donoghue. See John Haffenden, *W.H. Auden: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), 423, 419, 429, 482.
36. Jon Bradshaw, "Holding to Schedule with W.H. Auden," *Esquire*, January 1970, 138, 139.
37. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*, 77.
38. See the following exchange between J.D. McClatchy and Merrill: "Q: You'd disagree, then, with Auden, who said he was a poet only when actually writing a poem. JM: Lucky him. What was he the rest of the time? Q: A citizen, I believe he said. JM: Oh. Well, that citizen must have heard a lot of funny sounds from the poet pigeonhole next door. I certainly do. Whether you're at your desk or not when a poem's under way, isn't there that constant eddy in your mind?" (*Prose*, 124).
39. However, the assignment may be a particularly fitting literalization of Auden's statement in "The Poet and the City": "All poets adore explosions, thunderstorms, tornadoes, conflagrations, ruins, scenes of spectacular carnage" (Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*, 84).

40. Alan Jacobs, *What Became of Wystan: Change and Continuity in Auden's Poetry* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998), 104–10.
41. Auden, *Forewords and Afterwords*, 471. Indeed, the only thing Auden appreciated in hippies was that they, as he put it, “tried to revive the spirit of *Carnival*, something which has been conspicuously lacking in our culture” (Auden, “The Art of Poetry,” 47).
42. Bradshaw, “Holding to Schedule with W.H. Auden,” 139.
43. See Bergman, *Gaiety Transfigured*, 111–21.
44. Nick Halpern, *Everyday and Prophetic: The Poetry of Lowell, Ammons, Merrill, and Rich* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 162.
45. Willard Spiegelman, *The Didactic Muse: Scenes of Instruction in Contemporary American Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 244.
46. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 5.
47. In his afterword to the 1994 reissue of *The (Diblos) Notebook*, Merrill further distances himself from the “raw” poetry camp: “To Kerouac, Ginsberg, et al., revision was an all but criminal betrayal of the ‘spontaneity’ of their vision. This view I was by temperament unable to share; true spontaneity came for me, as when Rome burned, after hours of Neronian fiddling.” *Collected Novels and Plays*, ed. J.D. McClatchy and Stephen Yenser (New York: Knopf, 2002), 634.
48. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*, 382.
49. Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), xii, 96.
50. Auden, *The Complete Works of W.H. Auden: Prose*, vol. 2, 344.
51. See, for example, Auden's meditations on the nature of romantic love in his 1929 Berlin journal: “When someone begins to lose the glamour they had for us on our first meeting them, we tell ourselves that we have been deceived, that our phantasy cast a halo over them which they are unworthy to bear. It is always possible however that the reverse is the case; that our disappointment is due to a failure of our own sensibility which lacks the strength to maintain itself at the acuteness with which it began. People may really be what we first thought them, and what we subsequently think of as the disappointing reality, the person obscured by the staleness of our senses” (Quoted in Luke, “Gerhart Meyer and the Vision of Eros,” 107).
52. Christopher Ricks, *Allusion to the Poets* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 33.
53. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 542.
54. *Ibid.*, 249.
55. *Ibid.*, 314.
56. *Ibid.*, 403.
57. *Ibid.*, 444.

58. In 1965 Auden said to a newspaper reporter: “A poet enchants for the purpose of disenchanting people with their illusions about themselves and the world” (Quoted in Davenport-Hines, *Auden*, 323).
59. Lucy McDiarmid, *Auden’s Apologies for Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 39.
60. Auden, *The Dyer’s Hand*, 37.
61. *Ibid.*, 37.
62. Jacobs, *What Became of Wystan*, 117 (Jacobs’s emphases).
63. James Merrill, black notebook, page 175, James Ingram Merrill Papers, Washington University Libraries. Here is an excerpt from the session recorded on August 17, 1977 (all typos in the original): “JM reads 8, plus the ‘convalescence’ insertions, which he fears threaten to blur the ‘school’ metaphor. WHA: YES I THINK IT WORKS Doesn’t blur NO NOR THE CHANGING ROBES MORE IS MORE WBY: QUITE BUT WAS THERE HOSP REF AFTER 6? I point them out. AH WS: HOW DID U MANAGE TO REDUCE THE TAPPING OF THEATRE STAFF A THERMOEMETER BEING SHAKEN DOWN mercury/ It might work, I’ll see. CANAL BOY? HL: JIM I LIKE THE COMPLEXITY DEEP IN INTERWEAVING MET. EVEN AS THE LESSONS SUPPOSEDLY ARE CLEARING THINGS US + WONDER U DON’T UNDERLINE THE ‘CLEARING’ IN THE JUNGLE MET.” And further: “MIS STEIN O PARDON MD: THE FIGURE AT 5 IS HE A BAT? CD U SAY WHITE AGAIN? OR ANGEL? OR FACE? I KNOW WHA USES BLAKE BUT HIS APPEARANCE OUTSIDE OF COLORED WINGS IS SCANTED. Indeed, thank you. VOTE? 11 AYES. The mirror bit? ADD ADD AS THE REVELATION APPROACHES THE PATIENT IMPROVES, THE LANGUAGE IS EVER RICHER U’VE DONE THIS MY BOY NO SMALL JOB. MIR’S SPEECH PROFOUNDLY MOVING All his, you know, I just put it onto the page.”
64. Wystan quickly recovers with “FILL IT WITH ARTICLES WE’VE PLUCKED / FROM THE ROW OF NUMBERS,” but these lines, plus an additional brief poem by Wystan, are missing from the published version of *Sandover* (James Merrill, black notebook, page 75, James Ingram Merrill Papers, Washington University Libraries).
65. Auden, *The Dyer’s Hand*, 37–38.
66. Contrasting Merrill’s imaginary engagement with Wystan in *Sandover* with Auden’s encounter with Byron in “Letter to Lord Byron,” Jeffery Donaldson points to a crucial distinction: Merrill’s poem is not an address to his deceased exemplar, but a *dialogue* with the exemplar. Auden’s epistle to the author of *Don Juan* is one-sided, so that the addressee never answers the younger poet from the “eternity” he inhabits. In *Sandover*, however, Merrill does not contact the spirit of Auden by letter, but by way of a Ouija board. Wystan is able to answer JM, and vice versa, in a constant echoing of one voice by the other, enough to suggest that his poem underscores, as Donaldson puts it, a

- “dialogic relationship that the poet experiences with literary history.”
 “The Company Poets Keep: Allusion, Echo, and the Question of Who Is Listening in W.H. Auden and James Merrill,” *Contemporary Literature* 36, no. 1 (1997): 51.
67. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*, 39.
 68. Merrill, “Exploring *The Changing Light at Sandover*,” 424.
 69. Keller, *Re-Making It New*, 188.
 70. Auden, *The Complete Works of W.H. Auden: Prose*, vol. 2, 48.
 71. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*, 38 (my emphasis).
 72. *Ibid.*, 52.
 73. W.H. Auden, “Notebooks of Somerset Maugham,” review of *A Writer's Notebook*, by W. Somerset Maugham, *New York Times Book Review*, October 23, 1949, 1.
 74. W.H. Auden, *The Map of All My Youth: Early Works, Friends and Influences*, ed. Katherine Bucknell and Nicholas Jenkins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 86.
 75. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand*, 366.

AFTERWORD

1. J.D. McClatchy reports that, while an undergraduate at Amherst College, Merrill played the lead in a student production of *Orpheus*, the first installment of Cocteau's Orphic trilogy. “Monsters Wrapped in Silk,” in *Modern Critical Views: James Merrill*, ed. Bloom, 138.
2. Miller, *On Being Different*, 11.
3. Alfred Corn, *Notes from a Child of Paradise* (New York: The Viking Press, 1984), 97.
4. Sinfield, *On Sexuality and Power*, 190.
5. Christopher Hennessy, *Outside the Lines: Talking with Contemporary Gay Poets* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005).
6. *Ibid.*, 55.
7. About his first two poetry collections, with their conspicuous links to Whitman and Crane, Robert K. Martin says, “Corn announces the development of a gay poetry which can transcend its gayness. . . . [He] seems to suggest, one must explore one's sexuality, so that finally one may forget it” (Martin, *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry*, 217). See also Martin's comment: “There is obviously an O'Hara-Schuyler-Ashbery ‘line of descent’ in Corn's work . . . but there is also an important Auden-Merrill line. Above all, Corn speaks in his own voice” (*Ibid.*, 240).
8. Hennessy, *Outside the Lines*, 122.
9. *Ibid.*, 84–87.
10. J.D. McClatchy, *Stars Principal* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 55–56.

11. Hennessy, *Outside the Lines*, 60, 62, 63.
12. *Ibid.*, 63.
13. J.D. McClatchy, *Hazmat: Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 75–81.
14. Hennessy, *Outside the Lines*, 67, 62.
15. McClatchy, *Hazmat*, 81.

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