



W. H. Auden: A Biography

By Humphrey Carpenter

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W. H. Auden disapproved of literary biography. Or did he? The truth is more equivocal than it at first appears. Humphrey Carpenter himself neatly summarizes Auden's ambiguity: 'Here, as so often in his life, Auden adopted a dogmatic attitude which did not reflect the full range of his opinions, and which he sometimes flatly contradicted.' Although Carpenter's biography, first published in 1981, was unauthorized, he did receive the co-operation of the Auden Estate, and the results remain of unimpeachable merit. "Carpenter is a model biographer - diligent, unspeculative, sympathetic, and extremely good at finding out what happened when and with whom". (John Bayley, Listener). "An illuminating book; full of information, unobtrusively affectionate, it describes with unpretentious elegance the curve of a great poet's life and work". (Frank Kermode, Guardian). "A deeply interesting book about a deeply interesting life". (Roy Fuller, Sunday Times).

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Humphrey Carpenter was born and educated in Oxford, and attended the Dragon School and Keble College. He was a well-known biographer and children's writer, and worked previously as a producer at the BBC. He wrote biographies of J. R. R. Tolkien, W. H. Auden, Benjamin Britten, Ezra Pound, C. S. Lewis and Dennis Potter. Among his many books for children were the best-selling Mr Majeika series. He also wrote several plays for the theatre and radio. A keen musician, he was a member of a 1930s-style jazz band, Vile Bodies, which was resident at the Ritz Hotel in London for a number of years. He died in 2005.

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