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## “Apt Admonishment”: Wordsworth As an Example<sup>1</sup>

The history of poetry contains many accounts of what might be called poetic recognition scenes, meetings where the poet comes face to face with something or someone in the outer world recognized as vital to the poet’s inner creative life, and accounts of these meetings represent some of the highest achievements in the art. When a practitioner describes an encounter with a living or dead master, or an equivalent moment of epiphany, something fundamental is usually at stake, often having to do with poetic vocation itself. At the level of autobiography, such scenes record crucial events in the growth or reorientation of the poet’s mind; at the mythic level, on the other hand, they can be read as evidence of a close encounter between the poet and the muse.

One way of describing the function of myth is to say that it puts us in touch with the eternal. If, for example, you are a Viking warrior going into battle wearing an amulet of Thor’s hammer round your neck, then you become all the Viking warriors who have ever been, all the strength and warrior valor the god stands for are in you and with you. You have been brought beyond your uncertain individual self and turned into something fortified and potentially invincible.

The warrior, needless to say, won’t be conscious of things in this way, and if questioned would be very unlikely to employ such lofty terms. For him, wearing an amulet of Thor’s hammer is just another practice that comes with his culture, something so habitual he may not even register its supernatural implications. And yet, if the practice is in itself unremarkable, it nevertheless occurs in an uncommon perspective. The casual action has its origin in arcane mystery, an aura of the sacred glimmers in the

<sup>1</sup> This essay is based on a lecture delivered at The Morgan Library and Museum, June 8, 2006.

background, and while the person involved may entertain no particular awareness of it, his actions are still deeply implicated in a solemn order of reality.

What I want to write about here are moments when poets are reminded that theirs too is a solemn calling and are made newly conscious of the powers they serve. And that is why I make mention at the very beginning of “the muse.” Poets in the twenty-first century are unlikely to invoke her the way Homer invoked her: probably the last one to call upon her in any serious way was John Milton, for although by then the invocation had become thoroughly conventional, in Milton’s case the convention was animated and in effect sanctified by his identification of the muse with the Holy Spirit of his three person Christian God. And yet, in spite of the archaic nature of the muse phenomenon, the several encounters between the poet and the other which I’ll be discussing still flicker with gleams of mythic light—a light which emanates from an original source in the opening lines of Hesiod’s *Theogony*.

Hesiod’s dates are as uncertain as Homer’s (probably some time in the late eighth or early seventh century BC) although there is firm enough evidence that he was a farmer from the countryside in Boeotia, a man whose life was changed when the Muses, the daughters of memory, appeared at the head of his field and called him to a new task—which task would in turn confer upon him a new authority. A recent prose translation gives Hesiod’s account of how he was chosen from among the other “field-dwelling shepherds” on Mount Helicon, those “mere bellies” unworthy of the laurel and the gift of inspiration:

Let us begin to sing from the Heliconian Muses, who possess the great and holy mountain of Helicon and dance on their soft feet around the violet-dark fountain and the altar of Cronus’ mighty son. And after they have washed their tender skin in Permessus or Hippocrene or holy Olmeius, they perform choral dances on highest Helicon, beautiful, lovely ones, and move nimbly with their feet. Starting out from there, shrouded in thick invisibility, by night they walk, sending forth their very beautiful voice . . .

One time, they taught Hesiod beautiful song while he was pasturing lambs under holy Helicon. And this speech the goddesses spoke first of all to me, the Olympian Muses, the daughters of aegis-holding Zeus: “Field-dwelling shepherds, ignoble disgraces, mere bellies: we know how to say many false things similar to genuine ones,

but we know, when we wish, how to proclaim true things.” So spoke great Zeus’ ready-speaking daughters, and they plucked a staff, a branch of luxuriant laurel, a marvel, and gave it to me, and they breathed a divine voice into me, so that I might glorify what will be and what was before, and they commanded me to sing of the blessed ones who always are, but always to sing of themselves first and last.

So, with Hesiod’s foundational story in mind, let me repeat what I said at the start: poetic recognition scenes can be read at one level as significant biographical moments—“crucial events in the growth or reorientation of the poet’s mind; at the mythic level, on the other hand, they can be read as evidence of a close encounter between the poet and the muse.” And yet these moments of realization do not always or necessarily involve a face-to-face encounter with some great poetic forebear. In the modern era, the sense of visitation and rededication will often derive from meetings and occasions which are far less exalted, but which are nevertheless bathed in an uncanny light, occasions when the poet has been, as it were, unhomed, has experienced the *unheimlich*.

Even in the modern period, however, the poet typically comes away from such encounters with a renewed sense of election, surer in his or her vocation. What is being enacted or recalled is usually an experience of confirmation, of the spirit coming into its own, a door being opened or a path being entered upon. Usually also the experience is unexpected and out of the ordinary, in spite of the fact that it occurs in the normal course of events, in the everyday world. A strange thing happens. A spot of time becomes a spot of the timeless, becomes, in effect, one of “the hiding places of [the poet’s] power.”

In the first canto of *The Divine Comedy*, for example, when Dante meets the shade of Virgil, he is not immediately aware that heaven has intervened to send the Latin poet to be his guide, yet a high sense of mystery and destiny does nevertheless prevail; and when, in “Little Gidding,” T. S. Eliot meets a familiar ghost in the dawn light after an air raid in wartime London—a ghost whom Eliot thought of as an emanation of the recently dead William Butler Yeats—there is a similar feeling of mystery and destiny in surroundings that are entirely matter of fact. In both cases, the sense of rare occasion is present in the way the language goes a little bit beyond its usual operations: Dante meets Virgil “*là dove ’l*

*sol tace*—“where the sun is silent,” and his appearance “*per lungo silenzio pareva fioco*”—“seemed faint through long silence”; and in a passage which directly imitates and pays homage to the art of Dante, Eliot says of the stranger he meets “in the uncertain hour before the morning” that he had

the look of some dead master  
Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled  
Both one and many; in the brown baked features  
The eyes of a familiar compound ghost  
Both intimate and unidentifiable.

Dante and Eliot, of course, are highly self-conscious artificers, and the contexts in which they situate these encounters are unapologetically literary. Your response to what’s happening in each case will be enhanced if you happen to know and have a feel for the history of poets and poetry. Neither of them resorts to the ancient invocation of the Muses, but both signal the elevated nature of their experience by recourse to idioms and allusions drawn from the world of high culture. In each case, we are immediately aware that what is at stake is Vocation with a capital V.

Yet direct literary allusion and the appearance of great literary forebears are not the only ways in which poets situate themselves spiritually and artistically. In the age of Freud there was a far more fluid awareness of the sources of inspiration, a much greater readiness to locate the radiance of the gift in those very areas of the psyche that have been the most repressed. D. H. Lawrence’s snake, for example, in the poem of that name, is surely a messenger from the hiding place of his own gift, a gift whose operations, Lawrence believed, were obstructed and deformed by the conventional processes of education and socialization. The snake emerges from a fissure in the earth-wall and trails his slack body down to the water-trough, drinks from it and is then about to withdraw.

At which point, Lawrence tells us, he picked up a clumsy log and threw it at the water-trough with a clatter, scaring the snake so that the “part of him that was left behind convulsed in undignified haste, / Writhed like lightning and was gone.” “And immediately,” the poet goes on, “I regretted it / . . . I despised myself and

the voices of my accursed human education.” Which is to say that he realized instinctively that he had sinned against his gift, broken his covenant with the powers in the hiding place, and, as he says in the last lines of the poem, had “something to expiate, / A pettiness.”

It is Lawrence’s sixth sense that tells him he has something to expiate, and unless a poet continues to follow this sixth sense, he or she is never going to be entirely sure of the creative ground. And the reason for this is fairly obvious and fairly simple, and was stated with characteristic directness by the late Ted Hughes. A poet’s first duty, Hughes wrote, is to his gift, and yet, as he also wrote,

Many considerations assault [the poet’s] faith in the finality, wisdom and sufficiency of his gift. Its operation is not only shadowy and indefinable. It is intermittent. It has none of the obvious attachment to publicly exciting and seemingly important affairs . . . in which his intelligent contemporaries have such confidence, and so it receives no immediate encouragement.

And Hughes goes on:

Certain memories, images, sounds, feelings, thoughts, and the relationships between these, have for some reason become luminous at the core of his mind: it is in his attempt to bring them out, without impairment, into a comparatively dark world, that he makes his poems.

For a dedicated poet, in other words, the achievement of a true poem is a way of establishing self-worth in a world that does not necessarily regard poetry as being of any great worth in itself. Let me therefore proceed to consider a poem which had just such resolving effect on the poet who wrote it, a poem by Wordsworth now known canonically as “Resolution and Independence,” but originally referred to by the poet and his circle as “The Leech Gatherer.” The incident upon which the poem is based was recorded by the poet’s sister in her Grasmere journal.

“We met an old man almost double,” Dorothy Wordsworth writes on October 3, 1800. “He had on a coat thrown over his shoulders. . . . Under this he carried a bundle and had an apron on and a night cap. His face was interesting. He had dark eyes and a long nose . . . He was of Scotch parents but had been born in the army. He had had a wife, ‘a good woman, and it pleased

God to bless us with ten children.' All these were dead but one, [a sailor] of whom he had not heard for many years. . . . His trade was to gather leeches, but now leeches are scarce and he had not the strength for it. He lived by begging and was making his way to Carlisle, where he would buy a few godly books to sell. He said leeches were very scarce partly owing to this dry season, but many years they have been scarce . . . Leeches were formerly 2/6 [per] 100; they are now 30/. He had been hurt in driving a cart, his leg broke his body driven over, his skull fractured."

Even in the Wordsworths' time, the occupation of leech gathering was dying out, and the character in William's poem, who is recognizably the one described here and who presumably sold leeches to members of the medical profession, is now facing a drastic economic crisis. But when William comes to write about him, his concern is not primarily with the old man's economic prospects. What the poet is engaged on, after all, is dream work, not documentary. What absorbs him, what awakens his imagination and his powers of incantation is the equanimity with which the old man faces his crisis:

Himself he propped, his body, limbs and face,  
Upon a long grey shaft of shaven wood,  
And still as I drew near with gentle pace  
Beside the little pond or moorish flood,  
Motionless as a cloud the old man stood  
That heareth not the loud winds when they call,  
And moveth altogether, if it move at all.

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond  
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look  
Upon the muddy water, which he conned  
As if he had been reading in a book;  
And now such freedom as I could I took,  
And drawing to his side, to him did say,  
"This morning gives us promise of a glorious day."

A gentle answer did the old man make,  
In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew,  
And him with further words I thus bespake,

“What kind of work is that which you pursue?  
 This is a lonely place for one like you.”  
 He answered me with pleasure and surprise,  
 And there was while he spake a fire about his eyes.

.....  
 He told me that he to this pond had come  
 To gather leeches, being old and poor—  
 Employment hazardous and wearisome!  
 And he had many hardships to endure;  
 From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor,  
 Housing, with God’s good help, by choice or chance,  
 And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.

The old man still stood talking at my side,  
 But now his voice to me was like a stream  
 Scarce heard, nor word from word could I divide;  
 And the whole body of the man did seem  
 Like one whom I had met with in a dream,  
 Or like a man from some far region sent  
 To give me human strength by apt admonishment.

Here, as in the case of Hesiod, of Dante, of Eliot, of Lawrence, and, one might add, of Elizabeth Bishop who, when she looked through the window of her bus, saw into the big othering eyes of a moose that had come out of the *selva oscura* of the Maine woods—here, as in all those cases, the admonishing agent is one who appears in a haunted, dreamy light, like a messenger “from some far region sent.” We participate in an experience of absorption in an other life: in each case, the poet arrives on the scene either abstracted or disoriented, and is then brought more fully alive to his or her obligations and capacities—is helped, in fact, to get back in touch with his or her proper poetic gifts. The writing has a mesmeric effect, and one senses that the composition of the poem must have had a similar self-mesmerizing effect upon the poet: “Certain memories, images, sounds and feelings, and the relationship between these, have [indeed] become . . . luminous at the core of [each] poet’s mind,” and the encounter serves to remind him or her of the priority of those memories and images and the poetic obligation he or she owes to them—the obliga-

tion, that is, to bring these personally vital bits of psychic life out “without impairment, into a comparatively dark world.”

Ted Hughes was right to stress what he called the luminous aspect of such memories and images, and to insist that they are not one-off, chance occurrences but belong together in a web of relationships and are interrelated as part of an overall system of gravitation and association. The leech gatherer, for example, was connected subliminally in Wordsworth’s mind with several other solitary figures who had appeared to him in the ordinary course of his life, and who all attained a visionary dimension in his poetry subsequently. In William’s reimagining of their meeting, of course, the old man is singularly isolated, a figure who looms up against a vast moorland background, but as we can see from Dorothy’s journal, when the Wordsworths actually encountered him, they were all walking on the public road; and in fact it is instructive to compare Dorothy’s typically swift, alert, on-the-spot annotation of their encounter with the poet’s later re-envisioning of it.

The two accounts represent not only two kinds of writing but two orders of achievement, and as such they provide a way of commenting upon the exemplary nature of William Wordsworth’s art. The two orders might be characterized as the observational in the case of the journal entry and the imaginative in the case of “Resolution and Independence.” Both writings are about meeting a person at once destitute and dignified, but one is a little dossier of information about the leech gatherer as an individual broken and bent by circumstance, whilst the other is a presentation of the same man not just an individual case but, in a manner of speaking, as the very measure of man.

Dorothy is, as ever, vividly in sympathy with the figure in front of her, but the figure is still, we might say, drawn from the model. He is the focus of the writer’s daytime understanding, a life study, so to speak, but not a double, no way an inhabitant of the mythic or the oneiric world. On the other hand, what distinguishes the figure of the leech gatherer as he appears in “Resolution and Independence” is precisely this aura of strangeness, this sense that the figure is not a sociological specimen being observed and presented as a symptom of an ill-divided society, but rather somebody who has entered the poet’s consciousness as a dream presence, an emanation or, to employ Wordsworth’s own word again, an “admonition”:

The old man still stood talking at my side:  
 But now his voice to me was like a stream  
 Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;  
 And the whole body of the man did seem  
 Like one whom I had met with in a dream:  
 Or like a man from some far region sent,  
 To give me human strength by apt admonishment.

Wordsworth finished the first draft of “The Leech Gatherer” on May 9, 1802,<sup>2</sup> but even in this one stanza there is enough to remind us of this poet’s extraordinary gift of sympathy and the great unglamorous strength of his verse. Here again we are listening to poetry that vindicates the claims Wordsworth would make in his preface to the 18<sup>th</sup> edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. In that document, in words which have become familiar but are never stale, he declared:

The principal object, then, which I proposed to myself in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men; and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things would be presented to the mind in an unusual way; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature.

It’s a wonderful manifesto, and it describes accurately the appeal and exemplary quality of Wordsworth’s poetry, particularly in passages like the ones I’ve just cited. In such instances, the poet does precisely what he promises to do: he traces primary laws rather than dictates them, the law in this case being the one that says human beings, given the right conditions, have an immense and heartbreaking capacity for dignified endurance; and furthermore, to witness such endurance helps the rest of us also to endure. Yet Wordsworth does not force this conclusion; instead he divines and feels his way towards it. The coloring of imagination, as he calls it, means that a remembered incident is helped to develop into a poem in the language—all in good time and yet ahead of its time. Before Freud comes along to define the

<sup>2</sup> Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth: A Biography: The Early Years, 1770–1803* (Oxford, 1957) p. 544.

uncanny, before Joyce fixes upon his notion of the epiphany, before Lawrence puts his trust in the promptings of his creatureliness rather than the voices of his education, Wordsworth finds a way to bridge the gap between the quotidian and the visionary worlds, between a world where the conventions of social exchange issue in words like “This morning gives us promise of a glorious day” and one where human words are heard within a new and haunting acoustic, and human presence is backlit with gleams from a world of enduring forms.

Much, much more could be said and should be said about “Resolution and Independence,” but at this point I want to pass on, in conclusion, to a poem of my own which was written thirty-six years ago, during the Easter holidays of 1970. It is called “The Tollund Man,” and it could carry as its epigraph the lines, “And the whole body of the man did seem / Like one whom I had met with in a dream.” And yet the whole body of the man who inspired my poem had appeared to me only in photographs. In fact, by the time the poem got written, all that remained of the body in question was a head, preserved nowadays in a display case in a small museum in Jutland, at Silkeborg, not far from the city of Aarhus in Denmark. But those photographs had an effect on me comparable to the effect of the leech gatherer on Wordsworth. It was as if the Tollund Man and I had come from far away to a predestined meeting: a meeting where there was something familiar between us yet something that was also estranging and luminous.

The figure in question had been known to the world in general since the evening in May 1950 when he was dug up out of a bog at Tollund by two old brothers cutting peat for their kitchen range. I first met the Tollund Man, however, in a book published in 1969, a translation of a work by the Danish archaeologist P. V. Glob, entitled in English *The Bog People*, but the effect of the meeting was instantaneous. Opening Glob’s book was like opening a gate, crossing a line into a new field where the air was headier, the ground more mysteriously ancestral, the sense of scope altogether more ample. I was entranced first and foremost by the image of the old Dane’s head and face, seen in black and white, in almost life-size close-up. The man had been strangled, and around what remained of his neck there was a coil of rope, yet the features were beautifully in repose. The look of serenity

may have been produced by the pressure of the bog over the course of fifteen or twenty centuries, although there was speculation that the resigned expression came from the fact that the man had been a willing participant in a fertility rite. This, Glob suggested, could have involved his being betrothed to the goddess of the earth, being paraded on a wagon as her bridegroom, and being bedded down with her in the bog—so that spring should return and the cycle of nature be renewed.

For whatever reason, however, there was indeed a rare vulnerability about the wrinkles of the man's brow, his demure mouth, his slightly bristled upper lip, and the faint glisten of the skin on his closed eyelids. I knew from the scientific evidence that this was the head and face of a northern European countryman of the Iron Age, preserved in the peat for the best part of two millennia, yet he felt as close to me as a contemporary, as familiar as my Great Uncle Hughie, who had a similar bristle on his long upper lip and a similar weathered look that suggested both stoicism and a capacity for survival. At the same time, the head had the stillness and focus of a votive object. It did not appear like human remains. It invited contemplation, seemed capable of putting one in touch with the timeless. And yet if it could have spoken, it looked as if it might have said the kind of thing that my country elders had once been in the habit of saying. "Aye, times are hard, young Heaney," it might have remarked, "but then, aren't we hard too?"

By Easter 1970 times were indeed hard in Northern Ireland, and becoming steadily harder. Two years before, in the city of Derry, a Civil Rights march had been baton-charged by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and that clash started off a chain of events which drove the inhabitants of the place back into the fierce, frozen, ineffectual political and sectarian attitudes that for a little while in the mid-sixties had shown some signs of thaw. Now, however, the local Unionist administration had so mishandled the Nationalist minority's protests and demands for a new dispensation that the IRA had re-formed as the Provisional IRA. The Provisionals straightway resumed their armed struggle against what they regarded as the British occupation of Northern Ireland, the British Army arrived to take them on, and as I wrote at the time, we were all of a sudden "hug[ging] our little destiny again."

That phrase occurred in the dedicatory verse to my third collection, *Wintering Out* (1972), but the poem in the book which really took the measure of the times was “The Tollund Man.” Although it rehearses different images of death and atrocity committed in the course of twentieth-century Irish wars of independence and attrition, the main focus of the poem is on the iconic head, a head which had the same kind of brown baked features as Eliot’s familiar compound ghost, and which possesses to this day the same look of being “forgotten, half-recalled, both one and many.” And just as Eliot fixed what he called “a pointed scrutiny” on the face of his dawn walker, so I gazed with complete entrancement at my familiar ghost, as if he were indeed “a man from some far region sent / To give me human strength by apt admonishment.” This, then, is the poem:

I

Some day I will go to Aarhus  
To see his peat-brown head,  
The mild pods of his eye-lids,  
His pointed skin-cap.

In the flat country nearby  
Where they dug him out,  
His last gruel of winter seeds  
Caked in his stomach,

Naked except for  
The cap, noose and girdle,  
I will stand a long time.  
Bridegroom to the goddess,

She tightened her torc on him  
And opened her fen,  
Those dark juices working  
Him to a saint’s kept body,

Trove of the turfcutters’  
Honeycombed workings.  
Now his stained face  
Reposes at Aarhus.

## II

I could risk blasphemy,  
 Consecrate the cauldron bog  
 Our holy ground, and pray him  
 To make germinate

The scattered, ambushed  
 Flesh of labourers,  
 Stockinged corpses  
 Laid out in the farmyards,

Tell-tale skin and teeth  
 Flecking the sleepers  
 Of four young brothers,  
 Trailed for miles along the lines.

## III

Something of his sad freedom  
 As he rode the tumbrel  
 Should come to me, driving,  
 Saying the names

Tollund, Grauballe, Nebelgard,  
 Watching the pointing hands  
 Of country people,  
 Not knowing their tongue.

Out there in Jutland  
 In the old mankilling parishes  
 I will feel lost,  
 Unhappy and at home.

Two years after the publication of *Wintering Out*, I gave a lecture in London to members of the Royal Society of Literature. In it I said, "When I wrote ['The Tollund Man'] I had a completely new sensation, one of fear. It was a vow to go on pilgrimage and [as it came to me] I felt . . . that unless I was deeply in earnest about what I was saying, I was simply invoking dangers for myself."

This may have been a somewhat melodramatic declaration,

but the minute I wrote the lines, “Some day I will go to Aarhus / To see his peat-brown head / the mild pods of his eyelids / His pointed skin cap,” I found myself in a new field of force. It emanated from an aura that surrounded the head, an aura supplied no doubt by stories I used to hear in my Catholic childhood about the undecayed flesh of a dead body being a sign of sainthood in the living person; emanating also, perhaps, from the image of the face of Christ on Veronica’s napkin—the napkin with which she was supposed to have wiped his bleeding features as he made his way to Calvary. But here in a twentieth-century museum were the actual features of a sacrificial victim, a man of sorrows, a man who could have been my neighbor, one whose outer looks seemed to be an inviolable image of the inner state I and others shared silently in those days, “lost, unhappy and at home.”

And yet the contemplation of the face and the writing of the poem had a pacifying effect. The spirit felt less alone. Not consoled but stayed, in the words of Robert Frost, “against confusion.” And here I would go back once more to Wordsworth and notice that he begins his poem about the leech gatherer in a mood which he calls “despondency,” a mood haunted by thoughts which he calls “untoward,” and further notice that he ends absolved of these feelings, in a frame of mind that is now full of a new resolution and independence: from now on, as a result of his meeting with the old man but also of his having written the poem, Wordsworth will be inhabited, in a manner of speaking, by his inner leech gatherer, and will re-enter the usual life in a spirit that is better prepared and better disposed. When the old man has ended his discourse, which, says Wordsworth, was “cheerfully uttered, with demeanour kind,” the poet declares,

I could have laughed myself to scorn to find  
 In that decrepit man so firm a mind.  
 “God,” said I, “be my help and stay secure.  
 I’ll think of the leech gatherer on the lonely moor.”

This is an example of what the writing of a poem can do: it can lead the writer out of himself or herself, provide an experience of estrangement, and then resituate him or her in the usual life,

bemused, as it were, as if for a moment the gift for uttering truth had been possessed, as if from a laurel tree luxuriantly in bloom the Muses broke a branch and gave it for a staff and breathed a sacred voice into the mouth. Or to make the case more autobiographically, with reference to “The Tollund Man”: here was a poem written at a time when the literary scene in Northern Ireland was buzzing with debate about how the poets should be responding to the crisis in their society, a time when symposia were sizzling with the contributions of intelligent contemporaries and the ideologues were full of intensity about these exciting public events. And in that confusing Babel, my total immersion in the element of the bog man was a reminder of the necessary extra dimension and the truly credible order of poetry itself.

Needless to say, when I was writing “The Tollund Man” (the first draft came swiftly) I was not thinking of Wordsworth or Hesiod or Eliot or the Muses. When I call Wordsworth an example, I just mean to cite his poem “Resolution and Independence” as an instance of something constant in the poetic life, something indeed that is indispensable to it. Call it apt admonishment, call it contact with the hiding places, call it inspiration, call it the staying power of lyric, call it the bringing of memories that are luminous into the relatively dark world, call it what you like, but be sure it is what a poet’s inner faith and freedom depends upon. And the myth of his own meaningfulness among those intelligent contemporaries depends upon it also.