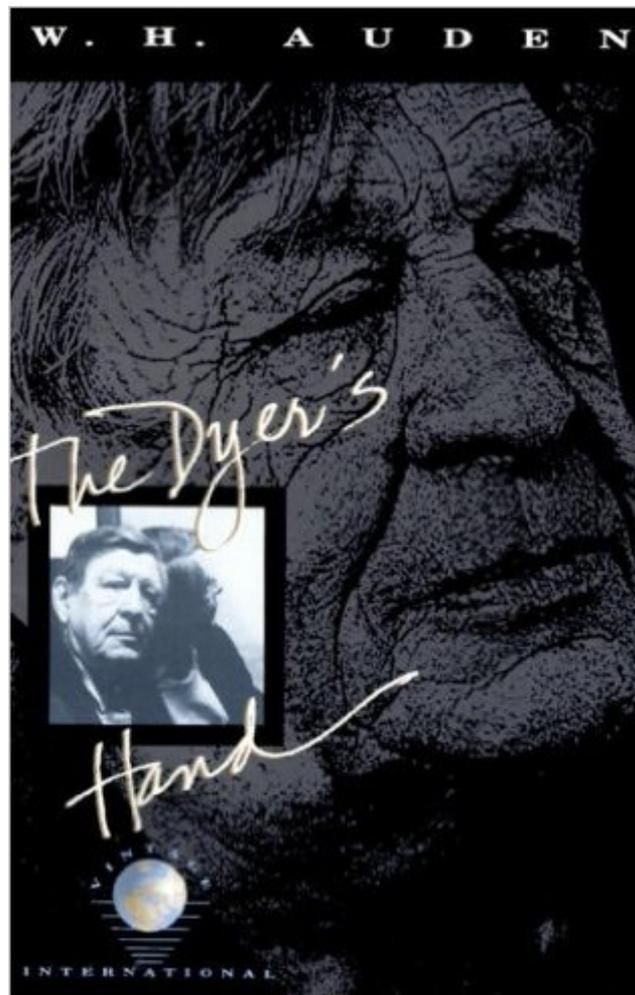


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The Dyer's Hand And Other Essays



Synopsis

In this volume, W. H. Auden assembled, edited, and arranged the best of his prose writing, including the famous lectures he delivered as Oxford Professor of Poetry. The result is less a formal collection of essays than an extended and linked series of observations on poetry, art, and the observation of life in general. The Dyer's Hand is a surprisingly personal, intimate view of the author's mind, whose central focus is poetry--Shakespearean poetry in particular--but whose province is the author's whole experience of the twentieth century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This collection of essays dealing with every type of literature -- poetry, plays, operas, comedies, tragedies -- and (almost) every essay is superb. In practically every essay Auden says things that make you slap your thigh and say, "dammit, so THAT'S why I feel like that about this play [or poem, or critic, or character in a play, etc.]" The main reason is that Auden has a superb understanding of the all-important, yet subtle, differences between different concepts, characters, types of literature, and so on. To give some examples, in one essay Auden defines perfectly the difference between PRETENDING to be in love, WISHING to be in love, THINKING one is in love, and actually being in love. In another, the difference between a comedy which makes us accept our imperfection, and a satire that makes us wish to change them. In yet another, the difference between two Shakespearian outsiders -- the Jewish Shylock and the Moor, Othello, and how their different type of "outsiderness" (Shylock, the lender, is despised but also despises the Italians, while Othello

thinks his military prowess made him acceptable, which is not so); the difference between the "I" and the "self"; between a "bore" and "a boring" person -- and show why they matter. In addition to making fine distinction, Auden is also extremely perceptive in other ways. E.g., Auden hits right on the head the problem with most literary theory written by poets: namely, that it amounts to "read me, don't read the other fellow". He notes there are numerous ways to write good poetry, and his own expertise is by no means the only way.

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