

'essential significance' and is not content with platitudes about character drawing and fullness of life. GERARD MEATH, O.P.

THE AGE OF ANXIETY. By W. H. Auden. (Faber; 8s. 6d.)

Auden's reputation as a poet was established in this country, with those of Spender, Day Lewis and MacNeice, in the early 'thirties, in those difficult years when Europe was troubled continually by war and the rumours of war. The 'twenties were over, and they had left a feeling of general disillusionment behind them: to believe seemed impossible, unless it was in some negative creed like Communism; the future was dark; doubt was the only thing about which anyone could be certain. It is to this time that many people look for the best of Auden's verse; they complain that since his departure to America and his 'conversion' a moral earnestness has pervaded his poetry which has deprived it of its early lyrical impulse. This is something that any poet who advances spiritually must expect to hear said: the deeper his contact with things greater than and outside himself, the more difficult will be their expression. And although he may have written better poems, he is here consistently at his most interesting.

*The Age of Anxiety*, which he describes as 'a Baroque Eclogue', is divided into six unequal parts and takes the form of a dialogue on All Souls' Night during the war in a bar-parlour in New York, between four people, a woman and three men, who, for one reason or another, have cause to feel acutely the anxiety of the age.

The form of the poem illustrates well Auden's versatility as a poet—the jazz-songs have all the bitter brilliance of his early ballads and the news-bulletins are clever in their brittle sharpness—but it is perhaps questionable whether the alliterative form which he uses—the form of *The Wanderer*—is justified in an age whose ears are not attuned to it. Perhaps he has used it for this very reason, to jar just sufficiently to shake the mind into an acuter awareness. At any rate, it certainly succeeds in doing this, even if at times it seems definitely out of place and imposes only a sense of strain.

Despite this, however, there can be no doubt about the extent of Auden's achievement. Nor indeed should there be about the extent of his potentiality; in *The Age of Anxiety* he gives a clear indication that it is within his capability to write something of outstanding worth in the future.

ELIZABETH KING

THE HAPPY PROFESSION. By Ellery Sedgwick. (Eyre and Spottiswoode; 15s.)

For thirty years Ellery Sedgwick was the Editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, that most urbane and influential of American reviews. His reminiscences reflect the qualities that made him so unequalled a journalist. Born into the closed world of New England privilege, educated at Harvard, thrown into the company of the famous, his story might have been intolerably smug. Instead it is gracious and