

LITERARY JOURNAL 1987

STELLA MARIS COLLEGE



NOTHING PREVAILS

BUT PITY FOR THE GRIEF THEY CANNOT FEEL

'THE PRISONERS' — SPENDER



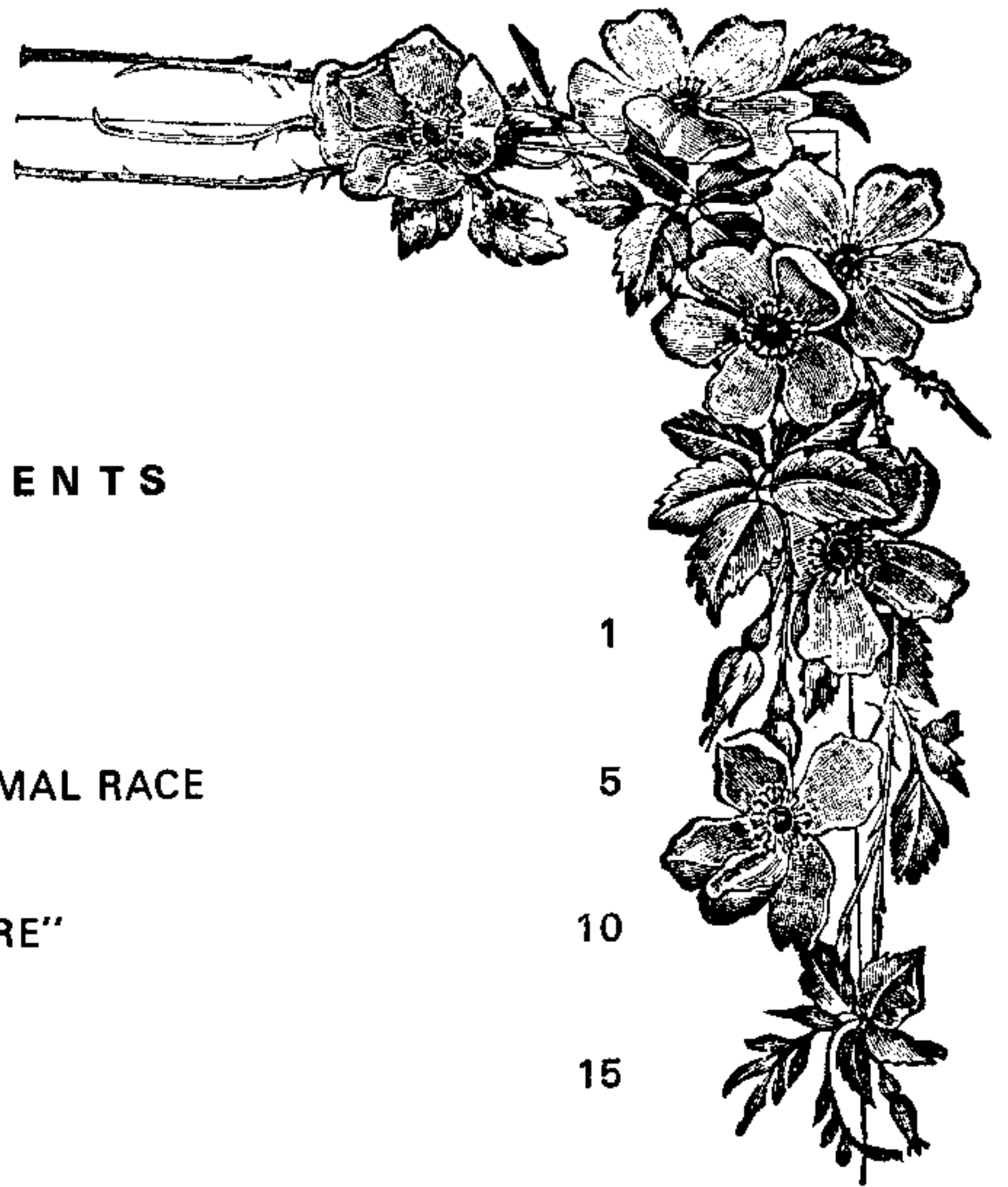
Editorial

This issue of the Literary Journal is dedicated to Sanchala Ranganathan who was an enthusiastic contributor to the journal.

The area of focus is twentieth century Literature, covering a wide range of writers, from India, America, Britain & Africa.

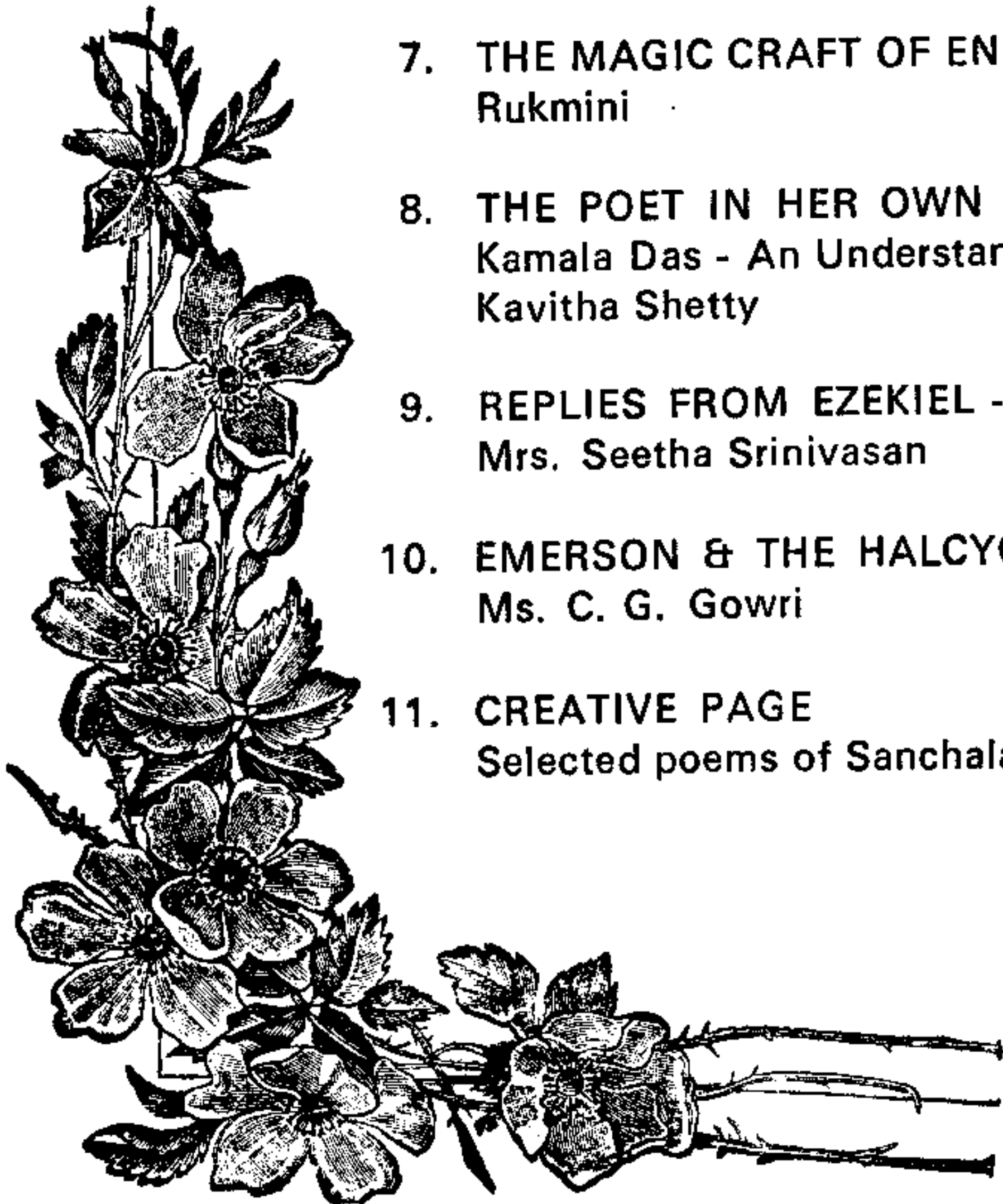
For the first time, we've introduced a creative page featuring the poetry of Sanchala Ranganathan.

Our aim in this issue has been to project a fairly balanced picture of all genres.



CONTENTS

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1. THE WAR GOD
Elizabeth Verghese | 1 |
| 2. SUPERIORITY OF THE ANIMAL RACE
Lakshmi Menon | 5 |
| 3. "...IT'S NIGHT ONCE MORE"
Pushpalatha Viswanathan | 10 |
| 4. "LOOK STRANGER"
Anita Cherian | 15 |
| 5. THE CRUCIBLE OF EMOTIONS
Shoba Vishwanathan & Rita Mathew | 22 |
| 6. A CRY FROM AFRICA
Dulanee Tampoe | 26 |
| 7. THE MAGIC CRAFT OF ENID BLYTON
Rukmini | 30 |
| 8. THE POET IN HER OWN WORDS
Kamala Das - An Understanding
Kavitha Shetty | 35 |
| 9. REPLIES FROM EZEKIEL - APRIL 1980
Mrs. Seetha Srinivasan | 37 |
| 10. EMERSON & THE HALCYON MIND
Ms. C. G. Gowri | 41 |
| 11. CREATIVE PAGE
Selected poems of Sanchala Ranganathan | 46 |



EDITORIAL BOARD

MRIDULA JOSE

PADMA MALINI

SHARON D'MONTE

CHITRA VIRARAGHAVAN, I M.A. Lit.

Cover page & lay out

CHITRA VIRARAGHAVAN, I M.A. Lit.

THE WAR GOD

“Because the conqueror
Is the victim of his own power”
(from Stephen Spender’s “The War God”)

Over the centuries, poetry has been one of many mediums through which man has expressed his feelings and thoughts about war. Reactions and attitudes to each war have been diverse and varied. The two World Wars of the Twentieth Century have wrought revolutionary changes in man. And, poetry was once again the tool of expression. The First World War not only provoked diverse attitudes but caused a whole generation of change in poetic style, diction and language, too. Until this war, the tone and mood of poetry had been one of romantic patriotism. This mood is best expressed in Rupert Brooke’s immortal poem “The Soldier”. Whereas, post World-war poets such as Stephen Spender portray the harsh, grim, misery of war. They saw the utter futility of a war fought in order that one man’s ideology or a cause maybe upheld.

Before the First World War no previous war had left behind a “poetic harvest” the likes of which was found between 1914 and 1919, written by the actual combatants. The reason for this is clear. World War I was the first war in which educated Englishmen took part either through voluntary enlistment or conscription. Educated civilians did fight in the American Civil War, however, if any Englishman was involved one can be quite certain he was not an educated one. The earlier Napoleonic and Crimean wars were fought by professional armies. So, critics found the World War poets interesting not only for what they said but also how the war affected them. In fact, Brooke’s death provided men who actually fought with the impetus to write poetry. Until then, the mass of poetry churned out was by men who viewed the war from outside. An absence of personal anguish and involvement characterised their poetry. They wrote poetry to help and contribute towards the war effort. This attempt was not merely to assuage feelings but also to keep politicians happy.

English poetry of World War I may be divided into two periods. The first period was from the beginning of the war to 1916, more specifically the Battle of Somme. The second period lasted from 1916 until the Armistice in 1918. The two periods indicate the very different moods of the people. During the first period the poets and the civilians on both sides believed in a “simple, heroic vision of a struggle for the right, of noble sacrifice for an ideal, of patriotism and country.”¹ Hopes for an early cessation of hostilities died as the war dragged on and soon it became a “war of attrition in which huge offensives were planned again and again, at a shattering cost in material and lives. The carnage and suffering were ceaseless and, to those taking part with rifle and bomb,

Stephen, Spender **THE WAR GOD**

1 John Lehmann, *The English poets of the First World War* (London : Thames and Hudson, 1981), p. 7.

increasingly pointless and full of horror."² It was no longer possible for anyone with any sensitivity to write like Brooke, Julian Grenfell or Robert Nichols. "The dreams were shattered.....it was increasingly not merely stupid but almost criminal not to negotiate an end to the slaughter."³ Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, Edmund Blunden, Isaac Rosenberg-these were the representatives of the new mood of grim disillusionment.

Rupert Brooke did not consciously react to the war, nor did he intend death and suffering to millions. He was very sensitive to the "sorrows and beastliness of war." He wrote after seeing the long columns of wretched Belgian refugees—"it's a bloody thing, half the youth of Europe blown through pain to nothingness."⁴ Timothy Rogers, the author of **Rupert Brooke: A Reappraisal and Selection**, writes "The truth is surely, that no one could have written more bitterly, more ironically, more truly of war than Rupert Brooke."⁵ There is little doubt he would have done so had he lived. Owen and Sassoon are not only fellow Georgians but his heirs in poetry writing the way he would have. Despite lack of experience, Brooke's sensitivity and perception is seen in his poem **Fragment** where as he "watched my friends at table,/Or playing cards" he thought of "perishing things and strange ghost—soon to die." But the romantic image of war never quite faded for him. Dying for the honour of one's country made one "rarer gifts than gold." While this attitude is reason enough to warrant criticism, he must be allowed the poet's right to glorious vision. It is possible "in later disillusionment he might have regretted those early poems."⁶ Yet as Donald Davie wrote "if Brooke had not existed it would have been necessary to invent him."

Stephen Spender on the other hand wrote in an atmosphere of disillusion, fear and regret. The Poets of the Thirties grew up among a generation whose teachers encouraged them to develop a social conscience. Hence it was natural they wrote poetry on social and political aspects such as unemployment, Communism, Nazism and Fascism which were brutal and inescapable facts of the day. "In their eyes the greatest weakness of the Georgians was their preoccupation with individual hopes and fears, their reluctance to tackle the kind of large-scale impersonal problems which shaped the daily lives of most human beings."⁷ Though they admired Eliot, they rejected his allusiveness and complexity. They wished to write poetry that the common man could not only understand but persuade him to follow what they thought was the right course of action.

Brooke's **1914 War Sonnets** echo the mood of chivalry and patriotism that prevailed in England at the time. They are ironic in that Brooke talked of death in terms

2 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

3 Lehmann, p.

4 Timothy Rogers, "The War Poet" Casebook Series: **Poetry of the First World War**, Dominic Hibberd, ed., (London: The Macmillan Press, 1981), p. 31.

5 Rogers *loc cit.*

6 Rogers *loc. cit.*

7 John Press, **A Map of Modern English Verse** (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 105.

of peace and safety. In "Peace" death seemed a better alternative to living in a "world grown old and cold and weary." Death is visualized as :

Where there's no ill, no grief...
Naught broken save this body, lost but breath.

Nature alone remains consistent as well as unaffected by Time in "Safety". "The winds", the "mirth and tears of man", the "autumnal earth" are a continuous cycle that will last until the end of mankind. His adherence to conventional diction is also found in the poem :

Dear ! of all happy in the hour, most blest
He who has found our hid security.

The enjambment of the two lines and the lack of the verb "to be" place emphasis on the man who has found the "hid security". There are two poems titled "The Dead". In both, the dead are raised to glorious heights. Men who attract little attention when alive gain honour and glory by dying for their country. Immortality is their gift in place of :

...work and joy, and that un hoped serene,
That men call age,...

Death made them rare than gold. However he also portrays death as "Frost"—something beautiful yet hard and cold. The sonnet "The Soldier" alone would have guaranteed Brooke immortal fame. The poem praises the anonymous battle-scarred slain English soldier—so vital for England's victories, yet, whose glories are never sung aloud.

Spender's images are like a sharply focussed photograph taken in the pristine light of the early morning sun. The simplicity and directness of his language are a part of his skill in obtaining as much meaning as is possible from every line. Examples are "He was a better target for a kiss" and "Ask, was so much expenditure justified/On the death of one so young and silly", taken from the poem "Ultima Ratio Regum" force is the final argument of the kings. The tone of the poem is one of regret and sadness for a boy who had to be the target of "One bullet in a thousand" which "kills a man." The element of love is frequently found in Spender's poems. "The War God" begins on a note of despair but ends on a note of hope :

.....under the waves
Chains defying despair
Love's need does not cease.

in a world where the slayer and the slain are caught in a ruinous cycle as the conqueror :

Remembering yesterday
...those he now vanquishes
Destroyed his hero-father.....

However, he is afraid that the "children of the slain" will "avenge their fathers." Yet another poem is "Air Raid Across the Bay at Plymouth" which contains a very onomatopoeic description of an air-raid. The poem begins with the approach of the plane while

the second section describes the plane itself. Spender then traces the flight path of the plane until finally "A sound, ragged, unseen" ends with "a thud" lighting up the whole night sky. Unconscious of the havoc and chaos all around, Nature remains serene :

...the corn
Sways, with metallic clicks.

The poem is similar to Brooke's "Safety" where Nature remains unaffected by man's insanity.

It is unfortunate that Stephen Spender is studied only in his role as a Poet of the Thirties. He foresaw the inevitable enslavement of man to his war machines. With World War II man had "surrendered the only true hope for civilization." By this time the individual neither believed he was capable of directing events nor did he accept responsibility for the ensuing results. And no poet made the mistake of supposing war to be glorious. Spender felt the air-raids of World War II were symbolic of loss of control. The pilots, their masters, the victors and the vanquished "were diminished until it seemed that they no longer had wills of their own but were automata controlled by the machines of war."⁸ Hence, Hitler who brought about the Second World War was powerless to halt it. Such a war stripped men of their individuality. The events overwhelmed and left the individual stunned and bewildered as he groped in the dark. Personal tragedy shrunk to insignificance as mass suffering became the cross all had to bear and universal disaster seemed imminent. While "Man hammers nails in Man" memories of the "blackness of that flesh/tarring the bones within a thin varnish" made one realize that to many "in its beak no dove brought answer."⁹

Thus, the two poets while writing during the first half of the century are representative of the diverse attitudes regarding each World War and the extent to which these attitudes underwent change in the course of war and experience.

ELIZABETH VERGHESE
I.M.A. Literature

8 Stephen Spender, *World Within World: An Autobiography* (1951; rpt. London: 'Memento' Selected Poems Faber and Faber, 1977), P. 284.

9 Stephen Spender, "Memento" *Selected Poems* (1951; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 59.

A Select BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Spender, Stephen. *Selected Poems* (1965; rpt, London: Faber and Faber, 1979).

Spender, Stephen. *World Within World: An Autobiographey* (1951: rpt, London: Faber and Faber, 1977).

SUPERIORITY OF THE ANIMAL RACE

SAKI'S STORIES

Story-telling is a deep-seated, primitive human instinct, born perhaps, in the imagination of some loving mother trying to put her wakeful child to sleep. Since then, the inevitable question, "what next" has fired people's imagination and found an inconceivable variety of responses in all lands and cultures testifying to this inborn talent in man.

Despite a long history as a mode of entertaining, imaginative verbal expression, the short story as we know it today, as a literary form, came into being only in the last century. England surprisingly, came late into this art, for Tchehov (Russia), Maupassant (France) and Poe (America) had already experimented and mastered the form.

Technically, a short story is "the fruit of a single moment of time, of a single incident, a single perception.....It is rooted in a single incident"¹ thus differentiating it from the novel. To some, the beginning of the short story is all important, to some, it is the end that counts. Opinion varies so largely over it that it may be concluded that the "short story can be anything the writer chooses it shall be",² pointing to the versatility of the form. The short story can take certain liberties with regard to time, place and character, which the novel cannot. What is more, it can plunge into the action without worrying about details such as atmosphere and background, so vital to the novel. The only requisites seem to be those of novelty and surprise in order to encourage the reader to lose himself in the unfolding tale.

Stevenson was the first short story writer to break away from the shadow of the novel, followed by Kipling and Maugham. Several trends coexisted in the 19th century-Detective stories (Conan Doyle), Science fiction (Wells), realism (Galsworthy, Lawrence, Conrad, Joyce, Katherine Mansfield, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf). Among the various schools was one that brought about the "sadistic revival in English comic and satiric writing"³ - the group that comprised Oscar Wilde, Max Beerbohm, 'Saki', Waugh and Firband. Their common target being the cult of convention, they show open irreverence for norms. Exploding long cherished myths, they score victories against a society resting on its faded laurels. The English character takes a tumble from its pedestal to reveal the foolishness and emptiness of life. Saki himself works out the humiliation of the aunt figure with characteristic delight through the extremely individualistic use of children and of the beast fable.

From the earliest times, the human world has stood poised against that of the animal in moralistic fables down to portrayals of human predicaments and the cause of Wild Life Preservation. Most writers have worked on the direct transference of human

1 Walter Allen, **The Short Story in English** (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1981) pg. 7.

2 H. E. Bates, **The Modern Short Story: A Critical Survey** (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1972) pg. 15.

3 V. S. Pritchett, "The Performing Lynx", **The Working Novelist** (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965) pg. 99.

qualities to animals in order to throw light on human nature itself. Saki, however, does not equate the two species to press home his evaluation of Man. **Superiority of the animal race** is the first premise on which his stories take shape. His animals display a haughty disdain of the human race and its plight and prove to be a significant contribution to the overall picture of Man emerging from his stories, which are deliberately worked out to a defeat of time-worn values and standards.

There is Saki's "story-teller" who weaves a fantastically improper tale around his group of admiring listeners. The girl who is 'horribly good' is devoured by the hungry wolf. Her goodness is no protection and it betrays her. She is made to lament it before she is devoured—"If I had not been so extraordinarily good, I should have been safe in town at this moment". (The Story-Teller). The final triumph of the story comes in Cyril's unstinted approval—"It is the only beautiful story I have ever heard". In this iconoclastic story, Saki tries to show how goodness within the world of human values is purely relative and therefore limited. Saki is quick to spot the loophole in the aunt's system of values. The story of the aunt had been about a very good little girl who was saved from a mad bull by a number of people who admired her moral character. "Wouldn't they have saved her if she hadn't been good?"—asks one of the little girls listening to this deplorably boring story. "Well, yes", admitted the aunt lamely, "but I don't think they would have run so fast to her help if they had not liked her so much". The verdict of the children, that it was "the stupidest story" they had ever heard is a good reflection upon the absurd scale of human values.

In "The Stalled Ox", we have Theophil Eshley acting quite out of the norms of

chivalry to paint his masterpiece against the discomfiture of Adela Pingsford. "Perhaps you'd like to do a nice sketch of that Ox, making itself at home in my morning-room?", she remarks sarcastically, never realising that Eshley would be ungallant enough to do just that and climb to the pinnacles of fame through her unintended generosity. So much for shining knight-hood and chivalry.

The animal is very often the bone of contention. In "The Hen", the lasting feud between Dora Bittholz and Jane Martlet is over a Bronze Leghorn which proves a bad bargain for Jane, as it turns out to be an abstainer from the egg habit. Jane's dreams of rearing a long line of pedigree chickens go up in smoke and the feud reaches its climax in the obstinate refusal of Dora Bittholz to take back the hen, and thereby admit her mistake. It becomes imperative to prevent a confrontation between the sworn enemies especially in lieu of the fact that "their remarks on each others' conduct and character have hither to been governed by the fact that only four ounces of plain speaking can be sent through the post for a penny". The extent to which the human capacity for invective and insult can be wielded over a minor matter, and the ingenuity for creating new mountains out of old mole-hills is displayed for our benefit.

"Tarquin Superbus's" afternoon-out brings in rich returns for young Matilda Cuvering. Mrs. Stossen and her daughter caught retreating in high dudgeon from a failed attempt to gain secret entry into the garden party of the season, find themselves hemmed in by the ferocious looking "Boar-pig", with no way of escape but by agreeing to contribute to Matilda's 'Fresh Air Fund'. Rather than risk discovery and commit social suicide, Mrs. Stossen submits

to blackmail only to discover Tarquin's perfect amiability and his undying passion for over-ripe medlars.

In "Mrs. Packletide's Tiger", the glory of a shoot is shadowed by the threat of disclosure. Mrs. Packletide decides to shoot a Tiger in order to eclipse and rival Loona Bimberton's achievement of a sojourn in an aeroplane. Every detail of the shoot is planned with meticulous care, down to the party at Curzon Street, with the tiger-skin rug in the foreground and the tiger-claw brooch to be sent with compliments to Loona Bimberton. The feat is achieved and Mrs. Packletide basks in the rich harvest of press photographs, and revels in the role of Diana. But the one dark spot in her bright life is the impending threat of Louisa Mebbin, whose one utterance—that the old tiger had really died of heart attack at the report of the gun that had fatally wounded the bait lamb—could ruin everything.

The incident procures by way of "hush money", a delightful week-end cottage for Louisa Vebbin. It also cures Mrs. Packletide's further aspirations in the field of big game hunting. Fame here, is expensively bought. The story is a delightful revelation of misplaced rivalry.

In "Tobermory", the animal device works in a peculiar fashion. Tobermory enters his role as English-speaking cat with vengeful gusto and proceeds to reveal character of hosts and guests alike at Lady Blemley's house-party leaving behind horrified dismay and consternation. The agitation of the guests is great when they realise the implications of the unrestricted freedom of the cat at vantage points, such as bedroom windows, especially in view of this alarming newly-acquired talent. The ambitions of the instructor—Mr. Appin and Lady

Blemley's love of her pet are barely significant considerations in the elaborate plans for Tobermory's short future. The tension of the guests as they wait for him to make his appearance and deign to drink the Strycchined milk ends on the anti-climactical note of the news of Tobermory's death at the hands of the Rectory "Tom", but the relief is universal. The high point of the story is not Tobermory's death, but the revelation of mercenary motive and veiled enmity. We are made aware of the wearying sterility of social life that must take recourse to deception and deceit. There is also man's cowardliness at times of crisis and his presumptuous self-importance in claiming mastery over his instruments. Cornelius Appin is killed by his less tolerant pupils—the elephants, when he invades their privacy to prove his greatness as a teacher of languages. What is revealed then is not merely the absurdity of man's presumptuous attempts to 'civilize' animals but the absurdity of the claim that human thought can prevail over that of animals.

There are times when punishment in human terms is too ordinary. Human cruelty is then sought to be counteracted by bestial brutality. Very often, punishment in such cases is both poetic justice and wish fulfilment. Violence, is then glorified towards these two objectives, as in "Sredni Vashtar" where Conradin turns in desperation to his polecat ferret when his cousin's persistent harassment and cruelty under the guise of correction become unbearable. The pole cat becomes the God of his little world, the last hope and sole instrument of revenge against "the woman". The shrine once discovered by Mrs. de Ropp, seems to be the end of all Conradin's hopes. "In the sting and misery of his defeat, he began to chant the hymn of his threatened idol". The wistful patience of defeat is replaced by the blazing look of triumph at the sight

of his idol vanishing in a streak with tell-tale wet signs around his mouth and the continued silence from the shed signifying the success of his revenge. The story is a faithful psychological portrayal of an emotionally neglected but imaginative child. It is also a triumph of authorial control for the boy's rising wishes of revenge though controlled by the disdainful tone of the prose is carried through the end.⁴ The story shows the second device put into use to emphasise adult cruelty and insensitiveness where the child's logic of instinct replaces the morality of the adult world. To a less intense degree, this idea is seen in stories like "The Lumber-Room" and the "Boar-Pig". There is a devilish joy in flouting adult authority, paying them back in their own coin, manipulating them and revelling in their discomfiture. In "The Lumber-Room", Nicholas displays an ingenuity far excelling that of his aunt's, when it comes to devising means of entertainment or punishment. While the aunt packs the other children off in a hastily devised outing to the beach to spite Nicholas, he himself, after shedding the few tears that decency demands, proceeds to enjoy himself in the lumber room among the tapestries, the china and the paintings. The aunt, hoping to catch him red-handed on forbidden ground slips with undignified haste into the rain water tank in the gooseberry garden. The ensuing conversation between nephew and aunt scores a victory for all children. "Oh Devil, you have sold yourself", says Nicholas in high glee, grasping with both hands, the luxury of being able to talk thus. The ultimate defeat of the aunt comes in the undignity of "unmerited detention", in a rain-water tank combined with miserable failure of the beach expedition and Nicholas's knowledge of at least one reason of its sure failure. And while the peevishness of the children and the

injured pride of the aunt cause silence to fall over the table, Nicholas indulges in silent, enjoyable speculation about the fate of the huntsman (with two arrows and three wolves to fight against) in the painting.

Nicholas's candid remarks are of a special significance. "You often don't listen when we tell you important things" — a sentiment no doubt echoed in the heart of all children, not always without justification. There is also the cheeky episode of Nicholas putting a frog into his milk (which caused his temporary quarantine) and then refusing to drink it while the aunt insisted there couldn't be one. Having put one there himself Nicholas felt quite rightly that he should know better and declares silently that 'older and wiser people have been proved to be profoundly in error in matters about which they had expressed the utmost assurance'. The truth of this statement cannot be challenged even if its context in the story is cheeky but the point of relevance is the questioning of the adult tendency to dismiss children as incapable of possessing logical reasoning, their self-given right of assuming the worst about children at all times, and their claims to infallibility.

This question is explored a little further in "The Penance" where Octavian Ruttle tries to buy his way back into the favours of the children with patronising indulgence. Having killed their cat, he hopes to climb back into favour with a few chocolates. But he finds his beloved money flung back at him in scorn and an unpleasant epithet "Beast" attached to his name. The

4. V. S. Pritchett, "The Performing Lynx", "The Working Novelist" (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), pg. 102.

children seize their chance of retaliation when he brings his baby daughter Olivia to try and break the ice. Olivia is whisked away and prepared to be fed to the pigs as revenge. Octavian has already realised that the cat was not responsible for the disappearance of his chickens and is sorry for having killed it. But when he says so, the children's rejoinder displays inexorable, unyielding child logic—"We shall be very sorry when we've killed Olivia, but we can't be sorry till we've done it." Olivia flounders in the slush before the cold, unpitying gaze of the children and Octavian Ruttle promises to stand by the cat's grave at dead of night, in a white sheet, candle in hand, repeating the words, "I'm a miserable Beast" for half an hour as "penance" in return for his daughter's safety.

The story points as much to the keen observation and perception of children as well as their potential for violence when hard-pressed—very much in the manner of adults. Ruttle learns his lesson well. There is something grand and awesome in the children's gesture of forgiveness, for Ruttle is undeniably gladdened by the scribbled message proclaiming a return into their favours....."Un Beast".

Saki's children are not violent or blood-thirsty by nature. There is, somewhere, a social cause for the awakening of the savage in the child's heart. Sometimes, violence is the only protection against a world insensible of its cruelty. Conradin's resentment grows into violent hatred only as the last defence against a growing, frightening loneliness that his cousin seems determined to perpetuate. The logic of Octavian Ruttle's neighbours is their only weapon. It is their last card that turns out a winner.

The purpose of these stories has been to show up the sometimes-unintended but

mostly deliberate insensitiveness of adults in their dealings with children. What Saki cannot condone is the guise of correction that adults resort to in these cases. It is a form of hypocrisy and self-righteousness that is unforgivable. Using the socially acceptable crutch of correction to thwart children is nothing short of meanness. The adult world must wake up from its complacent assertions of infallibility and accept its responsibility towards children, for it is their lack of understanding that is primarily responsible for the rebellion of children through violence.

That the idea of children and animals meeting out justice to human adults is absurd, is a view that will arise only in a mind incapable of perceiving it as a carefully, consistently and efficiently utilised device. A mind deceived by the lightness of tone and the undeniable humour of the situations portrayed might perhaps, fail to see the seriousness and significance of the issues Saki has raised through the use of these devices.

There is a temptation to accuse Saki of writing for the express purpose of seeing men squirm but the truth of his assertions cannot be denied. There can be no two opinions about the fact that despite the spirit of condemnation the abundant humour almost fools the reader away from the seriousness of motive.

LAKSHMI A. MENON
I M.A. Literature

Select Bibliography

Allen Walter *The Short Story in English*-Oxford Clarendon Press 1981.

Bates H. E. *The Modern Short Story: A Critical Survey* (London: Michael Joseph Ltd. 1972).

Pritchett V. S. "The Performing Lynx"—*The Working Norelist* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965).

“... IT'S NIGHT ONCE MORE”

A STUDY OF BECKETT'S PLAYS

On 19th November 1957, *Waiting for Godot* was performed before an audience consisting of fourteen hundred convicts at the San Quentin penitentiary. Despite the apprehensions that troubled the director, Herbert Blau, and the actors, the performance was an overwhelming success and was received extremely well by the audience. Curiously enough, an earlier production of the play, directed by Alan Schneider at Miami in 1955, had been a spectacular flop. Why and how did a play that had baffled most spectators and critics in London and Paris manage to get across to this audience of convicts on the very first night of the production? One possible reason was perhaps the element of identification between the convicts and the tramps. The leading article of the prison paper said of the play that “It was an expression by an author who expected each member of his audience to draw his own conclusions, make his own errors. It asked nothing in point, it forced no dramatized moral on the viewer, it held out no specific hope... We're still waiting for Godot, and shall continue to wait.”¹ Beckett's plays and novels speak of men and women who have suffered and are, by all accounts, still suffering. It is this sensitive handling of the deepest fears of man that gives his works their universality. Jack Macgowran relates how a young teenager explained to him the reasons for Beckett's popularity among younger audiences. “The more I read Sam Beckett and feel his compassion for the human condition, I realize that the magnitude of my own youthful and harrowing problems need no longer be a tortured secret, but can really be understood and shared, and my existence made much more tolerable.”² At one point in *Waiting for Godot*, Gogo tells Pozzo that his name is “Adam”. The play, indeed all of Beckett's plays and novels are about all mankind, and his characters are all used as representative figures—Didi, Gogo, Pozzo, Lucky, Winnie, Krapp, Hamm, Clov, Mrs. Rooney...the list is endless.

Bleakness and hostility characterize the Beckettian universe. His plays do not show the protagonist moving from a state of order and stability to one of total chaos. Rather they presuppose the existence of this state of disintegration. Didi says “What's the good of losing heart now, that's what I say. We should have thought of it a million years ago...”³ For each of Beckett's characters, therefore, the one thing to do is to come to terms with the meaninglessness enveloping the world. That this meaninglessness is not merely a particularized but a universal phenomenon is made evident in “Dante and the Lobster” where even the lobster is subjected to moments of excruciating pain and terror.

Beckett projects the hostility of the universe through the grotesque situations that his characters find themselves in. At the beginning of *Happy Days*, Winnie is “embedded up to above her waist in exact centre of the mound.” By Act II, she is

1 Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (Penguin Books, 1974 rpt.) p. 19-20.

2 *Beckett at 60*, (London : Caldes & Boyars, 1967) p. 24.

3 S. Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (London : Faber & Faber, 1979 rpt.) p. 10.

embedded up to her neck in the mound. Neither the wide open spaces of **Waiting for Godot** nor the claustrophobic confines of **Endgame** seem attractive. Beckett's concretization of the general atmosphere of uneasiness gets increasingly terrifying in plays like **Endgame** and **Play** where the characters are seen inside ashcons and urns respectively. Perhaps the most terrifying aspect of his plays is the total reduction of any initiative that his characters might take. Winnie is fully aware that there can be no change in her situation until something in the world changes. "I cannot move. No, something must happen, in the world, take place, some change if I am to move again."⁴ The possibilities of change, however, are extremely dim.

In a world where all other meaning seems to have dissolved, Beckett's characters attempt to relate to other human beings. It is not mere coincidence that in as many as four of his plays, **Happy Days**, **All That Fall**, **Waiting for Godot** and **Endgame**, he depicts pairs of characters who cling to each other for sustenance against the unknown.

At one point in **Waiting for Godot**, there is a reference to Ecclesiastes iv: 9-10:

"Two are better than one...for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow." The tragedy, as Beckett sees it, is that such a relationship seems no longer possible. The basic relationship, that of man and woman, has lost much of its purpose. In **Happy Days**, Winnie remains in her mound, Willie in his corner away from the sun, reading his newspaper. There is a near total lack of communication between them. Willie responds to Winnie precisely four times in the course of the play, each one of these responses being conditioned by inane comments like for example, the use of singular and plural forms when referring to hair." Most of Winnie's pained questions and comments go unanswered.

The man-woman relationship appears to have lost its primary function of procreation. Mrs. Rooney in **All That Fall**, we are told, had a daughter, Minnie, who died soon after her birth. All that Mrs. Rooney is left with are memories of what might have been, as she reminisces painfully, "In her forties now she'd be, I don't know, fifty girding up her lovely little loins getting ready for the change..."⁵ She bemoans her childlessness, "Oh, I am just a hysterical old hag I know, destroyed with sorrow and pining and gentility and churchgoing and fat and rheumatism and childlessness."⁶ Marriage does not seem to be a joyful partnership between two people who think alike, but more a painful effort to breach the differences that jostle against each other. Mrs. Rooney's lament for Minnie is offset by the possibility of Dan Rooney's killing of the child on the train.

"It was a little child fell out of the carriage, Ma'am. On to the line, Ma'am. Under the wheels, Ma'am."⁷ Significantly, the play ends with these words, "Tempest of

4 S. Beckett, **Happy Days** (London : Faber & Faber, 1976 rpt.) p. 28.

5 S. Beckett, **All That Fall** (London : Faber & Faber, 1970 rpt.) p. 12.

6 I bid., p. 9

7 I bid., p. 41.

wind and rain. It abates... Tempest of wind and rain." Storms and silence. Are these the only conditions possible in the Beckettian world? Perhaps. There is very little to choose between the tempestuous storm of **All That Fall** and the scorching heat of **Happy Days**, and the possibility of a warm and mellow sunshine breaking through this shell of pain and fear remains remote.

With **Waiting for Godot**, one comes to a complex working out of relationships. While the Pozzo-Lucky pair forms a parallel to that of Hamm and Clov in **Endgame**, that of the tramps, Didi and Gogo, includes within itself varying relationships. In Act I of the play, the Master-Slave relationship of Pozzo and Lucky, is seen in full progress. Marked by a sense of cruelty, it fails to establish its credibility. With **Endgame**, the picture gets more bleak. There is very little that is funny and there is no real evidence that Clov will walk out on Hamm. Didi and Gogo enact various roles—those of lovers, of master and slave, of friends. While this provokes a great deal of laughter, it also raises the disturbing suggestion that all relationships may be futile and that one can no longer achieve a perfect union but can only masquerade under the guise of one. Another significant idea that the Didi-Gogo relationship throws light on is the relativity of one's chances of salvation. Didi tells Gogo, "One of the thieves was saved. It's a reasonable percentage."⁸ The arbitrariness of a fifty-fifty percentage is one of the main themes of the play. If there is a fifty percent chance that Godot might make his appearance before the end of the play, there is also the possibility that he might not appear at all. The insecurity that this leads to in the minds of the characters is evident in Didi's response to the Boy's message :

"Tell him.....tell him you saw me and that.....that you saw me"⁹.

In a world as uncertain as this, it is necessary to strike out for oneself. Ultimately, it becomes a question of each individual fending for himself. Perhaps the saddest thing about the play is that even where a relationship goes beyond self-protection and self-advancement, circumstances themselves inhibit the growth of such a fruitful association. Didi cannot save Gogo from getting beaten up, however much he might want to. Besides, there is nothing that one can do about another's deepest fears.

Gogo : "Who am I to tell my private nightmares to if I can't tell them to you?"

Didi : "Let them remain private"¹⁰.

For most of Beckett's characters, part of the pain arises from this isolation. Mrs. Rooney's attempts at making friends with the others only leads to greater estrangement until she is left, at the end of the play, devoid of the support of either friends or husband. She is as alone as Krapp, lost in a world of tapes that record his own experiences.

8 I bid., p. 11.

9 I bid., p. 92.

10 I bid., p. 16.

The Beckettian protagonist is placed in an unenviable position where to go forward is painful, and to go back is not possible. Pozzo's anguished awareness of the nature of life relates to all the characters' feelings. "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more."¹¹ The longing to go back to the security of the womb expresses itself repeatedly in the foetal posture assumed by the characters. If birth is not redemptive, neither is death an escape. In *Play*, for instance, the three characters who speak (W1, W2 and M1) are no longer alive, yet they suffer just as the others do. They suspect that peace is not merely over but "as if never been".

The plays are, in a sense, about the tragedy of consciousness. For if his characters are, on one level, involved with getting to the truth of meaninglessness, to the "nothingness", they also shy away from the pain of total consciousness. While the games that Didi and Gogo play with their boots and hats and the routine that Winnie follows with her handbag may seem funny, they are necessary to them. For as Didi says, "Habit is a great deadener." In his essay on Proust, Beckett speaks of "the periods of transition that separate consecutive adaptations.....represent the perilous zones in the life of an individual, dangerous, precarious, painful, mysterious, fertile, when for a moment the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being."¹² The Beckettian character finds himself keeping to a razor's edge balance between routine and a descent to nothingness. Beneath it all is a deep sense of pain and bewilderment which grows into resignation as the plays progress. Habit becomes a defence against a truth that is known, it delays the moment of total surrender to this painful truth. Habit itself, however, is suspect. It cannot withstand the onslaught of consciousness.

Language itself becomes important as a method of defence. *Not I* expresses the need that the protagonist feels to puncture the silence of pain with words, words unintelligible perhaps but nonetheless necessary. Winnie's long monologues are meant to keep the anguish at bay, yet she confesses that "Words fail, there are times when even they fail."¹³ Didi and Gogo realize that they talk in order to postpone the act of thinking, yet even these conversations lead them back to the consciousness of their situation. In Act II, they talk about leaves but this brings them around quickly to the idea of death and ashes. There is no respite, however much one may desire it.

Another form of defence that Didi and Gogo use is that of humour noir or black comedy. The comedy is no longer amusing. Rather it is an intensification of the tragedy of life. Winnie speaks for all the characters when she says, "How can one better magnify the Almighty than by sniggering with him at his little jokes, particularly the poorer ones?"¹⁴.

All the bastions of defence crumble in the face of the flux and the uncertainty of the human condition. In such a situation, to confront this flux is a heroic, though

11 I bid., p. 89.

12 I bid., p. 58.

13 I bid., p. 20.

14 I bid., p. 24.

painful, act. Krapp looks back to what he was thirty years earlier and, in the process, realizes that "Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness."¹⁵ All his characters have come to this realisation and in their differing attitudes to this truth lies their heroism. Winnie's cheerfulness, Pozzo's urge to move on, despite his loss of the sense of time and sight, Didi's and Gogo's waiting for Godot, Krapp's annual ritual of listening to the tapes—all these require courage. Like Sisyphus, their heroism lies in their power of endurance.

What is important is not establishing the identity of Godot but that there is an area of nebulosity which man cannot penetrate. For the reader, Beckett's plays are to some extent a participatory exercise. Didi says, "We are no longer alone, waiting for the night, waiting for Godot....." For most of us wait with them, wait for our personal Godot.

PUSHPALATA VISWANATHAN
II M. A. Literature

15 S. Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape*, (London : Faber & Faber, 1973 rpt.) p. 20.

Select BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beckett, S. *All That Fall*. London : Faber and Faber, 1970 rpt.
Beckett, S. *Ends and Odds*. London : Faber and Faber, 1977.
Beckett, S. *Happy Days*. London : Faber and Faber, 1976 rpt.
Beckett, S. *Krapp's Last Tape*. London : Faber and Faber, 1973 rpt.
Beckett, S. *Play*. London : Faber and Faber, 1969 rpt.
Beckett, S. *Waiting for Godot*. London : Faber and Faber, 1979 rpt.
Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Penguin Books, 1974 rpt.

"LOOK STRANGER"

"Follow poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night
With your unconstraining Voice
Still persuade us to rejoice".

Living and writing in an age which he himself called the Age of Anxiety, Auden strived towards becoming an affirming light' an 'unconstraining Voice' attempting to dispel the gloom of the night. He was primarily, at the start, a product of his age, and was predictably enough filled with a zeal for reform. He was one of a group of socialist poets, who included his contemporaries and close friends. Mayneice, Stephen Spender and C.Say Lewis Anden, was by far the best poet of this group though he was in all honesty the most uneven of them all. This was probably a result of his belief in variety —

"By all means, let us touch our humble caps to
La poesie pure, the epic narrative,
But comedy shall get its round of claps too.
According to his power, each may give,
Only on varied diet can we live.
The pious fable and the dirty story
Share in the total literary glory".

In his work we find competence & virtuosity mingled with careless obscurity, interest and a desire to reform society with the impersonality of a clinical analysis and rhetorical drum beating. The formal is laced with the idiomatic and brilliant analysis with slapstick buffoonery.

In his poem "September 1939" Anden has called the thirties a "low, dishonest decade". The disillusionment and upheaval caused by the first world war were accentuated by the revolutionary doctrines of Darwin, Marx and Freud.

The decade began ominously with the Wall Street crash of 1929 reaching Britain in 1930. It turned the economic crisis of the past years into the Great Depression. Unemployment was at its peak in Britain. The scenes of stark suffering in the Welsh towns of Jasson and Rhonda, aroused the guilt and indignation of the bourgeoisie poets, and drove them to Marxism — more as a faith, than an economic theory. Russia, seemed to be the only country weathering the slump. Further, communism seemed to be the only real opposition to the growing horror of Nazism.

The rise of Mussolini and Fascism in Italy and Hitler and Nazism in Germany only seemed to prove the theories of Freud. It also gave credence to Auden's idea of a 'sick'

ailing society. Hitler, Mussolini, Fascism & Nazism came to be seen as living dramatisations of the monstrous worlds of the unconscious.

“Accurate scholarship can
Unearth the whole offence
That has driven a culture mad,
Find what occurred at Linz
What huge image made
A psychopathic god:
I and the public know
Those to whom evil is done
Do evil in return”.

The clouds of War loomed large over Europe and Asia till War was finally declared in 1939, following Hitler’s conquest of Poland.

The civil war in Spain, which started in 1936, was to be a turning point for Auden and the other poets of the ‘socialist group’. The War in Spain led to a “polarisation” of political feeling in Britain. Auden, Spender and other young poets involved themselves in the War—usually joining the Leftist Republicans. They returned from the War their ardour for Marxism, much diminished. The War, however, gave the poets a new, exciting focus, a chance to experience reality and test their revolutionary ideas. Allan Rodway, says “The Spanish Civil War gave the new myth drama, simplicity (Clear cut good and evil) and above all urgent simplicity

“On that arid square, that fragment nipped off from hot
Africa, soldered so crudely to inventive Europe,
On that table land scored by rivers,
Our fevers menacing shapes are precise and alive”.

Auden, fabricated a ‘private, secondary World’ to write and create in. He acknowledged that these ‘secondary Worlds’ were formative to his poetry, from them he learned “certain Principles “that applied to all artistic fabrications”. The poet says, Auden, “must never make a statement simply because it sounds poetically exciting, he must also believe it to be true”. “Poetry” says Auden is not concerned with teaching people what to do, but with extending our knowledge of good and evil, leading us to a point where it is possible to make a rational and moral choice”.

The poet he feels should preserve a “necessary impersonality”. His attitude should be detailed “clinical, like a surgeon concerned with the well being of the individual and society”. Auden is a moralist, concerned with the problem of human guilt. His own guilt—the guilt of being a comfortably reared Englishman”.

“And gentle do not care to know
Where Poland draws her eastern bow
What violence is done
Nor asked what doubtful act allows

Our freedom in this country house,
Our picnics in the Sun".

The influence of Freudian thought is evident in Auden's poetry. Freud's theory that the repression of unwelcome impulses into the subconscious was undesirable because they were then beyond control and apt to emerge in perverted or distorted forms—becomes the basis of several of Auden's poems. The 'Sickness' of contemporary society was a result of repression.

"A human forest all by one infection cancelled
Despair, so far invading, every tissue has destroyed in these
The hidden seat of the desire and the intelligence".

It is Auden's belief that the psychological ills that beset society are greater than the political. The enemy manifests himself in several forms and we have to destroy them. "He is the destroyer of life and love and his agents malaise, cowardice, inability to 'cope', inertia, the longing for death, frustration, the ingrown will, reason without emotion, self-regard. The enemy is all the fear and negation which helps to dry and deaden".

It was to this society filled with people lost in a haunted Wood who are like "Children afraid of the night" that Freud revealed through his "undiscouraged shining" the "assurance of escape".

In his elegy to Freud, he say

"but he went his way,
Down among the Lost people like Dante, down
To the stinking fosse where the injured
Lead the ugly life of the rejected,

And showed us what evil is: not as we thought Deeds that must be punished,
but our lack of faith,

Our dishonest mood of denial
The concupiscence of the oppressor".

He concludes the poem in splendid tribute

One rational voice is dumb: over a grave
The household of Impulse mourns our deeply loved.

Sad is Eros, builder of cities,
And weeping Anarchic Aphrodite".

Auden, dabbled in Marxist politics. His comfortable background, however, denied him the social experience which his 'Naive, theoretical' politics needed to mature. His political poetry is therefore clumsy and inept. His study of Marx was incomplete. Allan Roadway, says, "Auden, was something of a magpie thinker.....brilliant, but not original

swift, adaptable and ready to pick up anything that glittered.....any bit of Mirror that would reflect his experience". He was not interested in the economic aspect of Marx's theories, his interest lay with what, he (Marx) said on revolution and man's alienation under the capitalist system. Auden's philosophy, was thus composed of a rather arbitrary amalgam of Freud and Marx. Marx was adopted to suit his views on Freud and the needs of his poetic vision.

There is a definite aim to Auden's poetry, an aim to awaken and to teach. He experimented for this reason with various forms and wrote poems which dealt with serious thomes in a lighthearted "buddy can you spare a dime fashion". "Refugee Blues", a poem dealing with the miseries of expatriate Jews, is written for Jazz singing. The serious theme of "Farewell to the Drawing Room's Mannerly cry" is treated with frivolity within the confines of the ballad form. Using these forms, Auden, attempted to 'catch' the ear of those who would not normally read poetry.

In "Farewell" nowhere are the Spanish civil war, or Hitler, Mussolini Freud or Marx mentioned. Yet, Auden implies the influence of them all, and points to the relationship between them

"For the devil has broken parole and arisen,
He has dynamited his way out of prison
Out of the well where his Papa throws
The rebel angel, the outcast rose".

"Like influenza he walks abroad
O were he to triumph, dear heart you know
To what depths of Shame, he would drag you low".

An eccentric, Auden, pandered to his eccentricities. Eccentricity was in keeping with his steadfast belief in individuality, and the right to 'not' conform. To conform would mean to stifle the originality.

"I hate the modern trick, to tell the truth
Of straightening out the kinks in the young mind,
Our passion for the tender plant of youth,
Our hatred for all weeds of every kind.
Slogans are bad: the best that I can find
Is this: Let each child, have that's in our care
As much neurosis as the child can bear".

—Letter to Lor Byron.

Auden's love poetry is written in a manner consistent to his other poetry. He is ever the outsider—watching and waiting. His love poetry meditates rather than emotes. The meaning of the word 'love' itself can never be pinned down, it is being constantly modified. 'Love' inspires an unusual lyricism in the lyric, "O Love, the Interest itself in Thoughtless Heaven"—"O Love, the interest itself in thoughtless Heaven Makes simpler daily the beating of man's heart within". Though, Auden's 'Love' does owe something

to Freud's 'erotic instinct', it is to him a gloriously therapeutic power, a releasing energising force—

“The word is love
Surely one fearless Kiss would cure
The Million fevers”.

In “1st September—1939” Auden talks at length of the “Waves of anger and fear” which ‘Obsess’ our “private lives” He is almost cynical as he speaks of the

“ error bred in the bone
of each woman and each man
craves what it cannot have,
Not universal love
But to be loved alone”.

Love is a ‘creative’ force and so must ‘out’, refused its natural growth it may take on a horrible disguise—“the false attitudes of love”, like the excessive love of self, and the insane striving for worldly recognition.

Scenery was at best, in Auden’s poetry, a backdrop against which the human situation could be studied, or a symbol for the activity of the human psyche. Richard Hoggart comments “Auden, has no trace of anthropomorphism and could never draw a moral from the contemplation of nature in the way Wordsworth did”.

Auden’s geography is always political or economic as seen in “Spain”. His settings whether natural or urban are usually stark. They reveal with clarity the distortions that personality and a mechanised civilization have wrought on them. His poem “Get there if you can” reveals the paraphernalia which inhabits today’s landscape.

“Smokeless chimneys, damaged bridges,
rotting wharves, and choked canals,
Tram lines bulked, smashed trucks lying
on their sides across the rails”.

“Look Stranger” is one of Auden’s few poems of natural description. Even, here there is a recall of attention to the voluntary errands” undertaken by man, at the end — “Far off like floating seeds the ships Diverge on urgent voluntary errands”

Auden’s imagery almost always tends to make us ‘see more than feel or ‘sense’. The images he uses are of a dozen, different kinds. Each is unique.

Very little of his poetry uses the images of landscape to convey their meaning — landscape usually serves as backdrop and very rarely has an entity of its own. In “Look Stranger” however we see an unfamiliar Auden, revelling in the beauties of nature

“Here at the small fields, ending pause
When the chalk wall falls to the foam and its tall ledges
Oppose the pluck
And Knock of the tide

And the shingle scrambles after the sucking Surf,
And the gull lodges,
A movement on its sheer side".

The nature imagery of this poem can be contrasted to the imagery used in "A Summer Night" — 1933, Where the sea's destructive capabilities are emphasized. The image of the sea 'crumbling' the dyke is used to hint at the ominous political situation which is soon to ensure. Auden, is a poet of the intellect. His poetry is not a vehicle of romantic self expression, it expresses instead the nature and character of the subject or theme upon which he fixes his attention feeling is rarely involved and sees things in "long perspective". "He analyses clinically the ailment of society, diagnoses its condition and occasionally suggests a remedy, "as he does in the Chorus: so under, the Local Images" where he urges us to repent", "unite" and "act".

The term 'modern' can be used to describe his art —he was modern, more in what he said, than how he said it. "He was obsessed with poetic craftsmanship and admired the formal neatness and clarity of Pope and the Civilized urbanity of Horace and Goethe" (Rodway). From Eliot he learnt the use of the symbolist idiom and from Wilfred Owen—the half rhyme. His poem catered to the modern whim that poems should 'be' and not say. They therefore, show an elliptical curt grammar, picked up from Anglo Saxon and Norse alliterative verse.

Auden's poetry has often been accused of 'obscurity'. This obscurity arises from his unusual handling of language and the desire to be fashionably difficult. There is also the complexity which arises from the nature of the experience that must be expressed — to appreciate which the reader must have an intellectual capability equal to the writer.

Auden, experimented widely with form. He is reported to have said — "I always have two things in my head — I always have a theme and a form. The form looks for the theme, the theme looks for the form and when they come together, you are able to write". His repertoire ranges from the cryptic, curt, verse forms which show the influence of Anglo Saxon verse to the colloquial, mock heroic and the satiric. He has made use of them all the lyric, the farce, the burlesque and the dirty story. In an attempt to win a wider audience for poetry he has written poems meant for jazz singing like Refugee Blues", and placed the serious, general theme of Farewell to the drawing Room's Mannerly cry", in the popular ballad form". Letter to Lord Byron", "Miss Gee" and "Victor" are examples of his expert handling of satiric, light verse.

Auden's so called "journalistic eye" exposes him to criticism on charges of a propensity for side stepping". There is in his work a reluctance to probe contents and an unseemly eagerness to generalize. Like Yeats he has been accused of falsifying human data" to make a point.

In spite of these faults, Auden's poetry is admirable. His extra ordinary social and psychological concern, if not perceptiveness makes, it so, as does his love for

humanity, his concern for her health his courage, his desire to "show an affirming flame" in a world "beleaguered" by "negation and despair". The spirit of Auden is exemplified in his tribute to the poet Yeats — where he says

"In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise".

ANITA CHERIAN
II B.A. Lit.,

BIBLIOGRAPHY :

1. A Preface to Auden — Allan Rodway Preface Books. Longman group — 1984.
2. Auden — An Introductory Essay — Richard Moggart Pub — by chatto and Windus — ed — 1951.
3. The Twentieth Century Poets—Mauriee Wollmass Oxf. University Press—1977.
4. Poetry of the 1930's Ed — Allan Rodway Longmans — 1967.
5. Fifty Modern British Poets — A Reader's guide Michael Schmidt — Ind — ed — 1980.
6. York Notes on W. H. Auden — 1985.

POEMS REFERRED TO :—

from THE DOE BENEATH THE SKIN — 1935, the Choruses

1. The Summer holds.
2. You with shooting sticks from LOOK STRANGER — 1936.
3. A Summer Night — 1933.
4. Look, Stranger from ANOTHER TIME — 1940.
5. Its farewell to the drawing — room's Mannerly cry.
6. Lay your sleeping Head.
7. Refugee Blues.
8. In Memory of Sigmund Freud (d. September—1939).
9. O Love, the interest itself in thoughtless Heaven.
10. 1st September—1939.
11. Spain.
12. Letter to Lord Byron.
13. Get there if you can.

The Crucible of Emotions

“Ours is a divided empire in which certain ideas and emotions and actions are of God, and their opposite are of Lucifer. It is impossible for some men to conceive of a morality without sin as an earth without ‘sky’. Since 1692 a great but superficial change has wiped out God’s beard and the devil’s horns, but the world is still gripped between two diametrically opposed absolutes.” (The Crucible). Miller saw this distinction as existing not merely in the past but also the present. But while in the past we had God and Lucifer in opposition, “there are now communists and capitalists, and in each camp there is certain proof that spies of each side are at work undermining each other.” Miller states this in one of his meditative intrusions into the action of the play, and this seems to form the basis on which the play ‘The Crucible’ has been built.

Arthur Miller’s play ‘The Crucible’ written in 1953, and produced later in the same year, at Martin Back Theatre, New York, conveyed an atmosphere of ominousness, which may be related not only to the play’s but also to the contemporary 20th century scene.

In the 1940’s the United States & Soviet Union had developed a feeling of antagonism towards each other. And in both countries a total commitment to the prevailing ideology was enjoined upon all citizens. In such an atmosphere to be suspected of sympathy for capitalism in a communist economy, or for communism in a free enterprise economy, could bring upon the suspect sudden trial, rapid death or lingering social disgrace. Thus by processes of persuasion and intimidation,

the majority of the people were encouraged to remain in conformity to the existing social system. This sense of conspiracy and intrigue makes the years of the late 40’s and early 50’s a dark grotesque period, when hypocrisy seemed institutionalised and individuals crushed beneath a new type of fear. It was a fear based on ideology and each citizen had to examine his conscience to find where he stood: the examination was conducted not before God, but before the prevailing ideology of the empire within which he lived.

When Miller reflected on this situation, which he dramatized within a historical setting in ‘The Crucible’, he wrote in ironic & disparaging terms of imposed ideologies conformity: “Political opposition, thereby, is given an inhumane over lay which then justifies the abrogation of all normally applied customs of civilized intercourse. A political party is equated with moral right, and opposition to it with diabolic malevolence. Once such an equation is effectively made, society becomes a conger of plots and counter-plots, and the main role of govt. changes from that of the arbiter to that of the scourge of God.” (The Crucible).

This phenomenon had appeared in America too-as Mccarthyism. Appealing to American rationalist sentiment, Senator Joseph Mccarthy conducted hearings in which selected fellow-citizens were accused of possession, or of having possessed in the past, communist sympathies. As a consequence, it was asserted, American defence had been undermined. Many men & women were arraigned in this period, urged

to confess their true affiliations and reveal the names of acquaintances whom they regarded as communist sympathisers. Those who refused collaboration endured ordeal by slander, deprivation of jobs, and in some cases preferred temporary exile abroad to further existence in the United States. Thus a country dedicated to liberty seemed suddenly to have negated its own ideals. The people were denied the freedom to express dissent.

Characteristically in a manner which is central for understanding 'The Crucible', Miller goes behind the reality of the immediate situation; instead of writing a documentary style account of the "Witch-hunt by the committee, he seeks to dramatize 'principles' of human behaviour inherent in a civilized society. The 'principle' of keeping faith preserves the "customs of civilized intercourse." To break faith i. e., collaborate with, or confess to, the interrogators-may lead to destruction of civilization. In this dramatized dilemma of conscience there is an element of autobiography, for Miller was himself one of the victims of political investigation. The writing of 'The Crucible' was an attempt to examine and analyse the principle within such a phenomenon of accusation, prosecution & hysteria. Although 'The Crucible' should never be seen as a mechanical parable about Mccarthyite America, the atmosphere of dread in the Salem of 1692 may be paralleled with the world of the late 1940's and early 50's.

It is interesting to note Miller's reason for writing the play. "It was not only the rise of McCarthyism that moved me," Miller wrote in the introduction of his collected plays, "but something which was much more weird and mysterious. It was the fact that a political, objective, knowledgeable campaign from the far right was cap-

able not only of creating terror, but a new subjective reality, a veritable mystique which was gradually assuming even a holy resonance. That so interior subjective an emotion could have been so manifestly created from without was a marvel to me. It underlies every word in 'The Crucible'. I saw forming a kind of interior mechanism of confession and forgiveness of sins. New sins were being created monthly. It was very odd how quickly they were accepted into the new orthodoxy, quite as though they had been there since the beginning of time. Above all, above all horrors, I saw accepted the notion that conscience was no longer a private matter, but one of state administration. I saw men handing conscience to other men and thanking them for the opportunity of doing so". Feeling as he did he had to show how reprehensible the conduct of the committee was in his eyes, and in the eyes of all thinking men. Going back into America's history he dug up the records of the Salem witchcraft trials, and created his own characters based on the few facts of "Known behaviour" of the persons involved. The result was a powerful indictment of mass hysteria and savage fury born of terror and superstition.

The play is set in the little community of Salem, which Miller describes as a "theocracy - a combination of state & religious power" whose function was to keep the community together, and to prevent anykind of disunity that might open it to destruction by material & ideological enemies". Individual dissent was not permitted and when the common unity was thought to be threatened, the guardians of society and many citizens over-reacted, in their confusion thus adding panic to panic. In the resultant disorder, opportunity was provided for smouldering jealousies between acquaintances to kindle, neighbours to covet neighbours

goods and false accusations of witchcraft to be made against others in the hope of personal economic gains. As Miller puts it: "Old scores can be settled on a plane of heavenly combat between Lucifer and the Lord; suspicious & envy of the miserable towards the happy could and did burst out in the general revenge." All that had seemed "natural" and guided by providence in the society was now perversely infected by the dark power of disorder. It is historically true that a disorder of considerable proportions had afflicted the village of Salem in 1692. Public feeling boiled to such an intensity in this crucible of emotion that few citizens escaped. During this period, parents were jailed children left destitute and homes despoiled. 19 people were executed on charges of witchcraft and one Giles Corey was crushed to death. And yet this crisis had grown from small beginnings.

During 1691, '92, a group of young girls including Abigail Williams and Mary Warren had formed a group which practised things like palmistry and fortune-telling and even danced in the nearby forest in the night - all things not permitted by the high moral standards of the Puritan society. When their activities began to be suspected, the girls either out of fear or rebelliousness began accusing prominent adults. The leaders and people were so influenced by a narrow dogmatism, they were incapable of perceiving simple causes for events; their ideological view confused them so that conspiracy was felt on all sides and fanaticism replaced reason. It was thus that the girls came to be seen as "afflicted girls" and their feigned convulsive spasms and sharp cries had 'diabolical' causes ascribed to them. In Miller's perspective, the social tragedy he dramatized was "the everlasting conflict between people so fanatically wedded to

orthodoxy that they could not cope with the evidence of their senses". (The Saturday Review, 31 Jan. 1953).

All the names used in 'The Crucible' are authentic, as are the fates of the persons. However, as little is really known of the villagers' lives or temperaments, the characters behind the names have been "rounded out" by Miller's dramatic imagination.

The first scene opens with a distraught Rev. Parris, worried about his daughter's illness. Susanna Walcott, who comes to meet Rev. Parris tells him of Dr. Grigg's advice to the father that he "might look to unnatural things for the cause" of his child's sickness. Parris has reason to be affected by this warning for he knows that his daughter Betty along with his niece Abigail and slave Tituba had done things prohibited by the society, thus entering what is in the popular imagination that "disorderly" domain of a devil. Parris' fear at this time is based on the fact that he feels his ministry will be taken from him because of all this talk of witchcraft. Meanwhile Rev. John Hale, who has been called to Salem to investigate the situation is also convinced that it is true. This gives free reign to the girls to carry on as they want, and we see the tension in the play rising with each baseless accusation they make - their freedom making them lose all sense of discrimination. And we find the culmination of these outrageous accusations in Abigail's accusation of Elizabeth Proctor — which is in truth nothing but the venting of personal vengeance. Abigail had shared an adulterous relationship with John Proctor and his return to sexual fidelity frustrates her and she hits back at Elizabeth Proctor by deliberately setting up a trap to arrest her on charge of practice of witchcraft, and connives at judicial murder.

Elizabeth possesses a sharp psychological insight into her husband's character. Aware that Abigail, "thinks to kill me, then to take my place", She warns her husband, "you have a faulty understanding of young girls". In contrast to Abigail who is characterized by her willingness to lie, the thought of deliberate lying is repugnant to Elizabeth, and Miller exploits this trait of her character to give a remarkably effective climax in the Third Act :— During the trial John Proctor tells Deputy Governor Danforth, "that woman will never lie". But, then in an effort to protect John's reputation Elizabeth sacrifices the principle she holds most dear ; she lies, and by the terrible irony of fate assists the condemnation of her husband.

The period of separation and imprisonment effects a change in her. When she visits John before his execution, she still refuses to judge him, although she is confronted with a situation to which her fundamental principle is opposed — John to save his life, considers the possibility of lying by signing a confession of guilt. She is quietly resolute even in the face of this possibility.

"It is not my soul John, it is yours only be sure of this, for I know it now : whatever you will do, it is a good man does it."

Elizabeth has found a new deeper knowledge through tribulation and a process of self-examination. Unjust accusation, her husband imperiling himself to save her, her own unintentional condemnation of John, imprisonment and pregnancy have all contributed to this self-knowledge. Meanwhile John Proctor has also undergone a profound change, his attitude has changed he has realised the importance of living upto his own ideals and for his own conscience.

Miller felt that tragedy today may dramatize the predicament of a common man — "I believe that the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense

as king's were." To be wounded by indignity, filled with growing indignation and to struggle in securing a personal dignity is to be the experience of the common man-tragic hero and it is the experience of John Proctor. If the protagonist accepts the indignity imposed upon him — he could survive as an ordinary man without tragic significance. Instead John Proctor protests, refusing conformity to the forces surrounding him. In other words, he discovers painfully through experience—an individual course of action ; he commits himself to this, and does so with such intensity that violence is unleashed against him. His intensity of commitment varies through the drama as does the retributive violence, inflicted on him. "His questing after knowledge is a process of mind — a fluidity opposed to the rigidity of accusers and prosecutors — by which a degree of self knowledge and integrity is ultimately found. And most important in the social dimensions of the drama is awareness that consistent, reiterated and public mendacity can compound disorder make what is unnatural or evil seem morally right and just. Against this reversal of values, a person can only seek to live by an inner "goodness". And Proctor's character reinforces this.

In 'Tragedy and the common Man' Miller spoke of what was according to him the central purpose of tragedy : "In them and in them alone, lies the belief optimistic, if you will, the perfectability of man". Miller has succeeded in evoking this optimistic response in 'The Crucible'.

SHOBA VISHWANATHAN
RITA MATHEW
II B.A., Lit.,

Bibliography :

Modern American Playwrights—Jean Gould
(Publishes-Popular Prakasham)

The Crucible (A criticism)—Published by
Basil Blackwell & Molt Ltd.,

A Cry from Africa

Thomas Jefferson the great theoretician of American freedom believed at least in his active years that negroes have a lower grade of talent than whites.

The Poet Kipling said something about black men being half-devil and half-child.

The famous Humanitarian Albert Schweitzer sees no reason to doubt that he is the black man's brother, only he thinks of himself as the older or 'senior brother'.

One independent Country in the African Continent today is committed to the belief that the rule of black people is the negation of Christianity and civilization and the rule of white people is synonymous with civilization.

In a world bedevilled with these and much worse beliefs is it any wonder that black nations should attempt to demonstrate (sometimes with exaggerated aggressiveness) that they are as good-and better than their detractors ?

This presents the African writer with a great challenge. African writers, unlike writers in some other countries with similar colonial pasts, have not turned their backs on their own cultures but have faced up to the many problems—political ; social ; educational, and cultural—which colonialisation has produced, and have sought solutions for them in imaginative form, and seeks to identify these things of real value to contemporary African society in the colonial experience.

When the majority of the African States became independent, the problem took on a new aspect. The recovery of freedom and dignity that the Negro writer had given himself as an aim, meant that the new perspectives were needed and a solution that would take into account the change of circumstances. The struggle against colonialisation had to give place to taking part in building the city of the future.

A Black Poet, of African descent, the West Indian Derek Walcott in his poem "A Far Cry From Africa" takes a humanitarian insight of the black and white situation. He takes no sides but is in search of an identity. Instead of decrying colonialisation, he speaks of the cruelty and suffering that both sides had to face.

"I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
Where shall I turn, divided to the vein ?;
I who have cursed
The drunken officer of British rule, how can I choose,
Between this Africa and the English tongue I Love ?

He is expressing the needs and feelings of the people, and is not indifferent to humanity in question, for no thinking African can escape the pain of the wounds inflicted by colonialisation. One finds in this poem that Derek Walcott is taking an educated step towards regaining belief in being recognized.

**“What is that to the white child hacked in bed?
To savage, expendable as Jews?”**

He negates the question of black and white clashes by bringing out the futility of the racial element. The figure of the white child which (according to his human insight) is useless to both sides but stands alone as a human being. One could bring to light the words of Chinua Achebe.

“If I were God I would regard as the very worst our acceptance — for whatever reason — of racial inferiority. It is too late in the day to get worked up about it or to blame others, much as they may deserve such blame and condemnation. What we need to do is to look back and try to find out where we went wrong, where the rain began to beat us”.

In the face of colonisation Walcott continues-

**“Again brutish necessity wipes its hands
Upon the napkin of a dirty cause, again
A waste of our compassion, as with Spain,
The gorilla wrestles with the Superman.”**

The confrontation with Europe and the human violation has resulted in most African writers trying to regain belief in themselves and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement. For an African writing in English, he often finds himself describing situations or modes of thought which have no direct equivalent in the English way of life. Like Derek Walcott his mastery of English has brought out adequately African thought.

All these explanations come back to the dual public of the African writer and to the almost wholly exclusive orientation of his work towards Europe. The same cry is going up everywhere and there is a general agreement as to the situation of the writer in search of a public. What is particular about African thought and literature is that it hopes to satisfy two different publics. In every country what writers want most of all is to be national, bearing witness to the intelligence and sensitivity of a specific people. They claim to be synthesizing the cultural traditions of the West and African culture.

The colonial situation, the western education of the writers, the extent and depth of receptivity of European public, the language the writer has in common with his public, all determined the orientation of this writing.

The writer took an active part in the fight against colonisation, challenging the world to deny the political and cultural maturity of Africa. “A far cry of Africa” challenges the world on two different fronts. The first step was to convince the west of the divorce existing between the ideals it professed and the outrage to man’s dignity that was colonisation. Secondly the great mass of the African people had to be given hope, first through eliminating the theory of assimilation by producing proof of the specific nature of Negro culture and traditions and showing that Africans can be proud of these, as of their culture and historical past. They also had to be made aware of their inalienable right to freedom.

**“How can I face such slaughter and be cool?”
How can I turn from Africa and live?”**

The objective aimed at was to make Africans realize what was their genuine personality and arm them so that they could win back their dignity. The African writers without any real means of communicating with his people whose language he does not know, and from whom he has been cut off for some decades, had to direct his action mainly towards the west which he had to convince of the necessity of adopting an attitude towards Africa which would be more compatible with its democratic ideals.

Paul Niger felt compelled to defend the black continent in his poem—“Je n’aime pas L’ Afrique” and takes a different approach to Walcott, he chooses to demand, be angry, rave about Africa that is exploited-

**“Africa is going to speak
Because it is her turn now to make demands,
I wanted a land where men were men
and not wolves
and not sheep
and not serpents
and not camelions,
I wanted a land where the land was land,
Where harvest was harvest”**

Also David Rubadiri, a Malawi educator, poet and once his country’s Ambassador to Washington D. C. writes in the same vein in one of his college poems entitled “The tide that from the West washes Africa to the Bones”. It is an angry voice of protest of revolution such that one hears the tides of western culture and domination buffeting the skeletal form of Africa.

**“The tide that from the West
Washes Africa to the bones,
Gargles through my ribs,
Gathers the bones clustering
Rough and polishes.....”**

An East African writer R. C. Nturu, a graduate of Makerere, is a poet who has the advantage of the production of a sizeable canon of literary works. He is able to summarize African Literature over the past fifteen years.

“The key word in the consideration of the modern trends in African writing is disenchantment or disillusionment. In this respect, there are very few African writers of whom we can say, this one is modern, this one is conventional or unmodern. Soyinka, Achebe, Lo Liyong and others exhibit conventional and modern aspects in their writings”.

This is evident in Nturu’s Poem “To the Living” where he combines the western and ancient living ritual within the framework of the English language.

“On graves till nights when nude priests,
In mortal ecstasy,
Bless multi coloured anti-amulets.....
To the rhythm of the drum of death”

This experience is remote from any western poet. He realizes that there is a lack of self-realization and tries to establish identity.

“But we who,
Clutch at tattered totems
And turn away from solar solace”

This lack of identity and self-realization intensifies at the end of the poem when he asks the question—

“Hands that would embrace-
What dreams are we capable of?”

This brings us to Nturu's plea for a creative literature that Africa could call its own. He believes that this tradition must be based on the conviction that literature has an important place in the African culture.

He says—

“Ideally the serious critic should be familiar with the writer's cultural milieu, even if he is not of it, and he should interpret his role very largely in terms of nurturing both the literature he is criticizing and the reading public”.

On conclusion we could summarize African poetry into three eras. Firstly the pre-colonial tradition which was collective and which involved the participation of the individual villager in the collective expression of joys, sorrows, anger, hatred or even pious sentiments. This era was supplanted by the colonial era during which poetry moved away from the community partly because of linguistic difficulties and the new medium of expression English, Spanish, French or Portuguese. But the poet continued to be actively involved quite often as a leader or reformer in the affairs of his people and thus expressed their sense of frustration and revolt against oppression in his poetry. However with the break in this negative bond of union-colonialism giving way to independence very little appears now to tie the poet to his people. The post - independence poetry thus tends to be personal rather than collective, introspective rather than revolutionary.

He is simply writing as an individual alone in an existential world, expressing ideas that strike a chord once in a while in the hearts of the people.

DULANEE TAMPOE
II B. A. Literature

Bibliography

1. 'African writers on African Writing' (1973) pgs. 56-8, 96-7, 100.
2. 'Literatures of the world in English-Kenya (1973) pgs. 129-35.
1 & 2 author-G. D. Killam.

The Magic Craft of Enid Blyton

Man, the homosapiens, stands apart from the other living species as he is blessed with the twin faculties of rationality and imagination. Rationality or the reasoning power helps him act and react, to correct and to judge and to draw conclusions from fact. It is reason which establishes a set of principles and defines right and wrong for him. Reason helps him establish an ethical code and allows him to improve his nature. Imagination on the other hand is his ability to audio-visualize his thoughts and feelings and his ability to form mental pictures. Imagination enables him to transport himself to another world, another field of perception. Not only is he able to transport himself back and forth with ease but his "willing suspension of disbelief" allows for distinct audio-visualization.

Of rationality is born science. A thirst for information and knowledge, an intense curiosity to find causes for all action. Of imagination is born all art. Man's quest for beauty and truth which seems to be manifest in his nature since the beginning of all time is born from his imagination.

Both these faculties are manifest obviously in the child. Generally anything that interests them will either appeal to their curiosity or to their imagination. Their curiosity, which prompts them to ask questions, is their subconscious desire to learn, to know. The innocence of a child gradually widens into knowledge.

The play acting instinct is inherent in man. He works out his frenzy through drama and pretense, with partial involvement in reality or semi-reality. Experiencing life through others is second nature to a child. A Child learns through imitation. A child's games are those of make — believe. This explains his fascination for the story — a ready made vehicle of his imagination.

A child has only limited experience in real life. Only a very small part of his curiosity is satisfied by his family and friends. Therefore reading becomes an integral part of a child's development and growth as an individual. He therefore lives the book rather than merely reads it.

For nearly three decades children have turned to Enid Blyton for enjoyment and pleasure. Her books have been printed and re-printed several times since her death in 1961. Many children and adults too, recall the warmth, coziness and excitement of first reading Ms. Blyton's books. They remember Noddy and Bigears not as stories but as personal friends of childhood. Even discounting familiarity her books are often re-read by adults and grip the attention through strength of narrative.

Repeated accusations of lack of mental stimulation has been hurled at Ms. Blyton. In fact her books have been banned in Australia and England due to her insularity and what has been termed her national pride carried to the point of arrogance. However on

exploring her world further one sees a tremendous scope for study. Her subtle inculcation of values through deliberate plot construction and casual dialogue, the juxtapositioning of the child's world with that of the adult, the eternal conflict between the good and evil of those two worlds and her unquestioning fulfilment of a child's expectancy can each be studied in their own right. Her approach to children's fiction has been described by a psychologist as "a child's thought expressed as a child."

It is an established fact that children read with open minds and eager intellects. It follows therefore that they are tremendously impressionable. They are influenced in their emotional and intellectual processes by what they read. They learn of life and imbibe moral values from their reading.

The world portrayed by Ms. Blyton is essentially one of conflict and a possible solution is offered in order for the protagonists to come to terms with it. This is particularly significant in the modern world where everyday, in every field, potential sources of conflict are being exploited. The evil in the world is not hidden from children. They grow up in a world filled with crime—a tangible reality of the world in which we all live. However the reassurance of good over evil is always provided by the traditional "happily ever after" ending. Most often this ending only comes after painful awakening to the truth and self-realization of one or more characters in the story.

The adults, always seen from the point of view of the child, are of many types. The criminals are evil, though often reasons (sometimes complex psychological ones) are provided for their behaviour. There are stupid adults like Goon in the Mystery Stories. There are pretty but empty-headed ones like Aunt Rose in the Six Cousins series. There is always an avuncular figure to be held up as role-model like Bill in the Adventure series. Through these varied types of people that the child is introduced to in the stories, he begins to understand the importance of security, his own responsibility to it and the role that he plays in his own family. In the family context love, mutual affection and respect are stressed beyond everything else. Money has to be earned and used carefully. The dignity of work is also encouraged. Repeatedly she proves to her young readers that being rich is not all happiness and neither is being poor always so bad.

Fair play and justice mean a lot to most characters in the stories. A very interesting example of this is in *The Naughtiest Girl in the School*. Elizabeth Allen the main character is put into Whyteleafe School. The school has a government of sorts which is run by the students. The rules too are made by the children themselves. It is almost socialist in set-up.

'We have very few rules : she said. 'One rule is that we place all the money we get into this box, and we all draw from it two shillings a week each. The rest of the money is used to buy anything that any of you especially want - but you have to state at the weekly meeting what you need it for, and the Jury will decide if you may have it'.¹

Facing problems, making decisions and sticking by them are things that the main characters do as matter of course. The eldest child assumes a leading role - and is the chosen or unspoken leader responsible for the others. These 'leaders are usually blessed with common sense. When confronted with dangerous situations they respond with quick thinking and demonstrate their courage with caution and avoid needless risk. A good example of this can be seen in Five are Together Again when George (a girl) has to hide a valuable set of papers in case there is another robbery. Julian the eldest suspects that their plans may have been overhead—

'Do you think he heard what George said about going over to Kirrin Island with the other papers - the valuable ones that the thieves didn't get in the tower room last night? I wouldn't let George go if I thought he had heard. In fact, I think she'd better not go. She might run into danger.' 'Don't be silly Ju,' said George 'I'm going and Timmy will be with me.' 'You heard what I said George. You are not to go; I will take the papers and hide them on the island when it's dark and fairly late.'

Besides courage and responsibility, helpfulness and kindness are emphasized. This is evident in the Pinkwhistle series directed at a lower age group. Mr. Pinkwhistle is half-man and half-brownie who goes about the world putting wrong things right.

It isn't fair, shouted Mr. Pinkwhistle,
It isn't fair; He stamped around the
room in a rage...Here I have just been
reading about a man who saved up and
bought a nice new tea-pot for his wife
and on his way home a boy in roller skates
barged into him and broke it...Now is that
fair, Sooty? Is that fair?
Did anyone buy him another teapot? No! And
look! Heres the picture of a little girl
who ran to pick something for a friend
and was knocked over by a motor car! Now
I ask you Sooty - is that fair? Well I don't
think its fair either. I think if people are
kind they should be rewarded, not punished
and whats more Sooty I'm going to do something
about it. I'm going to go out into the town
and look for unlucky people. I shall go into
their houses...and see that they get rewarded
for being kind.'

It is around this idea of reward and punishment that most of her stories revolve. Goodness - which is represented by unselfishness, sacrifice, courage, loyalty, commonsense, honesty, helpfulness, kindness, fairness and responsibility is always rewarded. All evil, represented by crime and wickedness at their worst or at a lower level by malice, pettiness, inquisitiveness, selfishness and bad manners is always punished. However the ideas of repentance, self-realization and reform are accepted and encouraged. Many of her bad children emerge finally as misunderstood, confused children who when they come into contact with goodness, are capable of change.

This does not mean however that the good children - those obviously held up as role models are to put it succinctly-'prigs'. Little 'know-it-alls' are not admired at all. The balance is struck well in *Those Dreadful Children*. This is an amusing and absorbing account of the three Carlton children, who are extremely well-brought-up, and very prim and proper. Next door the noisy, careless, selfish and not very truthful Taggerty children move in. Though at first they detest one another by the end of the story the Taggertys learn better manners and learn to be more thoughtful and unselfish and the Carltons learn to have more good-humoured fun and thus become friends after going through this mutual learning process.⁴

Besides behavioural patterns and ethical codes children are exposed to a good deal of scientific facts about natural living. Rural living is always held up as an ideal. All outdoor activity is described with exciting detail. Concern for the maintenance of one's surroundings, common birds of England and their calls, names of flowers and their seasons are all introduced skilfully either in the plot construction or naturally through dialogue. Simple explanations are offered and day-to-day experiences are recounted.

Mark had the job of scraping the perches clean. He wasn't sure that he liked it much but he was a sensible boy and knew that there were dirty jobs to do as well as nice ones. You can't pick your jobs on a farm. You have to be ready to do every thing! Sheila looked to see if there was enough grit in the little box she kept for that purpose. She told Mark what it was for. 'It's to help the hens digest their food properly,' She told him. 'And that broken oyster shell over there is to help them to make good shells for their eggs.'⁵

This takes us to the accusation of insularity that is levelled at Ms. Blyton. Her plots are usually set in the British countryside often giving a slightly rosy picture of it. On being questioned an eleven-year-old remarked 'I don't mind that the stories are about England. I began to wonder what the names of the plants (weeds) on the empty plot in front of our house was after reading the farm books.' This is a valid argument. Ms. Blyton's descriptions of nature do not merely wax poetic. Her skilful raising and

answering of questions with practical suggestions often thrown in help to open up the child to the natural world wherever he may be. The idea that cruelty to animals is wrong is something that can have meaning for a child in any part of the world. She transcends the boundaries of place and time because she is talking of human behaviour which does not change decade after decade - why, century after century. Her basic principles of life and code of behaviour may thus be applied anywhere in the world.

Thus the easily impressionable child experiences a gamut of emotions after a brush with Ms. Blytons varied and numerous novels. As she deals with many different age groups at once each reader finds one character to identify with. The reader meets with many different kinds of people, good and bad, and he also faces many complex situations. Along with the characters in the story, he emerges rejuvenated, triumphant and extremely satisfied.

RUKMINI
I M.A., Literature

FOOT NOTES

- 1 Enid Blyton, *The Naughtiest Girl in the School* (Middlesex : The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd, 1967) p. 9.
- 2 Enid Blyton, *Five are Together Again* (London : Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 1963)p. 134.
- 3 Enid Blyton, *Adventures of Mr. Pinkwhistle* (London : Dean & son Ltd, 1970) pp. 7-8.
- 4 Enid Blyton, *Those Dreadful Children* (London : Mayfair Books Ltd, 1964)
- 5 Enid Blyton, *Adventures on Willow Farm* (London : Mayfair Books Ltd, 1970) p. 18.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aiken, Joan. *The Way to Write for Children.*
London : Elm Tree Books Ltd, 1982.
- Blyton, Enid *Adventures of Mr. Pinkwhistle.*
London : Dean & son Ltd, 1970.
- Blyton, Enid *Adventures on Willow Farm.*
London : Mayfair Books Ltd, 1970.
- Blyton, Enid *Five are Together Again.*
London : Hodder & Stoughton Ltd, 1963
- Blyton, Enid *The Naughtiest Girl in the School.*
Middlesex : Hamlyn Publishing Group. 1967
- Blyton, Enid *Those Dreadful Children.*
London : Mayfair Books 1971.
- Fox, Geoff. et al., ed. *Writers, Critics and Children.*
New York : Agathon Press, 1980
- Williams, Gladys. *Children and Their Books.*
London : Gerald Ducksworth & Co. 1970
- Wilson, Barbara Ker *Writing for Children.*
London: Purnell & Sons Ltd. 1960.

THE POET, IN HER OWN WORDS

KAMALA DAS — AN UNDERSTANDING

“Reader
You may say
now here is a girl with vast sexual hungers
a bitch after my own heart...”

Shocking, almost insolently direct, that is Kamala Das.

One school of critics label Kamala Das as being blatantly and deliberately exhibitionistic. That she is, and she admits as much in her poem ‘Loud Posters’

“I’ve stretched my two dimensional
Nudity on sheets of weeklies, monthlies,
Quarterlies,”

Kamala Das treated the theme of sexual love with a candour that clashed violently with the traditional image set by her precedents like Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu. The modern Indian woman subconsciously cowers under the pervasive influence of the so called Sati Savitri image. A woman is expected to be so many things that she is not, and does not want to be. In ‘An Introduction’ we come across Kamala Das struggling against the imposition of these impossible ideals,

“Dress in sarees, be girl
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
Be quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,
Belong, cried the categorisers.”

Sex is to her natural and essential and she treats it as such in her poetry. Very often both physical and spiritual love are intertwined. In some of her poems sex even replaces love. Her disillusionment in the search for love leads her into sordid physical relationships,

“It is I who make love
And then, feel shame” (‘An Introduction’)
which, instead of assuaging the loneliness in her, only serves to reinforce it.

“Love
I no longer need
With tenderness I am most content” she says in ‘Composition’, almost as if she is trying to convince herself that it does not matter. Again contradicting herself in

‘The Suicide’ she says

“If love is not to be had
I want to be dead, just dead”
In ‘Composition’ when she says

“I must
most deliberately
whip up a froth of desire,
a passion to suit the occasion.”

One gets the impression of a woman who has no illusions. Then again in ‘The Freaks’ she appears almost pathetically vulnerable when she says ;

“Its only
To save my face, I flaunt, at
Times, a grand flamboyant lust.”

Her futile quest frustrates her.

She has looked for love, long and hard and has been disappointed in her search. A search doomed to failure right from the start,

“When
I asked for love, not knowing what else
to ask
For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the
Bedroom and closed the door.”

(‘An Introduction’)

Her own feelings, desires and attitudes, her very individuality conflict with society's conception of a woman.

"It is time to

Choose a name, a role" ('An Introduction')
which she is not prepared to do. These incessant pressures from a claustrophobic society make her want to rebel, to outrage, to shock, even disgust.

But beneath that air of candid, sometimes desperate nonchalance lay a disarming awareness of her own pretences, her vulnerability.

"I must let my mind striptease
I must extrude
autobiography.
The only secrets I always
withhold
are that I am so alone
and that I miss my grandmother."

('Composition')

KAVITHA SHETTY
III year Lit.

Replies from Ezekiel - April 1980

- Q. 1. Are both your parents and your wife Bene-Israel?
(Bene-Israel you say don't intermarry with other Jews).
- A. Yes, both my parents were Bene-Israel. And so were their parents and the parents of the parents for as long as is known. My wife is Bene-Israel too.
- Q. 2. Did you study in your mother's school and father's College?
- A. No, I didn't study in my mother's school. I got my B.A. and M.A. at Wilson College, Bombay, where my father was a Professor of Botany and Zoology.
- Q. 3. How would you describe parental influence on you? (Unlike A. K. Ramanujam or even R. Parthasarathy very rarely do you call up a familial past).
- A. My father's influence was mainly intellectual, in a general way. He insisted on all the five children reading every evening, from sunset to 8.30 p.m. or so when we dined. "I don't insist on your studying the school texts' the would say, "but read you must." All of us have become voracious readers. My mother's influence was wider and deeper and more subtle. She stressed sensitivity and service, and serenity and harmony and living with a purpose. Her idealism affected all of us. She wanted us to be successful and to make a contribution, so to speak, to aim high and to be very human. Her values were and are our values to this day. She was very proud of us, and decisively influenced our ways of thinking and feeling.
- I have two daughters. Kavita (25) is a Lecturer in English, Kalpana (22) is a Lecturer in Psychology about to get married. My son Elkana at 15, is about to enter college.
- Q. 4. What influences on you do you think helped to shape you-in short responsible for what you are?
- A. Too many influences ; I would need to write an essay. Among personalities, the major ones were M. N. Roy and E. Alkazi (I can't really cope with this question). The thinker who has influenced me most is the Russian emigre Christian Existentialist Nicolas Berdyaev (except for his Christianity).
- Q. 5. What are your present political leanings if any?
(influence of M. M. Roy in the past)
- A. If I had to use labels, I would call myself a radical liberal democrat, opposed to communism but with no sympathy for the Right conservatives, none for Gandhism or any form of Indian revivalism in religion or social thought.

Q. 6. What do your constant shifts in career indicate ?

(i) Spirit of Adventure (ii) Restlessness (iii) frustration.

A. My shifts in career ended in 1962 when I returned to College teaching (I had a year of that in 1947-48 after completion of my M.A.) I don't think the earlier shifts were caused by a spirit of adventure, restlessness or frustration. I think now lack of self-knowledge was the main reason.

Q. 7. Any other details regarding family, religious faith etc. ?

A. I love family life, domesticity, a home but am reluctantly reconciled to getting it all in small, regulated doses.

The religious faith story is a very long one. I was an atheist from 1942 or so till 1967 when my first L. S. D. experience in New York made my essential view of the world religious-metaphysical. But no religious person would accept my "religion" because it is sceptical of all doctrine and against all the organised religions.

Q. 8. Are any your poems purely autobiographical ? (Jewish wedding Day, Background, Casually, In India, How the English Lessons Ended...)

A. All my poems are essentially autobiographical but I never hesitate to deviate from the facts when the 'logic' of the poem needs it. Jewish wedding, Background, casually, and In India are autobiographical. How the English lessons Ended is pure fiction, except for the fact that I am an English Teacher, and my neighbours are Muslim.

Q. 9. Is your poetry, the poetry of (personal) experience ?

A. Yes, I suppose my poetry is the poetry of personal experience. But I'm not interested in the confessional mode. I like to shape and resolve the experience.

Q. 10. You have been writing poetry for more than thirty years. What significant changes do you see in (i) your own poetry (ii) the Indian poetic scene ?

A. I don't think much of **The Third** but I may be mistaken. **A time to Change** was a good start, with four or five poems worth preserving. **Sixty Poems** is important only because it provides continuity. The dedicatory poem and two or three others are still readable. From the later books, selections can be made which I would stand by, including the manuscript of **Latter-Day Psalms** which is with Oxford University Press.

I feel I've grown and matured but, not changed very drastically. The Indian poetry scene now has ten or more good poets not around when I started.

Q. 11. The poets of to-day are existential and positivist it is said, with no poetry of the soul. Comment.

A. The good, serious poets of today have as much "soul" as the poets of the past. It is the dated outlook which is blind to their soul, because, the idiom is different, the values are different.

Q. 12. How do you react to your being compared with Larkin?

A. Only some of my work in the fifties and sixties can be compared to Larkin's. The later work is very different from his. There is nothing by Larkin which can be compared with **Hymns in Darkness** and **Latter-Day Psalms**.

Q. 13. Is your poetry, the poetry of statement?

A. Yes, it's all poetry of statement.

Q. 14. Why are images, metaphors so rare in your poetry?

A. Rarity of images and metaphors is the major weakness of my poetry. I think I would if I could, that's all I can say about it.

Q. 15. Is your simplicity also a reaction against the complexity and obscurity that passes for poetry?

A. My real or alleged simplicity is not a reaction, it's part of my real poetic self. I would like to be complex, but I think I would eliminate all obscurity from my verse. I don't care for the Aurobindo school of poetry - I believe they're just bad poets and bad philosophers.

Q. 16. Do you consider yourself and the poets of to-day socially uncommitted?

A. My poetry has its own commitments and so has the poetry of other Indo-English poets today. We are not committed to an ideology but we are committed to society and its welfare.

Q. 17. How would you react to the label 'confessional'?

A. I'm not a confessional poet, but I am personal and autobiographical.

Q. 18. Is it correct to say that an ironic urbanity and not satire constitutes the warp and woof of your poetry?

A. Yes, I'm ironic as a rule rather than satiric. I am too sceptical about my own position to write effective satire. About the urbanity, I don't see it in my poetry but most observers, do. I don't aim at urbanity but that's the way my utterances seem to crystallise.

Q. 19. Your "Indian Poems" are more attempts to parody the Indian's glib, incorrect use of the language than banners for the cause of Indian English. (which exists only at the phonological level) Comment.

A. In addition to poking fun at Indian English, I've tried to present typical Indian characters and values. I'd like to write more poems in Indian English where the language is less funny and more revelatory.

Q. 20. Any other statement you would like to make.

A. I want to write better poems than any I've written so far, in new styles and modes.

**Mrs. SEETHA SRINIVASAN, M. A. Phd.
Head of the Dept. of Eng.**

EMERSON AND THE HALCYON MIND

Ralph Waldo Emerson, as he stands today, is considered to be an author who has been done to death by researchers, scholars and critics. His persistent optimism has turned out to be more than satiating. The critics have been at the 'over soul' for more than a century. There have been numerous critical works which try to either bring out Emerson's pragmatism or emphasise the impracticability of a few of Emerson's ideas. These varying approaches have led me to examine in detail an aspect of Emerson's thought which I believe has received less attention than it truly deserves. And that is Emerson's concept of the Mind and his ideas on how it can be trained. At this time, when literature reflects an almost 'vulgarly fashionable mood of pessimism and futility' it would be a welcome palliative to return to Emerson and bring to surface the enunciation of the individual potentials, once again.

The term 'halcyon' which occurs in its ordinary sense in Emerson's writings, partakes of the associations of the Greek myth of Halcyone who was the daughter of Aeolus the wind god. Ceyx, king of Thessaly, during a voyage he undertakes to consult the oracles of Apollo, meets an unfortunate death. Halcyone, his wife, has a presentiment of the misfortune and casts herself into the sea in order to join her husband in death. Aeolus, unable to bear the death of his daughter, converts both her and Ceyx into Halcyon birds. These birds and their descendents were thought to have the power to charm winds and waves during the period of incubation. Like the birds of the myth, the Halcyon Mind is itself calm

at all times and also creates an environment of serenity.

The mind is unlike a receptacle which contains certain faculties. Mind is thought-flow. "...I watch that flowing river, which, out of regions I see not, pours for a season its streams into me..."¹ The faculties like the intellect, memory, intelligence, imagination and intuition have essential roles to play during the thought-flow. The intellect is "the simple power anterior to all action or construction... is void of affection and sees an object as it stands in the light of science, cool and disengaged". (S.W., p. 292). "There lie the impression on the retentive organ, though know it not. So lies the whole series of natural images with which your life has made you acquainted...though you know it not". This is the memory which resides in a dark chamber (S.W., p. 297). Intelligence is the product of a synthesis of 'ideas, truths and laws'. It is with the help of imagination that poets become 'liberating gods'. "Therefore we love the poet, the inventor who in any form has yielded us a new thought. He unlocks our chains and admits us to a new scene." (S.W., pp. 335-336). Intuition, according to Emerson, is:

"an insight of the perfection of the laws of the soul...Thus in the soul of man there is a justice whose retributions are instant and entire. (S. W., p. 68). ...that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue,

¹Brooks Atkinson, ed. *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Modern Library, 1950) p. 62. Henceforth cited in the body of the text itself as 'S.W.' in parenthesis.

and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition." (S. W., p. 155.)

Yet, an understanding of the faculties alone cannot explicate the mind. There can be no definite description of the way in which the mind functions.

How can we speak of the action of the mind under any divisions, as of its knowledge into perception, knowledge into act? Each becomes the other. Itself alone is. Its vision is not like the vision of the eye, but is union with the things known. (S. W., p, 292.)

In *Mind in Science*, Richard L. Gregory quotes Gilbert Ryle's famous phrase of the 'ghost in the machine'

...there is a ghost in the machine, which lurks among the pieces that we can see, and which is incarnated when the pieces, which cannot be described or explained by knowledge of the pieces alone.³

Similarly, the mind is also a ghost. It is an emergent property of a synthesis of the various intellectual faculties.

"The key to every man in his thought." (S. W., p. 280). Hence, it is necessary to find out exactly what this thought is. Emerson defines thought in the following manner: "When the spiritual energy is directed on something outward, then it is a thought." (S. W., p. 298.) When an individual watches the process of his Mind's functioning, he will find that 'a material image more or less luminous arises in his mind, contemporaneous with every thought... This imagery is spontaneous. It is the blending of experience with the present action of the mind. It is proper creation. It is the working of Original Cause through the instruments he has already made.' (S. W., p. 17).

A counter-part of thought is action. "The preamble of thought, the transition through which it passes from the unconscious, to the conscious, is action." (S. W., p. 52). "Thinking is the function. Living is the functionary" (S. W., p. 54). The mind now thinks, now acts and each fit reproduces the other. Thinking is a partial act. When thought becomes action, that is a total act.

The quality of the action, be it at the physical or the mental level, depends on the intensity of the thoughts and the faculties of the personality. Since every action is supported by the motivation behind it, the action by itself cannot be good or bad. Even motivation cannot be easily arrived at because of its abstract nature. What is good to one may not be so to another. Each man should decide for himself what is good and what is evil.

Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution; the only wrong what is against it. Do not set the least value on what I do, or the least discredit on what I do not as if I pretended to settle anything as true or false. I unsettle all things. (S.W., p. 288).

Unfortunately, man finds that he is hardly the master of himself. He has become a prisoner of the organs that serve him. He does not derive pleasure out of exercising these equipments in the external world.

The process of man's evolution towards the transcendental is hastened by three conditions. Man because of his limited perception considers them as factors which obstruct his progress towards the state of purity and perfection. "The first in time and the first in importance of the influences

³(London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson. 1981) p. 86.

upon the mind is that of nature." (S.W., p. 47). The burning desire in man to know himself and the world around him, is not easily satisfied. He has to understand that "there is correspondence between visible things and human thoughts." (S.W., p. 16). Hence, by trying to understand nature, man unconsciously puts forth the effort to understand himself.

Each aspect of human life, "each phenomenon has its roots in the faculties and affections of the mind" (S.W., p. 41-42). Man has to build his own world even as Caesar did. When man understands the functioning of nature, he becomes 'erect'. He is no more fallen. He will now be able to identify a close relationship between all things that he perceives :

He shall see that nature is the opposite of the soul, answering to it part for part. One is seal and one is print. Its beauty is the beauty of his own mind... And, in fine, the ancient precept, "Know Thyself", and the modern precept "Study nature" become at last one maxim (S. W., p. 48).

Once man realises that the laws which circumscribe the external world are also the laws by which the human mind abides, he comes to understand that there exists a definite correspondence between the ME and the NOT ME. Thus, nature becomes a metaphor of the human mind. By its very presence, nature inspires man to discover his own mind, and to unearth its full potentials. Thus man constructs the ME out of the NOT ME. It may probably be with this idea that Robert Lee Francis says, "Nature is, then, a blue print, an architectonic, for the construction of the self out of the world's body."³ "The mind that is parallel with the laws of nature will be in the current of events, and strong with their strength."⁴

Nature, according to Emerson, is an extension of the mind on one side. The mind may extend and exceed itself in another direction. This other side is the spirit; as Emerson calls it, it is the 'over soul'. When man learns to look at things and think of them without inhibitions or bias, he gains new perspectives. The ethics values and customs of his society polish and culture his personality; yet, they curb the growth of the genius. Man should let his superior intuition guide him. All choices rest with the self. "It is of no use to preach to me from without" (S. W., p. 272). True knowledge can come only from within, from the soul itself. When man forgets the oneness that arises out of the same spirit incarnating itself in men's forms, then, competition and war arise. The common nature which is impersonal is called God. Ordinary education obstructs the growth of the common nature, but man knows intuitively that something greater is always possible.

We know better than we do...

We do not yet possess ourselves...(S. W., p. 267).

We are wiser than we know... (S.W., p.268).

...there are resources in us on which we have not drawn... (S.W., p. 83).

The advancement of the individual soul is by a process of metamorphosis. When the over-soul rises in man's mind, the immediate motive of man's will becomes a 'universal rule for all intelligent beings.' The universal power expresses itself in the form of moral laws. There can be no

³"The Architectonics of Emerson's Nature," *American Quarterly*, 19, No. 1 (Spring 1969), p. 50.

⁴*The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (London: Macmillan, 1911) V, p. 45.

specific statement of these laws. But, man knows intuitively what these laws are. Since there can be no specific representation of the over soul in terms of concrete expression, it is necessary for man to personify this abstract concept as the sum total of moral virtue. This is the reason why our Gods are all persons of the most sophisticated moral character, i.e., they are an embodiment of virtue. Yet, "the soul requires purity, but purity is not it; requires justice, but justice is not that; requires beneficence, but is somewhat better..." (S.W., p. 266). "...within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence" (S. W., p. 262).

The third and the final stage of evolution of the human mind is an undoing of the 'degenerate state of man' when the 'victim of the society' breaks away from the overpowering influence of the society. Emerson wants every man to adhere to the laws of his own self, even at the cost of displeasing the various constitutions of the society. If each action of man is executed by him sincerely, virtue that is his personality is justified.

My life is for itself and not for a spectacle (S.W., p. 149). What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think... the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independency of solitude... (S.W., p. 150).

By knowing the present fully well, man can master the influences of the past and the future. This mastery works at an abstract level. The individual has no regrets of the past and no anxieties regarding the future. It is then that man identifies that there is one design which "unites and animates the farthest pinnacle and the lowest trench" (S. W., p. 61). He rises

above time since he has formed a certain amount of objectivity towards his own experience.

Not he is great who can alter matter, but he who can alter my state of mind. They are the kings of the world who give the color of their present thought to all nature and all art, and persuade men by the cheerful serenity of their carrying the matter, that this thing which they do is the apple which the ages have desired to pluck, now at last ripe, and inviting nations to the harvest. The great man makes the great thing (S. W., p. 58).

When man believes in the powers of his own self, he is said to have achieved self-reliance. The one and only solution available to man in order to bestow more meaning on his life and his personal experiences is as follows: "...if the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts and there abide, the huge world will come round to him." (S.W., p. 63). When the individual understands that his spiritual laws are of a kind that affects no one adversely but enhances happiness and good will amongst all men, then he becomes a "gentleman" in the true sense of the term.

By expanding his vision, an individual becomes a self-reliant genius. When the expanded vision enables the mind to concentrate inwards, the individual becomes conscious of himself as a potentially perfect being. A complete knowledge of the essentials helps him remain calm and serene. It is then that he attains the 'Halcyon' state of the mind. Raising himself from private considerations, he works for the welfare of the humanity. Since he dwells in illustrious thoughts, he becomes the world's eye and heart. Performing actions with the help of his intuitive powers, he

sets an example as the embodiment of nobility. In the bargain, he discovers and makes use of "the highest functions of human nature." (S.W., p. 56).

Ms. C. G. GOWRI, M.A., Phd.,
Dept. of English

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Carlson, Eric W. ed., *Emerson's Relevance Today: A Symposium*. Hartford: Transcendental Books, 1971.
- Detweiler, Robert. *Emerson's Concept of God*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1962.
- Gregory, Richard L. *Mind in Science: A History of Explanations in Psychology and Physics*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981.
- Davis, M. R. "Emerson's 'Reason' and the Scottish Philosophers." *New England Quarterly*, 17 (June, 44), pp. 209-228.
- Doherty, Joseph F. "Emerson and the Loneliness of the Gods." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 16, 1 (Spring 1974), pp. 65-75.
- Francis, R. L. "The Architectonics of Emerson's Nature." *American Quarterly*, 19 (Spring 1967), pp. 39-52.
- Neufeldt, L. "The Vital Mind: Emerson's Epistemology." *Philological Quarterly*, 50 (April 1971), pp. 253-270.
- Sealts, M. M. "Emerson on the Scholar: 1833-1837." *PMLA*, 85 (March 1970), pp. 185-195.

CREATIVE PAGE

Any attempt at describing Sanchala must remain futile - She's a person more associated with light - heartedness and the joy of living than with sorrow - so intensely alive that she communicated this "joie de vivre" to those around. In these poems, as in the memories of those who knew her, she is assured of her "little piece of immortality"

The mute

You think, because I cannot
speak,
That I do not feel, think,
BE
Why don't you see ?
Have you never felt, fought
Tears that rise unsought ?
Welling up unbidden
Forced back—hidden
Blurring your eyes
Blinding your mind
Burning through your being.
Words well up within me like
Unshed tears...
Try to break loose from the
Locked wall of my mouth,
Sink back...Speed around my
mind
In a frenzied, putrid circle.
Thoughts thud, dully—
A tom-tom message
That no one hears
Throbs in the
Bog of my
Unaired mind.
It's such a little thing, this mouth,
This mine—
But I can never tap it.
And so I fester in this crippling
quagmire
This acid impotence
Of my thoughts, ideas—
Words.

Moments

Days drift drearily,
Weeks waltz past...
Suddenly a year which
Yawned comfortably ahead has
Snapped shut and swallowed
A pulp of
Endless empty moments.

Moment, piled on
Moment
Piled on moment.
A blank almanac
Records of
Nothing momentous

Every moment
At the moment
Seems static ;
Finite ;
Interminable. But it
Catapults into
Another empty moment
And another...
And another...
Will life
Slithering slowly by,
Sting with meaning only as it
Retreats into its hole ?

Will the last moment
Slithering slowly by
Sting with awareness
Only as it retreats into its hole ?

Age 16

Like pieces of wood we all drift
On the ocean of our lives-
Swept from one shore to another
By its movement, ruthless, swift ;
Pushed in at one shore
By an unseen, unknown being,
Who alone can explain
Our end and our beginning.

Every current that flows through our lives
Steers us in a new directions
Every wave that surges through our lives
Gives us a different dimension

This way and that we toss and turn
In life's relentless tide,
Sometimes its hidden depths we plumb
Sometimes its crest we ride

The varied currents that flow through a life
Will carve out of it a shape
Which after the tumult and the strife
Is beautiful, strange & unique.
And those of us who resist the current
Will reach the other shore

Rigid, stiff, unchanged unbent
The same plain pieces we were before

For life is an opportunity to savour the
unknown

A voyage of exploration
And we must keep our minds & eyes open
For the unknown destination-
To live means
To surrender yourself
To the tide of experience.

A Rainy Sunday (13 years)

Outside the window
The intermittent sound of water
Slashing down in, to me,
Giant sized drops ;

Dampening my spirits,
Swifter than an old Mohammed Rafi song,
Filling my heart
with melancholy thoughts
Encompassing my mind
with awareness -
Or is it imagination ?
With the misery of life
I feel like crying
at nothing in particular,
The sight of those large, gloomy clouds
Spoils my day for me,
And I turn my thoughts,
To by-gone sunny days
Which actually are not so bygone.
The sound of cars
Wading through the sloshy streets,
Disturbs my afternoon peace.
Night time -
I still am caged
Worst of all
I suddenly realize
I haven't studied for my exam tomorrow !

(13 years)

WHY

Why ? Why ? Why ?
Haunting us all our life,
This question - why ?
A child has its own why's
And so does an adult.

Why ?
Why should you grow ?
From a child to an adult,
Why is it that sometimes
People treat you like a child

Yet at others
They say "You've grown up not
You should know better"
Than to do such things !
Why is a child allowed to do

So many things
That growing up forbids
Why did God make the human species
Possess more advantages
Than any other?
Why did the Creator
Confer on some persons
Intelligence, talent and wit,
And burden the lives of others,
With idiocy or poverty?
Why do people say

When I put to them these questions -
"You must'nt ask such questions
They are not meant for you"?
Oh! will no one explain things to me?
Has no one any answer to give me?
Nothing to satisfy my curiosity?
Then alas! I must be content
And patient enough to wait
Till there comes the time when
I can stand before my Maker
And listen to His explanation

SANCHALA RANGANATHAN

Printed at Seetha Printers, 1, Eldams Road, Madras-600 018 and Published by the
Department of English, Stella Maris College.

(For Private Circulation only)