

## YOUNG POET:

### *Rage, Rage, Rage*

## Against the Dying of Light!

by MANUEL SATORRE, JR., *College of Law IV*

"... no one comes so near the invisible world as the sage and the poet, unless it be the saint — who is but one spirit with God, and so infinitely closer to Him than anyone. I also point out the benefits men receive from poetry. Though in themselves no help to the attainment of eternal life, art and poetry are more necessary than bread to the human race. They fit it for the life of the spirit."

—JACQUES MARITAIN—

THE ANGUISH OF THE YOUNG POET is his rage, seemingly like a tiger leaping from his heart, struggles inadvertently for immediate recognition; and within a short span of his growing mind, he buries himself in an asylum of love-starved metaphors and smiles and creates, passing himself for a king and god. But in his burst of passion, what is actually achieved is never poetry but only a rage dying out quietly in a sad whimper. For in his rage, there arises a clear disparity between his poetic intention and the finished product, which is, of course, his verse. And slowly, he peters out and loses himself in a world of obscurity and dark poetry.

In this period of obscurity, the young poet lives in isolation and thinks. He begins to discover himself, the limits of his knowledge and the dullness of his sensations. Then he rises from his grave and seeks out the world: the pulsating world of songs, of life, of churches and tabernacles and of domes and labyrinths. And one day, he finds himself inside a writing workshop discussing, probing the mystery of his art, polishing the vulgarity of his craft. Yet, in the midst of this confusion, his rage rises again. But this time it is more subdued, no longer hungry for recognition but still fraught with ambition. What am I looking for? cries his voice and he descends into the world of T. S. Eliot. And after a taste of Eliot, he begins to measure his life with coffee-hospitals and telephone poles and declares: "Where am I?"

Then he writes:

"Dylan Thomas rages within me,  
And the flowers in the garden  
Wonder in their loud silence:  
Do I dare disturb literature?"

Do I dare disturb the universe? Anguish seems to be the beginning of almost all young poets. It is an indecision akin to the symbols of heaven or hell and the predicament of Hamlet. And yet, strangely though, in their first outburst, the young poets seem to be held by some mystical hand that in their anguish, they would not care to stop but instead continue burying themselves in dilapidated typewriters in some solitary rooms,

seeking, groping and searching for the lost syllables of their spirits.

To a young poet, there are no arrivals nor departures; what matters is only time and the endless rage against the dying of light! But what good would his rage be without the light? Perhaps what we would mean by light is simply this: it is not enough that the young poet has the rage, he must also have the proper perspective and direction; for in considering everything, he must know when to stop and know that he has finally discovered what he has been probing for years.

In his rage, Dylan Thomas explains the light: "Whatever is hidden should be made naked. To be stripped of darkness is to be clean, to strip darkness is to make clean. Poetry, recording the stripping of the individual darkness, must inevitably cast light upon what has been hidden for too long, and by doing so, make clean the naked exposure." This is the rage of Thomas. But could this also be the rage of the young poet?

It is sad to say that while the young poet rages for the cry of Thomas and Eliot, he has failed to discover that his rage for light can never be resolved without returning to the trivium of the roots of his anguish. The rage of the young poet can first be resolved thus: in this sound and fury, he has neglected the basic elements of poetry; it has not occurred to him that without knowing and learning the fundamentals of his art and craft he can never possibly hope to arrive.

The young poet would have us believe that the moon and stars and the universe are within the hollow of his palms; and that, the world in his anguish diminishes its light and awaits his arrival. But actually the truth is: it has not occurred to him that without raving, he can make a good start and possibly hope to arrive; and that his poetry can achieve divinity only when he goes back to the basic things and these things, we might say, are the proper use of the poetic materials. The study of the poetic craft is like learning the fundamentals of boogie-woogie. The comparison might look quite ridiculous, but it is appropriate. We start with

(Continued on page 36)

## YOUNG POET: RAGE, RAGE, RAGE . . .

(Continued from page 7)

boogie-woogie by learning the fundamental steps, acquiring an inner grace and probably a little talent. And after we have mastered these fundamentals, we move slowly toward the variations and that is, learning rock n'roll, the twist and the new dance craze, the jerk. And applying these to poetry, the young poet starts with language, acquires an inner ear for melody and rhythm, and develops the proper usage of form, figurative language, symbols ideas, effects, imagery, etc. And after learning these, the young poet can hope to descend into poetical variations as the narrative poetry and prose poetry. In this manner, his anguish and rage, instead of becoming a cry of a fool in the wilderness, will have proper direction and he can hope to arrive at something definite, at least, the poetic sensibility.

In explaining the development of a young poet, W. H. Auden, a professor of poetry himself, has this to say "If the young man, after being asked why he writes poetry, answers, 'I have important things I want to say,' then he is not a poet. If he answers, 'I like hanging around words listening to what they say,' then maybe he is going to be a poet."

Then Auden adds: "In the first stages of his development, before he has found his distinctive style, the poet is, as it were, engaged to language and, like any young man who is courting, it is right and proper that he should play the chivalrous servant, carry parcels, submit to tests and humiliations, wait hours at street corners, and defer to his beloved's slightest whims, but once he has proved his love and been accepted, then it is another matter. Once he is married, he must be master in his own house and be responsible for their relationship."

In his explanation, it is apparent that Auden compares the writing poet to a young lover courting. And

like any lover, there is the rage to love. Perhaps this is the rage of the young poet: his search for identity. And once he has found his lover and is married to her, he must learn to control her and become her master. Otherwise, if he would become a henpecked husband, all his rage would turn to ashes and his poetry would become as meaningless as a fallen leaf. And as Thomas warned him before: "Do not go gentle into that good night! Rage, Rage, Rage against the dying of light!"

But in the ultimate conclusion, however, as George Barker would have it, "All Poems are Elegies and soon all the poets would have died." And he further declares: "That moment of truth when God with the sword in his hand profiles in front of the poet to deal him the kill of a poem is the moment when the poet sees home to the heart of things: the inspiration which is the assassination. . . . To be so closely caught up in the teeth of things that they kill you, no matter how infinitesimally kill you, is, truly, to be a poet: and to be a poet in fact it is additionally necessary that you should possess the tongues and instruments with which to record a series of deaths." But beneath these deaths rise the light and the poem weaving the universe in the blues of the world. And Dylan Thomas, in his craft of sullen art, decries the yell of poetry from the poets' dead hearts:

"Not for the proud man apart  
From the raging moon I write  
On these spendrift pages  
Not for the towering dead  
With their nightingales and psalms  
But for the lovers, their arms  
Round the griefs of the ages,  
Who pay no praise or wages  
Nor heed my craft or art.

## THE WHITE CHRIST

(Continued from page 12)

to completion. I helped him secure a 300-year-old tabernacle owned by one of my mothers' kins. He was greatly impressed. We talked more about old wooden saints. Suddenly I struck upon an idea. "Father", I said, "the best thing to do in order to secure those old wooden saint images is to exchange them with new ones. Most people would not part with their old things easily for sentimental reasons. They regard them highly and consider them as heirlooms, but if we exchange them with new ones or some of your discarded images, Father, for sure, we can persuade them," I said, and I was filled with zest and enthusiasm.

"Quite a good idea," he said.

"Oh Father", I cried. "There's one image I know. It's the right one we need. In the research room in the science department, on top of one of those big cabinets, there is a crucifix about three or four feet high. The image is still intact but maybe there's some slight damage since it was dumped there, but someone we don't know who. I'm sure the natives will like it. And you must know Father how they value things coming from religious people like you. In not less than two seconds, Father! . . . studied the floor. Then he said: "Come and show me this crucifix right now."

We went down to the next floor and found ourselves talking to a young faculty member. We asked for the head of the department. The head of the department was not in the office at that moment so we managed to let him open the door after

asking his permission to get something from the research room.

The priest wasted no time in climbing the cabinet to get the white Christ. He saw the miserable condition and gave instruction to the faculty member that I could get it anytime. . .

I looked at the bruised knees and the cuts on his legs, his precious blood stained the escayola white sculptured work. My eyes were misty. It looked real — the image. His precious blood no longer dried dark brown but red and fresh. How could this thing be discarded and left to lay under a pile of rubbish and allowed to accumulate dirt.

I recalled the letter sent to me from an esteemed artist and also a member of the faculty. The letter was deeply hurting at the beginning and finally explained how the crucifix was left to him by a priest who was out of the country. According to him the crucifix was to be painted and would undergo some repair and that he was bringing with him a sculptor the next day to fix the broken parts. He was making it clear that I had to return the crucifix immediately to the place where I got it.

Days passed. The crucifix was retrieved but it never went back to its dirty place on top of the cabinet where the smell of badly preserved marine organisms and cadavers of cats gave off a most repugnant odor.

I felt greatly relieved.