Like W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender (1909- ) too could visualise the far-reaching implications of crisis in the social, political and economic milieu of British society in the thirties. He felt the agony of impending disaster acutely and got deeply involved in the existing state of affairs. There is a peculiar freshness in his response in dealing with the issues concerning social ethos, war, technology and love. The sense of urgency manifest in his attitude towards various issues reveals the extent of his profound involvement in the vast spectrum of interests centred on a genuine concern for society. Spender took serious note of the painful actualities and crippling inadequacies he saw around him and tried to incorporate the entire dilemma of social scene into poetic pattern. His poetry is a direct reflection on his conviction that contemporary poetry should emerge out of commonness, squalor, hunger, tension and inadequacy. This conviction, of course, reinforces his course of action in favour of the social cause.

Spender, like the rest of the radical-liberals of the decade under review, had bourgeois origins. He unconsciously imbibed in him the attitudes and prejudices of his class. The
thrust of the time was so sharp that he could not afford merely to sit on the fence and watch the whole show indifferently. His poetry reflects explicit details of his attempt to outgrow the imperceptibly imbibed middle class predilections. When he turned his gaze upon the contemporary scene, he felt pained to observe:

The wearing of Time,
And the watching of cripples pass
With limbs shaped like questions
In their odd twist,
The pulverous grief
Melting the bones with pity,
The sick falling from earth -
These, I could not foresee.

Spender's awareness of the maladies afflicting contemporary England led him to take his privileged position with a self-accusing conscience. He points out that "the young writers argued with their eyes stared into by the eyes of the unemployed to whom there were later added the eyes of the victims of concentration camps and all the dead of the coming war".

Spender's sense of guilt was acuter than that of Auden. Auden's sensibility was predominantly influenced by objective factors, the psychological factors lurking at the unconscious level only. Spender, on the contrary, considered himself in the light of a product of that capitalist system, which was responsible for all that was stagnant and unpleasant. He discloses that he
suffered from a sense of guilt and the suspicion that the side of him which pitied the victims of revolution secretly supported the ills of capitalism from which he himself benefited.

Spender made definite efforts in the direction of establishing a better social order by registering his revolt against the prevalent circumstances. Underlining the features of the decade Spender remarks:

This was a decade in which many assumptions previously taken for granted in middle class democratic Europe and America seemed shaken. There were vast numbers of unemployed workers, ill-dressed, living on the dole, which was below subsistence level, standing idle in the street or desperate on hunger marches. The capitalist system which seemed on the verge of complete breakdown and which was incapable of either employing the workers or, if they were unemployed, preventing them, from almost starving, was the same system that supported the cultivated leisured class of those whose aesthetic values seemed to have no connection with politics and social conditions. In such circumstances many young writers came to feel that art unconnected with social conditions was itself a kind of connection, in being a refusal to recognise those conditions, which were the consequences of the political and economic system.

In the poetic transcription of his social vision, Spender shows an attempt not only to grasp and communicate the topical crisis but also shows an unmistakably conscious concern for social change by making some positive suggestions to overcome it:
In this day when grief pours freezing over us,
when the hard light of pain gleams at every street corner,
when those who were pillars of yesterday's roof
Shrink in their clothes: then surely from hunger
we may strike fire, like fire from flint?'

(Collected Poems P.49).

Auden and Spender exhibit diverse sensibilities. Auden is
thoroughly scientific and objective in his approach and views
the social scenario with 'hawk-like' vision or like a 'helmeted
airman' as is manifest in the following lines:

Consider this and in our time
As the hawk sees it or the helmeted airman
The clouds rift suddenly—look there
At the Cigarette-end smouldering on the border
At the first garden party of the year

Spender's sensibility, on the other hand, is basically
romantic. In the prism of his understanding of social reality we
observe a conflict when he says "The ear is belied by dreams
inside—the roar outside", (Collected Poems P.113). Nevertheless,
there is an attempt to overcome the romantic nostalgia and see
world's grief reflected in the tears of his beloved:

Something in me tender and delicate
Reads in those eyes an ocean of green water
And one by one these bitter drops collects
Into my heart, a glass vase which reflects
The world's grief weeping in its laughter.

(Collected Poems P.115)
Inspite of this effort, we perceive that the irresistible romantic passion asserts itself in between his radicalism;

I wear your kiss like a feather
Laid upon my cheek While I walk the path where the river Suggests suggests

Dirt off all the streets
Rotting feet of factories.

(Collected Poems P.113)

G.S.Fraser rightly refers to Spender's deep inherited wish to yield to the romantic afflatus but he does not forget to underline his strong contemporary impulse to question it and check it\textsuperscript{6}. We feel inclined to accept Fraser's views that Spender attempts to view the human situation objectively at times but his limitation is that his essentially subjective temperament interferes with his objective interpretation of social reality.

Like W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender is more concerned with the well-being of the individual in society rather than with the grievances of the community as a whole. His intentions, like Auden, seem to be to bring about certain radical changes to ameliorate the decadent society so that the interests of the
individuals may be well-protected. Commenting upon the importance of individual in a society and the significance of social cause in the context of individual interests Spender observes:

Within even a good social cause, there is a duty to fight for the pre-eminence of individual conscience. The public is necessary, but the private must not be swallowed up by the concept of social man.

Here we may note that the two strains subjective and objective - almost work simultaneously on a conscious level in Spender's poetry, where as in the three phases of Auden's poetic output during the decade, his psychological reactions remain underground and almost inaudible. Thus, unlike Auden, who is graphic in his interpretation of social reality, Spender seeks to interpret the socio-economic malaise through romantic lyricism.

Spender's poetry reflects his total awareness of the objective conditions of the period as is evident from his handling of specific social issues like class antagonism fostered by the false value system of middle class, economic exploitation, unemployment, poverty, injustice, war, technology and love. He explores contemporary social environment and like other poets of the decade attempts to underline the factors responsible for the existing crisis.

In his poems "My parents kept me from children who were rough" and "Souvenir de Londres", Spender puts a question mark on the integrity of the middle class value system and highlights its pretensions and hypocrisies. Like W.H.Auden, he too rebelled
against his background. In some of his poems we find him reconsidering his childhood days in a critical manner. In "My parents kept me from children who were rough", for example, Spender challenges the undesirable intervention of parental authority which is responsible for raising inhibited and obsessed personalities. He feels that the ill offshoots of empty middle class value system obstruct the full, free and healthy growth of personality and result in class-barriers between the children of the underprivileged and those of the affluent classes.

Spender here, seems to underline that the middle class parents prevent free intermixing of their children with those of the poor classes without realising the fact that such restrictions may have disastrous impact on the full and healthy development of the personality of their children. Spender, in fact, ridicules the ruling middle classes through his envious appreciation of the active, lithe, free and vital lives of the children of the poor class in the following lines:

They were lithe, they sprang out behind hedges  
Like dogs to bark at my world. They threw mud.

(Collected Poems P.30)

In World Within World Spender states that due to the uncomfortable feeling of being born in a bourgeois society where
he had to live in loneliness created by parental notions of respectability, he developed a secret affection for these worthless outcasts and to give them that love which they were denied by respectable people. Spender appreciates the tough appearances, iron muscles, tight grip and adventurous spirit of the children of the unprivileged. The appearances, the attitudes and the responses of the poor children are, in reality, a reflection on the unjust social order, which Spender means to expose in this poem. These are also telling pointers to social tensions arising out of adverse consequences of social segregation, thus, generated.

Spender seems to discern a smouldering rage in the angry posture of the poor children. He vividly pinpoints:

I feared more than tigers their muscles
Their jerking hands their knees tight on my arm
I feared the salt-coarse pointing of these boys
Who copied my lisp behind me on the road.

(Collected Poems P.30)

To add to this, the refusal of the poor children to respond to the poet's gesture of forgiveness and sympathy implicit in his smile shows a sense of deep-seated hostility concealed beneath their expressed rough behaviour. The poet can already sense a full blast explosion of their long-suppressed anger.
Spender's analysis of the system, as it comes out in the above poem, leads us to "Souvenir-de Londres", where he focuses, once again, flash light on the false values and pretensions of the middle class. But in this poem, he lends on extra-dimension to this issue by analysing the adverse impact of the discord-ridden family life of the middle classes on their children. Spender exposes the filthy reality that private lives of most of the middle-class families are rotten though the fact remains hidden under the facade of pseude-culture and decency. Spender gives us the interior view of their lives to unearth their unsound social value system. He highlights the stifling impact of the quarrel between the parents on their son sleeping in the neighbouring room. Spender hints at the fundamental question that arises in the disturbed son's mind:

"How can these sleep who eat upon their fear./And watch their dreadful love fade away as it grows?"9

This obviously sheds enough light on the frustrations of the middle-class families, though, they may pretend to look complacent and cheerful. The impact of disturbance seems far-reaching. This is duly attested by the disturbed psyche of the son in the lines:

I am your son and from bad dreams arise
My sight is fixed with horror as I pass
Before the transitory glass
And watch fungus cover up my eyes.

(Collected Poems 1965 P.20)
The poet underlines the emptiness in the lives of the parents and shows how their hollow life interferes with the mental peace of their son also. The images of 'bad dreams', 'horror' and 'fungus' are symbolic of adverse reactions of such a family life. Thus Spender's analysis of the delicate issue of man-woman relationship in the middle class family life is profound and so is his investigation into the phenomenon of children growing up into choked personalities. Like W.H. Auden, Spender indicates the importance of a need to establish stable and healthy human relationships for a just social order. His critique of middle class where dichotomies and contradictions prevail expresses the hollowness of the existing social order and highlights Spender's radical ventures into all pervading chaos.

In "An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum", Spender dilates upon the issue of social segregation already discussed above and deals with the associated issues of exploitation, injustice, inequality and poverty in "The Prisoners", "In railway halls, on Pavements near the traffic" "Moving through the silent crowd" and "The Port" respectively. In "An Elementary school classroom in a Slum", Spender exposes the malfunctioning of the then ruling government in Britain and chides them for establishing separate educational institutions for the children of the rich
and those of the poor. He feels that this policy helps in flaring up class antagonism. He points out the unhealthy and wretched situation of the state-run schools where the children of the unprivileged go. These children are:

The stunted unlucky heir.
Of twisted bones, reciting a father's gnarled disease,
His lesson from his desk.

(Collected Poems P.80).

The poet's sense of justice is evidently injured at the unequal treatment given to the children of the poor. The ugly environment of the slums is a sordid comment on the sense of equity and fair play in the prevalent social order. Spender, however, does not mystify children and their revolting conditions like the Romantic poets. He examines the whole issue in a matter of fact way. He communicates the anguish writ large on their faces in a poignant manner:

Far far from gusty waves these children's faces,
Like restless weeds, the hair torn round their pallor,
The tall girl with her weighed-down head,
The paper seeming boy, with rat's eyes.

(Collected Poems P.80)
Their 'weighed down heads' and 'stunted bodies' are living reminders of the revolting inequalities and disorders in the socio-economic set up of the times. To these children Shakespeare is irrelevant and understanding world map is simply a tall order. Spender observes that for these children:

...these windows, not this world, are world, Where all their future's painted with a fog.

(Collected Poems P.80)

Rather their situation is worse as they "slyly turn in their cramped holes" (Collected Poems P.80). They can imagine only about their foggy slums which are as big as doom and the windows of these slums shut upon their lives like catacombs. The contrast in the separate educational institutions for the children of the unprivileged classes and those of the affluent classes is manifest through the images of cloudless dawn, belled flowery Tyrolean Valley Contrasted against fog and endless night which are strong pointers to social segregation. Unlike the poem discussed earlier, where the poor children are shown as symbol of collective strength, here, they are presented as pale, weak stunted bodies with their heads weighed down as if they have to bear the brunt of being born in an unprivileged class. The poet
appears to be well aware that the poor children cannot escape the fate of their parents. The poet introduces a solution towards the conclusion:

Break, O break open till they break the town
And show the children to green fields and make their world
Run azure on gold sands, and let their tongues
Run naked into books, the white and green leaves open
History theirs whose language is the sun.

(Collected Poems P.81)

In these lines the poet attempts at awakening his own class and assigning it the duty to adopt corrective measures to improve the condition of unprivileged before they themselves set the things right and end disparities by revolting against the system.

We are aware that the surmounting miseries like deprivations of poverty, inequality and injustice from which the children of the dispossessed suffer need an overall change in the government policies, where as the poet's suggestion of a brief excursion smacks of escapist tendencies rather than an offer of any tangible measure to overcome it. The poet, we must here emphasise, raises the pertinent social issue of proper development of human personality through expression of his anger at the hopeless living conditions of the poor and pleads for
immediate relief-action in the form of sojourning in the open green fields. This may not be a permanent solution but it will surely provide them with relative stability in the drift of experience. The poet makes a definite attempt to lay bare the stark realities of the system and presses with special force and urgency the need for immediate action to establish a vital link between establishment and proletariates, unlike the existing system which places barriers in interaction between different classes. Thus, the poet's deep concern for the healthy development of the poor children, his recognition of their deprivations and his attempt at producing healthy environment for them, of course, are radical gestures in the direction of bringing about qualitative change in the existing society.

As in "My parents kept me from children who were rough" where Spender accuses the system for creating class-distinctions by placing stumbling blocks in free intermixing of children belonging to different castes in the name of value system, in this poem also, the system is held responsible for aggravating differences by establishing separate educational institutions and giving unequal opportunities to the under-privileged.

"The Prisoners" is another poem which opens up the vital social issue of mal-functioning of the system reflected in the wretched conditions of the prisoners. Spender is grieved to see
the degeneration of the prison authorities into dehumanising machines. He presents the prisoners as absolutely helpless creatures who have lost all initiative and fortitude due to terrible miseries they had to undergo. They are:

The prisoners
Turned massive with their vaults and dark with dark,

They raise no hands, which rest upon their knees,
But lean their solid eyes against the night,
Dimly they feel
Only the furniture they use in cells.

(Collected Poems P.41)

These details are definite pointers to the vital significance of raising this issue as the shrivelled up personalities of the prisoners expose the real face of the prison-authorities.

A closer view of the poem reveals the intensity of anguish felt by the poet in the face of utter passivity of the prisoners and their becoming immune to grief. The prisoners are not shown as human beings determined to rise above the given conditions. The poet thinks of arousing them from their state of utter insensitiveness but his attempt is hypothetical:
No, no, no,
It is too late for anger,
Nothing prevails
But pity for the grief they cannot feel.

(Collected Poems P.42)

It is the limitation of Spender's perspective that this well-intended poem sounds as an expression of the upsurge of pity generating emotional outbursts at the deadening misery of the prisoners. The projection of the prisoners as representative victims of oppression and exploitation is not enough to give them justice. Still, in this case, his well-meaning critique on the prison authorities is an eye opener and is an apt illustration of constructive social criticism. It draws our attention to the excesses of the social system which is responsible for reducing the prisoners to their existing wretched condition.

Again, Spender raises the significant socio-economic issue of unemployment leading to poverty and a life of indignity in poems like "Moving through the silent crowd", "In Railway halls on pavements near the traffic", "The port" and "Not palaces, an era's crown". These poems are critical variations on the excesses of the unjust social order in the form of injustices done to the unprivileged. In "Moving through the silent crowd", Spender highlights the sense of emptiness that has taken over the poor
unemployed victims of Economic Depression. He regards this emptiness as an additional injury to the misery and starvation caused by poverty:

They sleep long nights and rise at ten
To watch the hours that drain away.

(Collected Poems P.36)

Apart from the conditions of the unemployed the pathetic scene of the beggars round the railway halls also demands immediate attention. As the poet depicts "In Railway Halls, On pavements near the traffic" the beggars are, in fact, measuring time. They are just dragging their lives 'As tides push rotten stuff along the shore'(Collected Poems P.59). The poet finds no consolation in the system where the oppressor starves and deprives the poor of even the basic necessities. He does not appear to believe in painting 'draped despairs' and 'saddening clouds'(Collected Poems P.59). There is no scope for romanticisation of miseries for Spender or talking about souls and eternity. Like W.H. Auden, Spender too, in this poem, seems to show a higher degree of objectivity in his analysis of the situation. He feels an irresistible urge to voice the injustices of the system so that public opinion may be raised against social inequalities. The distinction between W.H. Auden and Spender, however, is that the former compels the readers' attention by his ironic tone, the
latter influences them with his idealistic sincerity. For example, Spender, in this poem, succeeds in conveying consistent and genuine feelings in his response to the tragic condition of the beggars: No, I shall weave no tracery of pen-ornaments./To make them birds upon my singing tree. (Collected Poems P.59)

Thus, the poet does not regard the beggars as mere topics for poetic expression but considers them living human beings arousing moral indignation. There is no mystification of the issue but there is direct response to the direct situation. The presentation of the poor as passive demoralised creatures wallowed in the deepest blues with their eyes made big by empty staring and the insignificance of their lives made manifest through the vivid images of the 'blank clock' and 'rotten stuff' (Collected Poems P.59) may be taken as an attempt at arousing romantic sympathy for them as they have not been depicted as bubbling with exasperation to wreak vengeance upon the exploiters for the injustices they have suffered at their hands. But this is done perhaps with the specific intention of pointing out the excesses of the system to arouse public anger against the system.

In "Moving through the silent crowd" also the unemployed have been presented as suffering human beings. In this poem, Spender concentrates on the ugly impact of unemployment and poverty to highlight the atrocities wrought by the system. The
poet's reactions to their catastrophic condition indicate measures for removing ills but as it is evident through much of the poetry of this period, the poet does not look for solutions beyond the existing framework of the system. His attempt at raising the issue, going to the roots of its causes and arousing public opinion are positive gestures in both of these poems. The poet feels that a system which fails to provide justice should be thrown away but his approach to the issue is constrained by his perspective.

Another poem "The port" moves a step further to show how poverty leads to a life of indignity due to deprivations. The poet points out the miserable plight of the needy people by way of contrast:

And, far from lapping laughter, all's parched and hard. Here the pale lily boys flaunt their bright lips, Such pretty cups for money, and older whores Scuttle rat-toothed into the dark out doors .

(Collected Poems P.35)

The Contrasting images:

In their fat gardens, the merchants dwell Southwards. Well-lit, well-fed, well-spoken men are these, With bronze-faced sons, and happy in their daughters.

(Collected Poems P.35)
This contrast between the pale lily boys driven to begging and the well-fed merchants leading luxurious lives amply suggests the miserable impact of economic crisis on the poorer sections of the society.

"Not palaces, an era's crown" adds an optimistic dimension to the issue of hunger and inequality. As, the critic M.L. Rosenthal suggests, Spender pleads for transferring our sense of beauty and tradition to new objects away from family pride and self-cultivation towards a world without hunger and inequality. The poet seems to be hopeful about the deliverance of people from economic miseries. He confidently assures his comrades of a new dawn:

"No one shall hunger: Man shall spend equally. Our goal which we compel: Man shall be man"

(Collected Poems 1955 P. 64).

The poet even goes to the extent of prescribing death to killers and assures his friends that old capitalist system was doomed to fall. This seems to Willis D. Jacobs, a suggestion of "murderous vindictiveness" in a poem "expressive of high idealism and love of mankind."
Burnham decries it as a powerful negative principle for poetry and therefore, an aesthetic poetic failure on the part of Spender\(^\text{12}\). We feel that these are only superficial contradictions. The poet's intention in his indignant suggestion actually involves the death of destroyers and rebirth of a new order. It is never a suggestion for mass murder to be taken literally. Critics have also detected illegality of argument in his emphasis on a departure from "people ordered like a single line" (Collected Poems P.64) and the contradiction implied in his assertion: "Our goal which we compel: Man shall be man (Collected P.64). This, in any case, is a plea for cumulative efforts of the individuals to ensure the goal of a better society by defeating the hostile forces. Infact, overwhelmed by his humanitarian idealism, Spender believed in the relieving power of communism which he thought would ensure justice to the masses. He appears confidant that the capitalist tactics would, ultimately, fail to refute man's unflinching faith in humanism. But it is important to underline that absolute abolition of hunger and establishment of equality seem convenient wishes only. Nevertheless, the poem emerges as radical call to strive for economic betterment and human fraternity to ensure love, justice and equality. We shall have to bring about some basic changes in the system to cause a greater change. Michael Roberts' views about the poets of the thirties in the context of this poem in particular seem pertinent: They believe that a new order of society must emerge out of the present muddle and the
basis of the new society must be communistic but they exasperate the working communist by having definite ideas on the form and purpose of life in that society. This poem too highlights the urgency of changed outlook in the face of changed circumstances. Spender's exhortations to rebel against the unjust social order and to rebuild it show the extent of his indignation against the existing set up of society. The lyricism and the imaginative force of the poem are remarkable and add to the social content of the poem.

Again, in "The shapes of death haunt life", Stephen Spender tries to trace the roots of social problems relating them to distortions of individual freedom and initiative under capitalist system. The poet denounces the deliberate working of human greed:

The greed for property
Heaps a sky scraper over the breathing ribs,
The Speed-lines of dictators
Cut their own stalks.
From afar, we watch the best of us-whose adored desire was to die into all Time.

(Collected Poems P.33)

Spender sees the whole process against a historical setting and points out that shapes of death haunt such lives as are ambitious. Reviewing the contemporary socio-economic scene he points out this ugly aspect of reckless pursuit of individual
self-interest which causes social injustice through exploitation and corruption. A closer view of his critique of system unveils the underground pressures of liberal concern for the safety of individuals beneath the evident social concerns. Spender's liberal humanistic faith that goodness or nobility in man would triumph over the evil and greed finds illustration in his suggestion of finding consolation in 'autumnal instinct' of the swallows, his reference to 'unguided flight' and the expressions like 'perch simple for delight' (Collected Poems P.38).

His poem "Dark and Light" records with a sharper edge Spender's true personal response to the contemporary scene. He observes darkness within himself and in the outer reality. He feels profoundly involved in measuring the depths of public as well as private crisis. The mysterious grip of darkness and chaos is inextricable and the poet seems to cherish a wish even to sustain them because he finds that his will to breakout the chaos into a lucid day is not strong enough. He recognises the need of a search for his own identity as well as feels an urge for social amelioration. Both these impulses are simultaneous in him. The images of 'lucid day' and 'light' suggestive of his consistent efforts to advance towards the 'sun' - his social goal and the images of 'night', 'darkness' and 'chaos' representing his inward needs lend a peculiar sharpness to his complex social response. The poet wishes to come out of the chaos through a synthesis of
public and private to establish a better social set-up. Spender uses effective imagery to convey the complex character of his radicalism.

All these poems, thus, reflect Stephen Spender's genuine concern for the contemporary social problems of the crisis-ridden thirties. Even poems which do not appear to raise direct social issues still reveal implicitly his understanding of social reality.

The thirties, we know, was a decade of an overwhelming impact of technology and science on human life. Technology added new revolutionary dimensions to war, another important aspect of social life. The new scientific means of communication and transport contributed to the rise of authoritarian states and upsurge of fascism. The threat of impending second world war made it imperative for the contemporary poets to understand and analyse the real face of technology and gauge its impact on the quality of human life.

On the industrial and commercial front, the system put technology and science to misuse in order to fulfil its profit motive. Its repercussions were seen in the rigorous economic exploitation. Not only this, the emergence of factories, machines, transmission lines and transport impaired the natural environment with filth, squalor and pollution. It also adversely affected
the inter relationship of human beings with nature and created conditions in urban centres which were totally inhospitable to normal human habitat.

Stephen Spender's literary consciousness responded to the development of science and technology with a question mark. His specific response to the social environment reflected in his poems on technology and war reflects his understanding of social system and its operational policies regarding technology and science. Spender is anxious about the galloping speed with which technology is taking over this human planet but what perturbs him most is the fall out of this new phenomenon in terms of increasing erosion of a social set up friendly to the individuals. He feels concerned to note that technological objects were made instrumental in aggravating the social injustices under the existing social set up. Nevertheless, Spender did not exclude the possibility of new technology playing a positive role in society. In *World Within World* he remarks that the objects of technology showed him that modern life could be material for art and that the poet, instead of having to set himself apart from his time, could create out of an acceptance of it.  

Thus, keeping in view, Spender's acceptance of technology as an integral part of social life, its all pervading impact and
particularly its effect on the poet's sensibility, it is necessary to analyse in depth his poems which deal with the themes of technology and war.

Spender, in fact, struck a new note by making objects of technology as themes of his poetry. His poems "The Express", "The pylons", "The Landscape Near An Aerodrome" and "The Funeral" highlight his peculiar response to the application of technology in life. "The Express", evidently, is a sufficient expression of Spender's hearty acceptance, undisguised exhilaration and lavish approbation of technological products. The rhythmical pattern and imagery employed in this poem reflect his sense of thrill "gliding like a queen she leaves the station, / She begins to sing with a Jazzy madness" (Collected Poems P.54) Again:

Steaming through metal landscapes on her lines,  
She plunges new eras of white happiness

(Collected Poems P.54)

The poet invests the train with mysterious beauty and grandeur and imagines her moving "further than Edinburgh or Rome/Beyond the crest of the world" and further "like a comet through flame". But the sudden gust of thought about "black statement of the pistons" and his realisation that she passes with restrained unconcern "the houses which humbly crowd outside..."
the gas works' (Collected Poems PP.54-55) are pointers to the lurking doubts in the poet's mind about the nature of the impact of technology. But this symbol of new technology, for Spender, still, is invested with mysterious beauty against natural surroundings only, for instance, 'with the luminous self-possession of ships on ocean' (Collected Poems P.54). The distrust of technology gradually acquires new substance in the imagery used in describing the train's passage through the town. In fact, Spender's preference for the simple and natural life of countryside over the city life shows that he apprehends the smudging impact of technology on natural environment. His romantic nostalgia for pastoral beauty sufficiently evidences this. His apprehensions about the dehumanising effect of technology which will wipe out humanistic impulses through mechanisation is reinforced here.

Another dehumanising impact that he apprehends is brought by the absolute absence of human beings as passengers. There is not even a passing reference to human beings as passengers. Even the reference to slums is cursory and indirect. The poet's silence over the inclusion of human beings who are to use the technological objects shows his fears about lack of human warmth and mechanisation of human life.

Spender seems to cherish a secret wish for a change from the harsh world of technology to a musical world of open country.
side soothing to ears. The images unfolding the comparison of the dry sound of the train represented through the screaming whistles deafening tunnels, brakes and bolts with the bird's song and 'boughs breaking with honey buds' (Collected Poems P. 54) show Spender's wish that the technology should grow without its antihuman application. Spender fully exposes the faulty application of technology by the system, which believes in its commercialisation for the fulfilment of vested interests. Not only this, the dehumanising impact of technology on human existence is sharply underlined. It is remarkable that even in the thirties Spender could raise an issue which has invoked endless international debate in the recent decades.

The appreciation of an object of technology the 'Express train' in this poem is obvious enough though the true nature of the poet's response is muffled in the presentation of this technological object as an unmixed blessing. In "The Pylons", on the other hand, the poet's admiration of technology is implicit only. He is rather more direct about underlining the ravages caused by it.

In this poem Spender seems to welcome the positive changes brought about by industrial development and the consequent upliftment in the rural scene. But he is anxious about its smudging
impact on the simplicity of the pastoral landscapes. He unfolds the simple beauty of the landscapes prior to the development of technology:

The secret of these hills was stone, and cottages
Of that stone made,
And crumbling roads
That turned on sudden hidden villages

(Collected Poems P.58)

Now the technology has changed the face of Nature:

Now over these small hills, they have built the concrete.
That trails black wire;
Pylons, these pillars
Bare like nude, giant girls that have no secret

(Collected Poems P.58)

The lines reveal the adverse impact of technology on pastoral beauty and Spender's romantic nostalgia for natural scenery. With a painful sense, Spender feels the passing away of the pastoral grandeur:

The valley with its gilt and evening look
And the green chestnut
of customary root,
Are mocked dry like the parched bed of a brook.

(Collected Poems P.58)
Where as "The Express" raises the issue of adverse impact of technology in the form of ecological imbalance and broken rapport between man and Nature in an indirect manner, "The Pylons, makes evidently manifest the pastoral impairment and its ruinous consequences. Unlike the poem discussed earlier, the appreciation of technology in this poem, is evident only in viewing it as perspective for future. Spender's faith in development is, no doubt, reaffirmed and kept intact here:

But far above and far as sight endures
Like whips of anger
With lightning's danger
There runs the quick perspective of the future

(Collected Poems P.58)

But the poet's apprehensions about its adverse impact in the form of environmental pollution and delinking of man and nature show it to be something 'so tall with prophecy' (Collected Poems P.58). We may here underline that both these poems are descriptive of the objects of technology in an objective manner. There is not even a fleeting glimpse of actual human lives being ill-affected by technology. The comparison of the dry sound of train with the bird's song in "The Express" and reference to the rebuilding of the cities which would sprout out of the graves of
the villages in "The Pylons" sound hypothetical. Unlike W.H. Auden, who views the whole process of social change in its historical perspective, Stephen Spender's approach seems impressionistic only. He seems just to take notice of the objects of technology and observe its evil impact without going deep into the implications of the synthetic solution offered by him. In this context, Spender's suggestion that technology should grow without its misapplication and ill-effects, is not only idealistic but also infeasible under the existing framework of system. He, in fact, wants to retain the useful aspects of technology as well as the romantic decor: Dreaming of cities/Where often clouds shall lean their swan-white neck (Collected Poems P.58). This appears to be too tall claims of technology to be accomplished without its side effects in the form of ravages caused to the pastoral beauty. His anxiety about the demolition of pastoral beauty and impoverishment of human life and humanity bereft of contacts with Nature shows his commitment to social cause. We know that a solution in the form of a synthesis of towns with romantic grandeur is not possible. Still it envisages, at least, a dream of a new social order, however, difficult its fulfilment may be. His attempt to underline the dehumanising impact of technology on the quality of human life has to be appreciated along with his farsightedness in visualising, when none else could do, the issues of ecological imbalance and environmental pollution - the ill off shoots of technology.
In "The Landscape Near An Aerodrome", Spender's understanding of technology appears sharper than in the poems discussed above. Arnold Kettle feels that though the poem leaves an overall powerful impact, it suffers from lack of sufficient revelation which is responsible for the manifest gap between the poet's desire to come to terms with the contemporary landscape and his actual aloofness from the processes which mould it into its real shape. He further suggests that the gulf is accentuated by the fact that the observers in the poem are passengers by definition passively removed from the processes of social and technological activity going on around them.

It is true that the romantic in Spender is enthralled by the outward beauty of the aeroplane. He is driven to compare the air-liner with a moth:

With burring furred antennas feeling its huge path
Through dusk, the air-liner with shut off engines
Glides over suburbs and the sleeves set trailing tall
To point the wind; Gently broadly, she falls,
Scarcely disturbing charted currents of air.

(Collected Poems P.5£)
At the same time, he apprehends, as in other poems, the adverse impact of technology on natural beauty. He discovers the filth and squalor of the industrial towns too. He brings out a pathetic situation:

...now let their eyes trained by watching
Penetrate through dusk the outskirts of this town
Here where industry shows a fraying edge
Here they may see what is being done.

(Collected Poems P.56)

This shows the hiatus created between the luxurious life of the rich and the drab life of the multitudes by the development of technology. The scene near the airport is shown through the use of evocative imagery where industrial complex is defined as 'the outposts of work' which represent workers' military like subservience in job. Spender expresses the devastating effect of technology in the following lines through vivid images:

... Chimneys like lank black fingers
Or, figures frightening and mad: and squat buildings;
With their strange air behind trees, like women's faces
Shattered by grief. Here where few houses
Moan with faint light behind their blinds,
They remark the unhomely sense of complaint, like a dog,
Shut out, and shivering at the foreign moon".

(Collected Poems P.56)
The concluding line of the poem "Religion stands, the Church blocking the sun" (Collected Poems P.57) seems to have generated some controversy. To Thurley it is like falling with a "platitudinous thud". Some other critics reiterate Thurley's viewpoint and remark that the line seems abrupt and is inconsistent with the main argument of the poem. Thwaite is of the opinion that "the implied condemnation of the religion is too summarily dragged in; it is too late to give any moral shock, because there has been nothing in the rest of the poem to make such a statement relevant". Allen Rodway seems to agree with the above views but he objects to Spender's manner of introducing the image. Despite adverse opinions of the critics as to the misplacement of the last line, we feel that the theme of scientific and technological advancement is itself a good enough indicator of the negation of orthodox religion in the new world of Science. So the last line, in fact, seems attuned to our own inner response to the potential ideas in the poem.

Thus the concluding line which points out the impact of religion on human beings in an industrialised society shows the juxtaposition of religion and the world of science and technology. It lays stress on the change that must come in the society which will ensure man's liberation from the orthodox religion into the
world of science. Inspite of the fact that Thwaite charges Spender of myth making or allegory making out of modern material, even he considers the poem as a whole successful.

The twin awareness of the positive aspects of new technology and the ugliness and environmental pollution it causes lies at the centre of the poems dealing with the social consequences. He gives a true to life picture of industrial landscape which shows his instinctive protest against the misapplication of technology. Infact, advancement of technology is not enough unless a concrete change is brought about in the workings of the system.

The three poems discussed above have rhythmic pattern seasoned with sensuous imagery. Spender uses technological images like humble houses, gasworks, cemetery, black wire, giant girls, parched bed, loud city, dying sky and landscape of hysteria contrasted against luminous light, elate music, new eras of white happiness, feminine land, valleys with gilt, comets, birds and boughs breaking with honey buds. This contrasting imagery reflects his faith in material progress as well as his romantic nostalgia. The inevitable conclusion in the case of Spender seems to be that industrialisation is inevitable but it must not come out at the cost of quality of human life.

In "The Funeral" Spender views technology from a fresh angle. In this poem, he dreams about a world state which will
usher in with the help of technological advancement. He imagines a future where the cities will be extricated from ugliness and squalor and assume a peculiar beauty of their own. For the accomplishment of this vision he emphasises upon the necessity of a change in social order and believes in the strength of communism to resolve social dilemma. The concluding stanza brings out satirically the decadent bourgeois culture:

No more are they haunted by the individual grief
Nor the crocodile tears of European genius,
The decline of a culture
Mourned by Scholars who dream of the ghosts of Greekboys.

(Collected Poems P.53)

The poet feels concerned about the consequent curtailment of individual freedom in the new social set up. He shows nostalgic longing for natural life of childhood. The element of fear adds a tone of disillusionment to the poem. It intrudes into the optimistic future prospects of a new social order. The poem is significant in the sense that Spender, in this poem, has been successful in replacing his romantic nostalgia with some corrective measures to see technology in a more constructive light instead of showing earlier morbid reactions. The constant threat of impending war which captured the poetic imagination of all major poets of the decade influenced Spender's literary sensibilities also in a vital way. The misuse of new scientific
and technological war appliances aggravated fascist tendencies and sounded a global threat to human life. The Spanish Civil war was a major influence on Spender. It was a symbol of conflict between republican forces and the fascist forces. In this war the defeat of the republicans symbolised a threat to liberal democratic principles and as such this war became a challenging issue for the poets of the thirties. Stephen Spender personally went to Spain for the cause and wrote a number of poems on Spanish civil war reflecting the impact of war on the contemporary social life. Though Spender was not an active participant in Spanish war still, in the victory of fascists in this war, he could visualise the threat of impending global flareup. G.S. Fraser underlines the role of emotional involvement and imaginative participation in broadening the vision which helps us in forming our evaluation of Spender's stance in war:

... Suffering is an inescapable feature of our time and that in a persistent active sympathy with suffering, a refusal to withdraw from imaginative participation in it there is something heroic.  

Infact, Spender could recognise the impending crisis and felt emotionally disturbed about the deteriorating situation with the rising fascist tendencies and the possibility of misapplication of war-weapons on a high scale. His struggle against fascists in Spanish Civil war was motivated by his liberal
perspective as he regarded them as enemies of individual progress and freedom. He was concerned about solitary human beings confronted with forces of evil and destruction. His poems overwhelm with pity for the war victims. In his book *World Within World* Spender reveals the shattering influence of war on human lives and quotes from his friend Jimmy's letter which, in fact, reflects his own attitude to Spanish Civil war:

I knew the meaning of war, I can see the blood and the dead faces, worse still, the expression in the eyes of dying. I felt no anti-fascist anger but only overwhelming pity.  

Critics like Mildred Davison detected Spender's fault in his lack of emotional impetus behind his peculiar sensitivity and lack of genuineness since these critics believe that these poems were written in his "position of observer". Samuel Hynes too charges him for not sharing the suffering and participating in war and as such denies him the authority to pity even for lack of involvement. It is right that Spender wrote the poems in the position of an observer only but an honest imaginative participation can surely lend authentic perceptions. Spender's farsightedness even as an observer can be testified in his prediction about the second world war and its repercussions. Spanish civil war was rightly taken as a symbol of impending war.
We may determine the true character of Spender's response to the phenomenon of war by making an indepth analysis of his poems on Spanish Civil war. In "Two Armies" and "Ultima Ratio Regum" Spender highlights the deficient economic system, which compels the soldiers to join army and secondly the dehumanising impact of war on the innocent human beings. In "Two Armies" Spender clearly brings out the hardships faced by the soldiers in war. He depicts the dehumanising impact of war on society as a whole as "Deep in the winter plain, two armies/Dig their machinery, to destroy each other."

The poet investigates into the causes and points out that economic stringency and hunger force soldiers to join army where they have to confront the desolate and desperate conditions of living in which "Men freeze and hunger". The acuteness of adverse conditions have made them so nervous and cold: "That each man hates the cause and distant words/That brought him here, more terribly than bullets".

They have no understanding of cause or ideology. It is their deprivations that bring them there so the cause stands defeated in the face of their sufferings. The following lines bring out the intensity of their predicament:

... No one is given leave
On either side, except the dead and wounded;
These have their leave while new battalions wait
On time at last to bring them violent peace.

(Collected Poems P.97)
The poet mentions the episode of a youngman whose marching song was choked by a sudden bullet:

"Once a novice hand flapped their salute;
The voice was choked, the lifted hand fell.
Shot through the wrist by those of his own side

(Collected Poems P.97).

In these tragic lines the poet condemns the imposition of "discipline drilled once in an iron school" (Collected Poems P.97), Which holds them at the point of revolver. The poet painfully presents them as haunted by the images of homely love and affection in their sleep as if trying to escape the hard realities but unfortunately, are held back by discipline thrust on them. Consequently their emotions remain 'a mass unspoken poem' in their wakeful eyes which symbolises forcible repression of inner humanity in them.

The situation is so unbearable for the soldiers that they cease even to hate. Their dumb patience seems to emphasise upon the need to realise the inexhaustible anger of the guns, the meaninglessness of warfare for cause or ideology. It is ironical that those who manipulate war remain untouched by this calamity.
The brutality of soldiers is a compulsion of their job. Their inherent humanity is so clearly brought out in the following lines:

Clean silence drops at night, when a little walk
Divides the sleeping armies, each
Huddled in linen woven by remote hands.
When the machines are stilled, a common suffering
Whitens the air with breath and makes both one.
As though these enemies slept in each other's arms.

(Collected Poems P.98)

It is important to reveal that Spender does not look at Spanish Civil war as a concrete confrontation of Republicans and Fascists. He just views it as an abstraction which entails untold sufferings on human beings. Spender's approach emerges as that of a pacifist. He projects the soldiers on both the sides as helpless creatures in the hands of power hungry leaders. Auden, on the other hand, views the Spanish civil war from the historical perspective. His partisanship is evidently manifest in his singular poem "Spain, 1937", which presents a series of reflections about the past history of Spain and the future for which the Republicans were fighting.

But Spender's approach is that of liberal democrat providing distributive justice where all must share the responsibility of the evil of war. He, infact, saw the war from
the point of view of an individual and not from that of an entire community. The imagery of the moon, in this poem underlines the insignificance of war weapons and speaks for the irretrievable loss during the war. The charge of passive neutrality levelled against Spender can be ignored in the light of his achievements in ruthless exposure of the reality of war or its vicious impact on humanity.

In "Ultima Ratio Regum" also Spender highlights the evil impact of war, which he considers, is the consequence of the selfish motives or vested interests of war mongers. He is moved to see an innocent dead soldier, who joined army due to financial stringency. The poet introduces two contrasting pictures of his life - one before his death and the other after his death. He was an immature innocent boy who did not understand the political ideologies involved in the war. The poet ironically points out:

When he lived, tall factory hooters never summoned him Nor did restaurant plate-glass doors revolve to wave him in His name never appeared in the papers.

(Collected Poems P.99)

The poet digs at the cruel conscience of the materialistic minded war mongers who compelled him to join war army through
inhuman manipulations i.e. by creating problems of living for him. War brought the ultimate havoc in his life in the form of his killing:

The unflowering wall sprouted with guns,  
Machine-gun anger quickly scythed the grasses;  
Flags and leaves fell from hands and branches;  
The tweed cap rotted in the nettles.

(Collected Poems P.99)

Towards the conclusion, Spender seems to attack those who are engrossed in shrewd calculations of profit and loss. The poet cries out pathetically:

Considered his life which was valueless  
In terms of employment, hotel ledgers, news files,  
Consider, one bullet in ten thousand kills a man.  
Ask, was so much expenditure justified  
On the death of one so young, and so silly  
lying under the Olive trees, O world, O death?

(Collected Poems P.99)

The poet ironically suggests that the ambitious war mongers can spend heaps of money to satisfy their selfish interests. He makes use of metaphors like 'money' and 'gold' to indicate materialistic tendencies of business magnets who encourage war. 'Factory' 'restaurant' and 'hotel' (Collected Poems P.99) suggest
the norms of social system which again represent the access of moneyed people. 'Gun', 'lead' the fallen 'tweed cap' 'the scything of' the grass', 'flags' and 'leaves' symbolise war scene. Thus the poet introduces conflicting worlds of the exploiters and the victims of economic deprivations to unearth the inconsistencies of the system. Through this mechanism, Spender finally succeeds in arousing sense of justice and sympathy for the killed soldier.

Spender's "Thoughts During an Air-raid" is an attack on individualistic tendencies generated during the war. Spender looks at this individualism as a reflection on the dehumanising impact of war. Since the context of this poem is Spanish Civil war, the poet points out that in such a crisis the thought of personal survival predominates over any other human concern with others. Every one, the poet points out, is concerned with personal security so "The entire effort is to put oneself. Outside the ordinary range of what are called statistics" (Collected Poems P.96). The poet's aversion for self-regarding individualism is ironically brought out in the following lines:

The essential is
That every one should remain separate
Propped up under roses, and no one suffer
For his neighbour.

(Collected Poems P.96)
Though the poem is inspired by the Spanish Civil war, the adverse impact of war in general becomes the subject of focus. The poet views war as a terrible calamity for an individual. Overwhelmed by emotions of pity for war victims, Spender forgets to observe the whole phenomenon from proper historical viewpoint. But his matter of fact analysis of the futility of war and forceful manifestations of its ugly aspects makes Spender a significant commentator of social consequences of disastrous event like war. The ironical tone of the poem evidently suggests that the poet intends to register the protest against the degenerating impact of war on individuals. He unearths the vicious designs of war, which treats individuals in terms of statistics and makes them self-centred and devoid of human warmth. His observation of the self-regarding individualism as a defensive reflex in war situation is a pointer to his condemnation of the system, which encourages war. Whereas Auden arouses our sense of indignation against war by his historical materialistic approach, Spender touches the chords of human emotions in our sensibility by arousing pity for war-victims.

Another poem "Fall of A City" pinpoints the futility of human material achievements by taking a broader view of the ugly impact of war over time and space. In this poem, Spender denounces the wickedness of the perpetrators of war who are prompted by twin urges of victory and adventure. He suggests that war should
be stopped to ensure the well-being of the human beings. "Port Bou" on the other hand, indirectly deals with the theme of war by choosing to focus on the firing practices and their impact on the private lives of the citizens. The poet is lost in childhood reminiscences of headlands of the port. Republicans, performing firing practices, intervene for friendly consolations. The poet can sense the peace of the town being disturbed by the sound of the bullets. The poem seems to suggest the need for peaceful and developmental use of war equipment and human labour for the establishment of a better social order. Since the situation is imaginary, the solutions are also hypothetical but apprehensions about actual situation lurk beneath the imaginary one:

I assure myself the shooting is for practice
But I am the coward of cowards. The machine gun stiches
My intestines with a needle, back and forth;
The solitary, spasmodic, white puffs from the Carbines
Drew fear in white threads back and forth through my body.

(Collected Poems P.107)

The extension of sympathy to the civilians reflected in the extent of the poet's anxiety about the intrusions of public events into private lives shows the breadth of his liberal concerns. Nevertheless, his serious reflections over war issue and his reading predictions about impending real war in symbols are indicators of his social-consciousness.
In "The Room Above The Square" the poet views the issue of Spanish civil war in social context and analyses its devastating impact on the private lives of the soldiers. The experience of love which is central to human and social situation is viewed - love before the war and love during war. The passionate love, before the war came to pounce upon its intensity, is described in ecstatic terms in the following lines:

The light in the window seemed perpetual
When you stayed in the high room for me;
It glowed above the trees through leaves like my certainty.

(Collected Poems P.95)

Then through a contrasting image the poet unveils the devastating impact of war:

The light is fallen and you are hidden
In sun bright peninsulas of the sword;
Tarn like leaves through Europe is the peace
That through us flowed

(Collected Poems P.95)

The war evidently takes its own toll and drains out all beauty and strength from love - it rather paralyses love destroying all certainties and bright hopes. The poem, in this sense, becomes a serious reflection on the adverse consequences of war in human
and social terms. The situation is indicative of growing apprehensions about the impending second world war. In his war poems, Spender, thus, emerges as a radical-liberal humanist. He clearly recognises the threat of impending war and analyses the evil designs of war-mongers. Being idealist by nature, Spender respects human values and envisages in the world peace the ultimate human goal but the limitations of the perspective of a radical-liberal are conspicuous in his refusal to force the issues to the better end.

Auden, on the contrary, is not fascinated by a peace which is obtained by compromise and negotiations. In a fighter's tone, he would, for example, suggest:

Today is the struggle  
... the time is short and...  
History to the defeated  
May say alas, but cannot help or pardon24.

But Spender, unlike Auden, is all the time fearful of struggle and focuses attention on abstract generalisations and humanistic aims. The comment does not in any way detract from the statement that Spender's social vision is honest and sincere. It is radical too in the sense that Spender could well perceive and express the inconsistencies and incongruities of the
prevailing capitalist system and sought to underline the need to take corrective measures to prevent a total loss of humanistic order.

The understanding of Spender's poetry of the thirties, we must bear in mind, remains incomplete without throwing light on his concern for genuine and healthy man-woman relationships. In his poems "Two kisses", "The double shame", "The little coat", "The vase of Tears" and "Auf Dem wasser Zu Singem", which are built on the themes of love and separation, Stephen Spender highlights man-woman relationship in the context of social environment as human love is a social activity. These poems, in fact, depict the tensions of the over-all decay in western civilization and constitute a plea for meaningful and living human relationships. Whereas T.S. Eliot focuses on the directionlessness in human relationships by depicting love as barren and unsatisfying affair centring on mere lust, Spender, on the other hand, becomes conscious of the dirt and filth of the outer social reality while describing the experience of love.

In his poem "Two kisses" the poet attempts to relate the issue of love to the social reality. While experiencing the tender sentiment of love, he feels the pull of social tensions. He carries the ennobling impressions of private love with him but
comes to grips with the 'dirt of all the streets' (Collected Poems P.113). He feels the 'outside roar' intruding upon his private dreams. This initiates a struggle in him between 'Inside dreams and outside roar' (Collected Poems P.113). The struggle itself unfolds his involvement in the social cause and Unlike Romantics, he is conscious of the social challenges of the times. He does carry the ennobling impact of love in the midst of social tensions around but the pressures of social realities upon his love are so insistent that he seeks its fulfilment in the other world where his life will unfold itself to his beloved:

Between two sailing swans, a light
Stretches on waves, as on your cheek
That other kiss - my life
Waiting for your life to speak

(Collected Poems P. 113)

The poet does not present love as a regenerative force which may transform the filth of society into righteous and healthy human relationships. He presents love as something exerting magical impact to eliminate all that is dull and drab. There is some mysticism involved in the solution when the poet raises love to spiritual heights above the material earth of sordid realities. In Auden's poetry human love inspires him to understand social realities:
Through our private stuff must work
His public spirit.

In Spender, the positive transmutation of love to suit social needs is absent. His approach consists in the magical power of love rather than in its regenerative force. Still his awareness of social reality, while dealing with the issue of love, is remarkable.

"The Vase of Tears" appears to be a more sincere attempt in underlining the relationship between individual love and its social fulfilment. The images of 'tears', 'unhappiness' and 'face of stone' (Collected Poems P.115) are suggestive of the sadness in human relationships due to social tensions around. Here like C.Day Lewis the poet attempts to provide comfort to his beloved in the transitory pleasure of physical love; "And then we smother with caresses./Both your starved needs to atone (Collected Poems P.115). This type of temporary relief in physical love hinted at by the poet, though appreciable as timely comforter, fails to provide relief to the beloved's bruised conscience. We know that her miseries are caused by social factors: "...Unhappiness From some dream to your self alone" (Collected Poems P.115). The poet endeavours to come out of the illusory world of dreams and jumps into the flux of social reality. Thus even illusory love gives him a glimpse of social reality. The poet assesses the tensions which create unhappiness in the beloved but seeks to provide her
relief through love which is insufficient as her miseries can be overcome by bringing about environmental change. Thus the poet does feel the intensity of world's grief. There is a persistent, though oblique, urge to find a solution to the social crisis which shows the radical character of the poet's perspective.

The idea of love as a solution to the ills of the society is explored in yet another poem "Auf Dem Wasser Zu Singen". The poet feels that love alone can enable us to appreciate and share each others' miseries and sorrows:

Then I would understand
What the people of his land
Never understood: his heart
Was torn apart
By a vulture: hence
Fury his address
And his life disorder

(Collected Poems P.122)

The poet suggests that man is basically good and love would provide cure for social dilemmas. Here it is important to note that both Spender and Auden believe in love's positive role in remedying social evils. Auden's approach is psychological as for as social role of love is concerned but Spender's is romantic mystical.
In "The Double Shame" the poet shows his awareness of the impact of human history on love in the context of society. It brings out the chaotic contemporary scene in the opening lines:

You must live through the time when everything hurts
When the space of the ripe, loaded afternoon
Expands to a landscape of white heat frozen
And trees are weighed down with hearts of stone
And green stares back where you stare alone,
And the walking eyes throw flinty comments
And the words which carry most knives are the blind
Phrases searching to be kind.

(Collected Poems P.120)

The poet exposes the distortions of the existing system. The spirit of competition and rivalry which the system holders encourage show their vicious reflections in the form of jealousy and hypocrisy. He also lays bare the pretensions, vanity and snobbery of the people who try to maintain outward show of polished behaviour though inwardly they lack sincere love and genuine feelings.

Spender unfolds emptiness of human relationships in the existing society where individual has become obsessed with materialistic tendencies and consequently has become self centred. He draws an imaginative picture to introduce a contrast of the past with the present in order to bring about the insignificance of the outward material advancement of the present civilization
which has failed to bring about happiness for man. He emphasises upon the tragic sublimity of the past and sense of 'tawdry despair' (Collected Poems P.121) that overwhels the present. The poet points out that the present suffers from a double shame which runs into two extremes - lack of sufficient love and excessive love. The poet seems to indicate here the need for maintenance of proper balance in all human affairs which modern man has failed to achieve. He points out the deterioration of society in the excessive love for materialism and resultant cut throat competition and over ambition leading to economic disparities, exploitation and self-centredness. The poem may appear to be individualistic in poet's concern for the well being of individuals and his putting the responsibility of this state of impasse on individual himself but the historical perspective from which he views the social reality is a radical sign.

In "The little Coat" the poet's reflections over his past sharpens his sensibility and he realises that the pursuit of pleasures without social fulfilment gives a sickening sensation to the experience of life. This accounts for his search for finding permanent meanings in human life. The three stanzes successfully reveal the development in the poet's thought process. The images describing passionate youth with heart as a 'thudding bird' shows the central happiness of youth. The depiction of sensuous pleasures through images of arms like branches and head
against her breast" (Collected Poems P.114) unfold the spring of youthful love with passionate bustling emotional urges. Then there is a reflection on the transitory nature of youthful pleasures in the following lines:

Every thing is dragged down and away
The clothes that were so gay
Lie in attics, like the dolls
With which wild children used to play .

(Collected Poems P.114)

The poet craves for permanence of love:

Hold me in that Solemn kiss
Where both our minds have eyes which look beyond this Vanishment : and in each other's gaze
Accept what passes, believe what stays:

(Collected Poems P.114)

Instead of making an attempt to seek consistent and steady meanings within this life, the poet suggests the pursuit of permanence after death. The poet's social intentions are evident in his search for meaningful human relationships rather than those bound by transitory physical pleasures alone. Mystical conclusions demonstrated by his craving for 'solemn kiss' show his romantic temperament.
Spender's love poems reflect his consciousness of the contemporary social reality in which the tender sentiment of love has to seek its fulfilment. Unlike Romantics, who drew blinkers of neutrality over the social aspect of love and celebrated love untouched by the filth and squalor of streets, Spender takes note of social factors which exercise pressure on love. He recognises the need for a just social order for the healthy and meaningful development of love. His attitude towards love is more realistic than the attitude of the Romantics but it is his limitation that he takes convenient recourse to the magical power of love and fails to sustain his radicalism, which consists in his realistic consciousness of the social tensions of the thirties.

To conclude Stephen Spender's poems are a vivid manifestation of his serious grappling with the multi-dimensional socio-economic issues of the times. His social poems have powerfully exposed the inconsistencies of the existing system. He has achieved the desired effect by highlighting the problems of the underprivileged in the capitalist framework. In his poems on technology Spender welcomes the scientific and technological advancement but feels restless to observe the ecological imbalance and environmental pollution which came in its wake. His poems on war issue have shown his acute consciousness of the adverse impact of war on public and private fronts and have strongly pleaded for peace. In his love poems, Spender has visualised love as a
social act and has underlined the importance of making love meaningful in human relationships. He has upheld the role of social happiness but even in this broad vision, romantic in him has intervened to shift the emphasis to mystical love.

In the final analysis, Spender's social perspective has emerged out to be that of a radical-liberal. His poems have shown him to be striking bold postures but as he was a bourgeois-born he could work to bring about changes for betterment within the existing capitalist system itself.
This was a period when it seemed possible to hope, to choose, to act as individuals but for a common end; possible for us as writers, to bridge the old romantic chasm between the artist and the man of action. The poet and the ordinary.

C. Day Lewis