CHAPTER IV

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR: THE POETRY OF WAR

'Ay, Spain of my life!
Ay, Spain of my death!'¹

These lines by Miguel Hernandez express the cry (Ah!) of a tormented person. The fate of Spain was obviously the fate of the poet who voiced the feelings of his countrymen at large.

Hence unlike the earlier chapters (on the First World War) that dealt only with the poems by British poets, this chapter will also contain an analysis of a few poems by Spanish poets in translation. The Spanish poets have been included to try and distinguish the difference between their response to the war and that of the International Brigade.

A difference in writing might be expected from the difference in circumstances.

(a) First for the Spanish poets it was their own land that was ravaged.

They had their roots in Spain, the country that had borne them and made them what they were. They carried the spirit of Spain within them.
To quote García Lorca -

If by the Grace of God I become famous half of that fame will belong to Granada which formed me and made me what I am. 2

In fact here Lorca more than recognizing himself as a Spanish poet regards himself as Granada's poet. So the feeling is more localized than the love of one's country. Indeed in many Spanish poets we shall find this intense attachment to the region of one's birth.

(b) Secondly the Spanish poets were forced to be participants unlike the members of the International Brigade who volunteered.

(c) And lastly a greater inwardness of experience is felt in their work resulting from their intimate knowledge of the land. To illustrate this point one can recall the bombing of Guernica.

The isolated northern zone was the logical target for the Nationalists after four unsuccessful attempts to cut short the war by capturing Madrid. The northern zone was Republican territory and in April 1937 the nationalists began their attack with the bombing of Guernica. It was the first massive bombardment of civilian territory.

The whole of Guernica was a burnt skeleton except the parliament buildings and the oak tree. The first parliament of Spain had held its meeting in Casa de Juntas
under the same oak tree. Therefore with the bombing Guernica became a witness of the spirit of Spain, her pride, her struggle for liberation and of her martyrdom.

Such incidents have a symbolic significance for a Spaniard who had his roots deep in the history and culture of his land. The survival of the oak tree would not mean anything to a foreigner who knew nothing of its historical significance. Something of his nature can be observed in the poem 'The Winds of People' by Hernandez that is analysed later in this chapter.

Thus one might expect to find a difference between the Spanish poet's response to the war and that of the British. For the volunteers of the International Brigade it was their made political awareness that them conscious that the fate of the whole world hinged on the outcome of the civil war in Spain. Some of the most deeply involved of these did not even write any poetry arising out of this experience, for instance Ralph Fox and Christopher Caudwell.

As for the classification of the poems pertaining to the Spanish Civil War they cannot be categorised as early, transitional and later poems (like the poems of the First World War in Chapter II). Instead they have been categorised themewise and grouped as follows.
4.1.1 The Cause

This section includes poems projecting a sense of a cause, a sense of commitment among the Spanish and non-Spanish, soldier and non-soldier poets.

4.1.2 Spain Fights for Humanity

Poems that bring out the significance of the Spanish War for all humanity are likewise included.

4.1.3 International Intervention

Poems where a poet ironically attacks the foreign intervention and non-intervention policies towards Spain are discussed here.

4.2 A Picture of Destruction

This section has sub-sections as follows:

4.2.1 The Ravaged Land

Poems that describe the ravaged land mingled with memories of the past are analysed in this section.

4.2.2 Civilian Deaths

There are also poems that deal with civilian deaths and the reaction to civilian deaths.

4.3 Experience of Battle

This section consists of poems that describe the experience of battle and death in battle.
4.4 **Defeat**

This section analyses poems that express the feeling of defeat. The Spanish Republic appeared quite certain of defeat, yet the confidence that the future generation would carry on the struggle to fight fascism will be revealed through the poems in this section.

4.5 **Conclusion**

The conclusion will bring out the difference in the poetry of the Spanish Civil War by the Spanish poets and the British poets. It will then proceed to highlight the features of the poetry of this war which appear to distinguish it from that of the other wars.

4.1.1 **The Cause**

To start with a quotation from Hernández from 'The Injured':

> For freedom I shed blood,  
> fight and live  
> For freedom my eyes and my hands,  
> As a carnal tree, generous captive  
> I give to the surgeons.

The poet speaks of freedom as the cause for which he is ready to sacrifice himself. He is ready to sacrifice every part of his body, by mentioning this the poet may be wanting to stress the importance of the cause. Just as a person who gives his body to be operated to the surgeon
gives himself in full faith without any second thought the poet writes about his body

'I give it to the surgeons',
meaning his dedicating himself to the cause. This comparison in a way further enhances the importance of the cause.

If one attempts an analysis of the imagery the phrase 'a carnal tree' strikes the reader's attention. It does seem to suggest a different style in Spanish and English. An English poet may speak of a 'carnal desire' but would not use an expression such as 'carnal tree'. In this context since it is a translated poem one can suggest that the poet refers to a tree of flesh. The body rooted in the land as a tree is in the soil of Spain. The image also reminds one of the raw flesh beneath the skin that will be exposed in battle. The tone denotes how he wishes to convince his audience and create an awareness among them regarding the importance of his cause.

In another poem 'The Winds of People' once again we have Hernández giving reasons for supporting the Spanish cause. He writes

The winds of people sustain me spreading within my heart
The winds of people impel me and roar in my very throat.
It is clear from the above lines that he is a people’s poet and his voice that is heard in reality is the voice of his people.

Later in the poem the poet calls on the Basques of armoured stone, brave Asturians, lively Valencianos, tempered Castillians, Andalusians like lightening, rye field Estremadurans, Galicians of calm rain, dour trustful Catalans, pure born of Aragon, dynamiting Muricans, men of Navarre and Leon and tells them that they

Go from life to death
   go from nothing to nothing.

The poet calling the people from each state or part of Spain, addressing them by their special qualities reveals his intense consciousness of the characteristics of each region. This awareness of region as determining the qualities of people, noting the diversity of soil and temperament, is a tendency one observes in many Spanish poets (for example Lorca). And also one must remember that such awareness and closeness can be found only in Spanish poets.

In the poem the poet wishes to unite his people of such diverse qualities to fight against the common foe - fascism. These people with their various qualities inspire and impel the poet who end the last verse as:
Singing I wait for death
for there are nightingales
that sing
above the rifle's voice
and in the battle's midst.

The word 'singing' suggests that the poet does not want to
dwell on the grimness of the war. Also in a way it
symbolises the poet's calm, his courage as he awaits death.

Thus the poems reveal how a Spanish poet voices a
Spanish cause, Spain's cause and its struggle had a profound
impact in many countries in Europe. One may therefore next
proceed to examine W.H. Auden's poem 'Spain' which brings
out the significance of the Spanish war to all humanity.

4.1.2 Spain Fights for Humanity

Auden tries to represent the Spanish struggle and its
seriousness and to do this he gives a larger dimension to it.
And this is in the presentation of an entire civilization.

He describes the vast, variegated history of the
past by mentioning the scientific inventions of clocks and
cartwheels, the world of navigators, the abolition of
fairies and giants, which represents the Christian religion
substituting pagan beliefs.

In all this survey of the past he draws more attention
to those things characteristic of Spain and that is the
theological feuds, the belief in the absolute value of
Greece etc. And this entire past is counterposed against the
present struggle to which he comes back at the end of most verses by saying -

But to-day the struggle

Then Auden captures the views, the moods, the social values and aspirations of the past. Thus he mentions a poet whispering among the pines, the work of a researcher carrying out experiments on the bacillus, the poor in their fireless lodgings wishing for better times.

But beside the struggle in Spain everything pales into nothingness. Life in ordinary circumstances may take a variety of forms. 'Life' is presented as saying:

I am whatever you do. I am
your vow to be
Good, your humourous story.

I am your business voice. I am
your marriage.

In the midst of all this the thought of Spain and its fate is always present. Life today takes the form of the call of Spain. Spain questions humanity (its defenders):

What's your proposal? To build the just city? I will
I agree. Or is it the suicide pact, the romantic
Death? Very well, I accept, for
I am your choice, your decision. Yes,
I am Spain.
Man is left with no other option. Either the just city has to be built or one has to accept the suicide pact that was death.

After this Auden continues to dwell on how the news of Spain's struggle spread, the threat of fascism being recognized until the arrival of the volunteers that Auden recalls as:

Madrid is the heart. Our moments of
tenderness blossom
As the ambulance and the sandbag;
Our hours of friendship into a people's
army."

This is one of the few verses where Auden makes concrete direct references to the happenings in Spain. Otherwise it is a 'rather distanced poem' which reveals a sense of momentousness but not an immediacy.

But while being involved in the present Auden visualises the future. He sees in the rediscovery of romantic love, the young poets awakening, a future where one reverts back to the same kind of pettiness like in the past, the going back to the same unimportant issues. This will result in a future worse than the past unless the good and the best of the past are defended today. Instead Auden says today there is increase only in the chances of death, makeshift consolations, and every thing unsatisfactory.
It is only in the last verse that there is a strong sense of assertion by Auden to the world:

The stars are dead. The animals will not look.

We are left alone with our day, and the time is short, and History to the defeated
May say alas but cannot help or pardon.

Auden comments that the human beings alone are left to continue the struggle. The living and non-living forms of nature have all left man. And today if humanity does not defend itself tomorrow history also will not pardon them.

Thus Auden expresses the strong sentiment that humanity cannot afford to be defeated. They just have to win this battle.

Similarly Rex Warner dwells on the situation in Spain as an outsider to the country. In his poem 'The Tourist' looks at Spain 6 Warner says:

Spain has torn the veil of Europe. And because of the torn veil the world outside could see the courage of the forces who defended the Republic. In a sense for the Republicans the war was fought in self-defence so the poet says:

Hear what they say who came from farm and factory, the few weeks soldiers slain.
Or kept in the cruel wire, for fear and fury,
the tragic joke or abject surrender of
the cracked nerve.

The atrocities on the civilians, and the fate of those who joined the strange forced by circumstances are clear from the above lines.

In the next verse the poet attacks the Church's involvement in the war. To quote:

Christ is crowned with bombs.
the most saintly have become most
noted for their lies.
They have wept and handed out the guns for slaughter.

The poet mocks at the intervention of religion in the war and how the religious leaders have directed arms to slaughter mankind. He exposes the abandoning of virtues and ideals by the ruling classes and glorifies the freedom-fighters.

It is the aim that is right and the end is freedom.

To defeat fascism and achieve freedom was not just Spain's struggle but it was for all Europe because:

In Spain is Europe. England also is in Spain.

The poet describes the threat spreading all around in the form of clinging mist, though at the moment the light was chiefly falling on Spain.
The poet is aware that in the present it will not be easy to resort to normal guiltless living. He says:

Not for many years now will love be guiltless
Or boating or autumn leaves.

And in the concluding verse of the poem he says:

See Spain and see the world. Freedom extends or contracts in all hearts. Near Bilbao are buried the vanguards of our army. It is us too they defended who defended Madrid.

The poet wishes to reveal the sacrifices of those who died defending Madrid and adds that their sacrifice was not just to save Madrid but for the whole of humanity.

4.1.3 International Intervention

Warner is particularly indignant about foreign intervention. In his other poem 'Arms in Spain,' Rex Warner openly criticizes the Italian aid to Spain. He is sarcastic about the Nationalists and the Church joining hands and seeking foreign aid to make slaves of their own Spaniards. The poet writes in the second verse:

So that the drunken General and the Christian millionaire
Might continue blindly to rule in complete darkness,
that on rape and ruin order might be founded firm,
these guns were sent to save civilization.
The foreign aid was sent to serve a wrong purpose and an ironical last line confirms the poet's view. The poet has even mentioned later in the poem that the guns came from Christian Italy and the reason for it is 'lest peace and unity' be restored in Spain the 'Arms in Spain came from Christian Italy. That is to say that countries like Italy wanted to increase the ruin and disorder rather than try to restore peace.

Both these poems reveal the political awareness of the volunteers who came to serve Spain. Their poems show how they were conscious that the fate of the whole world depended on the outcome of the civil war in Spain. Though these volunteers arrived to serve the cause selflessly and even die for Spain the closeness to the Spanish soil, the oneness with it that the Spanish poets display is naturally lacking in their poems.

Poet H.B. Mallalieu in his poem 'Spain' rejects mere sympathy and pity, for he says that for Spain

Pity and love are no more adequate.

The poem addressed to a foreign audience declares that Spain's struggle had reached a stage where it could no longer be helped just by 'pity' and 'love'. These things had not helped to decrease the death toll nor had they brought any relief to the peasants.

Only as the struggle continued it had strengthened the forces of horror, hate, and tyranny. People had become
desperate; there was no love among them. The physical and mental suffering had only resulted in madness.

The poet wishes to restore sanity, strength, and unity to prove:

We have the will, then let us show the
might,
Who have forborne and pitied too long.

The poet wishes to prove to those nations who offer just pity towards the Spanish struggle that in Spain its spirit is not dead. There is still will power remaining in those Spaniards who have borne all the sufferings.

4.2 A Picture of Destruction
4.2.1 The Ravaged Land

This leads us to examine those poems that describe the ravaged land which is a common ground for destruction by both sides, the Republicans and the Falangists, resulting in mass killings of the innocent.

The first poem analysed in this section is 'Hear this voice' by Miguel Hernández. This poem could have been discussed in the earlier section because the poet does tell us why he wished to defend Spain. Yet since the description of the ravaged land and bloodshed are significantly brought out in this poem, it has been included in this section.
The opening lines of the poem are:

Singing I defend myself  
and I defend my people when 
barbarians of crime 
imprint on my people their 
hooves of powder and desolation.

The poet emphatically declares his commitment to defend himself and his people from the 'barbarians of crime'. The use of words like 'barbarians of crime' and 'imprint' reflect the atrocities that were committed on the civilians so that it left a mark that could not be wiped out.

Hernández describes the mass killings when he writes:

and there is no room for so much death  
and there is no room for so many coffins.

This sight disturbs the poet so much that he feels -

Spain will collapse  
from the weight of blood which 
soaks through her muscles.  
right to the bread which is eaten.

These lines reflect how the amount of mutual hatred was so much that in their bloodshed they did not spare any of their own folks too.

The poet appears desperate to seek help for Spain. He cries -

Apply your ears  
to my clamour of violated people,  
to the 'ay' of so many mothers, to the  
groans  
of many a lucid being whom grief  
devoured,
Spain is not Spain it is an immense trench,
a vast country red and bombarded,
The barbarians have willed it thus.

Words like 'clamour', 'groans', 'grief devoured', 'immense trench' all express the poet's intense grief which is further enhanced by the exclamation or cry 'ay'. The poet's repeated use of the word 'barbarians', brings out the picture of the brutal killings of the innocent.

In the last verse he warns that the earth will be desolated if the other nations do not join the Republicans to break the 'ferocious fangs'. The comparison of fascism to ferocious fangs reveals the threat to the whole world.

Here we can recall Auden's 'Spain' a representative poem by a British poet voicing concern over Spain's struggle and compare it to the voice of a Spanish poet. The Spanish poet's concern for Spain is expressed in language which is wilder, more dramatic, clamorous with the intensity of grief, whereas in the poems by the British poets the Spanish earth and people are not an actual presence. The closeness to the reality of suffering is lacking in British poets though their awareness of the Spanish struggle is predominant.

4.2.2 Civilian Deaths

Many poems describe the killing of civilians; it may be a child a famous poet, or the death of a thousand people at a time.
The 'Dead Poet' by Ortega describes the death of Spain's most loved and renowned poet García Lorca. The poet has used a pathetic fallacy to describe the meadows of Granada, the sky, the sun, the mountains, the Sierra Nevada; the rivers Genil and Dara each of which mourns the death of Lorca.

The poet has spoken of gypsies who shed blood from their eyes, for their beloved poet.

In a way the poet reveals to the world the fate of the intellectuals and the creative artists in Spain when he says:

Oh! Frederico García
for being a poet they killed you,
if you were not a poet
never would they have taken your life!

What is evident through the last lines is that Lorca was killed only because he was a people's poet.

The poem right from the descriptions of the meadows to the end localises the scene. It is Granada that mourns rather than Spain. Lorca's recognition in being primarily Granada's poet and only secondly a Spanish poet brings out a characteristic feature of Spanish writing - the attachment to the place from where one originated, though of course there is also the devotion to one's country.
Stephen Spender tries to bring out the waste in the killing of a young boy by speaking of the money spent on bringing about his death. In his poem 'Ultima Ratio Regum' Spender reveals what games power, money and politics could play. The poem opens with the following lines:

The guns spell money's ultimate reason
In letters of lead on the spring hillside
But the boy lying dead under the olive trees
Was too young and too silly
To have been notable to their important eye.
He was a better target for a kiss.

Spender is sarcastic that the ultimate end of money has been to purchase arms and ironically enough those arms are used blindly to kill an innocent boy who was meant to be loved, kissed and fondled.

He regrets that when the boy was alive those very powers that killed him did not offer him anything, did not acknowledge him or recognize him yet had voted to make him their target.

Spender compares the innocence of the young child to the lightness in the atmosphere with the light breeze blowing, and suddenly all that is crushed by the anger of the machine guns so that later:
The tweed cap rotted in the nettles

In comparing the amount spent on killing the young boy to what would have been spent on the boy if he were alive he concludes:

One bullet in ten thousand kills a man!

So Spender writes:

Ask. Was so much expenditure justified
On the death of one so young and so silly
dying under the olive trees, 0 world, 0 death?

Spender tries to draw attention to the large-scale involvement of money in the purchase of arms and that in turn is utilised in taking a life which seemed to be of much less value.

Although Spender's grief is no doubt sincere there is not the personal closeness that one observes in the poetry of the First World War or in the poems by Spanish poets. It seems a waste not only of a young life but of money, energy, the labour of men involved in running the State. It is ironical that so much effort should lead only to death.

The irony of fate is captured through the feelings of the mother in the poem 'Proud Motherhood' by F.L. Lucas.

An ambitious mother 'Dolores' dreams that her son Jose who was just three years old will be known far and wide. And:
Kind Providence fulfils
Dolore's guess:
Her darling's portrait thrills
the foreign press.

But the last verse reveals the irony; at what cost Dolores' dream was fulfilled. The poet brings out the irony in describing the photograph of the boy:

Though that's no wreath of bay
About his hair
That's just the curious way
Bomb-splinters tear.

While 'bomb splinter tear' express the way the boy had been killed, wreath of bay contrasts the dream of the mother who wished glory for her son.

In the last verse the poet shockingly reveals the fate of the proud mother. The irony lies in the contrast between the mother's assumption of her son's glory and the reality.

Every Spanish family was involved in the war and the future consequences if one apprehended them would be worse than the present reality of war. The Poet Manuel Altolaguirre expresses similar concern and fear over such omnipresence of death and does not wish the children of parents involved to get involved in the war. Also the poem expresses the poet's fear over the war turning this a fratricidal one.

The speaker's brother Luis in the poem 'My Brother Luis' bids him good-bye in a hesitant way as though he was
not sure of his return. And in truth his brother did not return and his whereabouts could not be traced.

The speaker who has frantically looked for his brother Luis is now more perplexed and worried about his brother's sons. He expresses deep concern as he says:

Where are the sons of my brother?  
Why are they not here?

We can recognize his fear and suspicion of a fratricidal war. The poet does not wish this to happen; he does not want the sons to get involved like their father. He feels:

It would be better if they ran
by the river,
If they ran among flowers without looking at them
like flowers also
like boys
Who never stop
as I have stopped
too much at the edge of sea and of death."

The speaker clearly reveals how he does not wish the sons of his brother to get involved. He is so much affected by the death in every family, that this personal feeling reveals an experience of one whose country was involved.

One can draw parallels between this poem and the poem 'Music in a Spanish Town' by Laurie Lee.

The poet speaks of the sounds of popular Spanish music being replaced by the noise of guns and arms. Firing is
ubiquitous so much so that the poet feels that his own 'fiddle' resembles a gun and his own music resembles a shooting.

The cold-blooded way in which civilian life was destroyed is captured in the following lines:

Each salt white house is a
numbered tomb,
its silent window crossed with blood.
The ruthless slaughter of defenceless victims can be visualised through the reference to 'windows crossed with blood'.

That the dead outnumbered the living is quite evident when the poet says:

My notes explode everywhere
like bombs,
When I should whisper in fear
of the dead.

The poet does not fail to describe the pathetic state of the children in the last few lines where he says:

Suddenly there is a quick
flutter of feet
and children crowd about me,
listening with sores and infected ears,
Watching with lovely eyes and vacant lips.

A very touching picture is captured here. These children it is evident are all suffering from lack of proper
medical care. The threat of killing is all around the place, yet these children do not deprive themselves of these small joys of living. They ran out of their houses curiously to watch the scene on hearing the sounds of the poet's fiddle. Probably the poet wishes to question why then should these children be pawned in the game of money, politics and power.

Now both the poems just discussed have as their theme the involvement of children in the war; while the Spanish poet expresses concern and fear, at the same time wishes that they should not get involved the British poet describes an observed scene. Also in the earlier poem the whole poem expresses the various feelings of the poet while the later poem merely captures a moment which is of course pathetic.

Yet another poem is analysed that reveals a civilian reaction on hearing the news of death. The poem is 'A thousand killed' by Bernard Spencer. To quote the opening lines:

I read of a thousand killed
And am glad the scrounging imperial paw
Was there so bitten.

These lines reveal that the poet is not appalled or even concerned on reading of the death of a thousand men, rather he is glad that in their death they had inflicted a defeat on the enemy.
And probably because the poet has only read the news and not seen these killings he immediately feels thrilled like a man who has won the elections. This is revealed also in the line

(That fighting was a long way off.)

He picturises the candidate in the elections buying his votes with money and other items when he suddenly realises the falseness of the comparison.

Immediately the poet becomes critical of his own earlier attitude and in an ironical tone expresses his view in the last verse:

Wars the most glorious
Victory winged and steeple
uproarious
With the lives burned off
Of young men and boys.

The poet has woken up to the reality of war.

While the above poem reveals a British poet’s reaction on hearing the news of a thousand killed, the poem 'At Castellon' by Spender gives the happenings in an already dead city.

Houses are tombs, tarpaulins cover
Mysterious trucks of the lorries over.
The town vacantly seems to wait
The explosion of a fate.
While the first line suggests the town is already bombed, in the second line the word 'mysterious trucks' makes one wonder whether the killings and bombings carried on even after the town was dead.

Under such circumstances there is still the hope to go to the next village and try to survive. This is presented in a working man; the lines on his ravaged face reveal what a trauma he has undergone, yet the face lifts up to smile when the sentry allows him to pass out of the town.

All this is again contrasted in the last verse where Spender writes of how the battle proceeds to disengage these people's lives from the grooves in which they move. Such mass killings, the totally destroyed towns, civilians drawn into the war did not leave anyone ignorant of death. Tom Wintingham in his poem 'Barcelona Nerves' says:

Neither fools, nor children any longer;
Those ways, traits, gone and away
That once made life a lucky game,
death a stranger:
We're going on.

These lines reveal man's awareness of the war, his involvement in it and his continuing struggle.

The roads in the city are all blocked by barricades, and people were awaiting bombers that cause destruction. This, of course, was a common sight but the image that is
still raw even after the action is over is:

Death means the girl's corpse
Warm and alive when buried;

This shows that haste with which the bodies were removed suggesting that they did not even wait to see if the person was dead or even if the person was dead it was so soon after that the blood in the person's veins was still warm. And the Spanish people had to be helped out from fury, frustration, fear and waiting over all this.

But what the poet feels over the aid rendered by the volunteers is:

Neither fools nor children we who
are joining
Twenty years ago I knew war's face
We make what can wreck others into
our gaining
Into our choice.

The poet conveys how for the British volunteers it was a deliberate choice they had made in coming to Spain. They were aware of the destructive power of war and knew that though they had come to save Spain they were also contributing to the havoc. They were indirectly responsible for the wreckage also.

4.3 Experience of Battle

Now turning to poems that describe the experience of death in battle, let us look at the poem 'Eyes' by an
The poet in the above poem vividly captures the ferocity of the Spanish War. The entire war, including the feelings regarding the war are covered by merely describing the eyes of the individuals. 'Eyes' one knows are the sense organs that speak volumes about an individual and the poet's study of this is observed in the poem.

Eyes in the poem express feelings of hope, fear, tiredness, love, hate and sadness.

In the first verse the eyes are of those in action who are falling, screaming, shouting, sweating, and bleeding; while in the second part of the poem the poet sees the 'eyes of the wounded', 'sodden in red' the 'eyes of the dying' and those of the 'dead'.

Through the medium of eyes the poet wants the reader to visualise the madness that was the war; to hear the cries, to sense the desperation and visualise the last hope of those living and involved in it.

Eyes of men thinking, hoping, waiting
Eyes of men loving, cursing, hating
The eyes of the wounded sodden in red
The eyes of the dying and those of the dead.

Today in the twenty-first century so much study is carried out on 'body language' that it is said that everybody speaks a non-verbal language with their bodies that can
convey more about what they really mean than any words. And in body language the least controversial of all areas of non-verbal communication is facial expression where the important part is the eyes.

The poet in his poem has truly translated every dialect of the eye to depict the picture of the Spanish War to the readers.

A view of battle by one involved is seen in the poem 'Battle of Jarana 1937' by John Lepper. This battle in February 1937 saw the beginning of a close liaison between air and ground forces.

The poet describes the quickness of the action, the noise of the shrapnel, the air filled with smoke and dust in the lines:

Dust rose from the roadside
A stifling cloud
Ambulance tore past
Klaxoning loud

The bombing gives rise to a dust storm that clouds all the vision and the only thing that passes across this dust storm is the ambulance with powerful electric horns (klaxoning). The scene brings out the ceaseless bombings, the mounting destruction and all this happening so quickly that:

Men torn by shell-shards lay
still on the ground
The living sought shelter
not to be found.
These lines reveal that while the dead lay around there were those who were alive fumbling to find a shelter from these bombings, something that was not easy. The poet describes even those who defended themselves during the bombings.

Holding their hot rifles
Flushed with the fight
Sweat-streaked survivors
Welled for the night.

The last verse is a dark dense image of war in the form of an abandoned graveyard full of helpless bodies. To quote

With the coming of darkness
Deep in the wood
A fox howled to heaven
Smelling the blood.

The scene of slaughter, haunted by the howling of the fox is rather frightening at the same time one can notice the poet's presence of mind in relating the fox's howling to a form of thanks-giving to the Almighty for his meal. By the use of words like 'klaxoning loud', 'Shell shards', and 'hot rifles', the poet tries to recreate a bombing scene adding to the vividness of the battle scene itself.

A very different kind of action attracts one's attention in the form 'Jarama Front' by T.A.R. Hyndman. The poet initially on purpose avoids looking at the person but hears the voice. Soon the moaning impels him to
to look around and notice the dying soldier whom he hardly knew, although they may have belonged to the same party.

The poet who goes to his aid is struck by the dying soldier's last gesture -

God bless you comrades
He will thank you
That was all.
No slogan
No clenched fist
Except in pain.

The dying person was probably a communist and he has no use for God. But during his last moments he reverts to religious belief rather than political gestures like slogans and clenched fist salutes. Here the soldier's 'clenched fist' was only due to pain. The poet reveals the fact that in death one did not belong to any party; anyone around you was your comrade and there was an unconscious turning to God.

To distance oneself from action and dwell on other political factors is what Tom Cornford does in the poem "Full Moon at Tierz". Before the storming of Huesca

In the first section of his poem he compares the past to a glacier, the 'time present to a cataract', and the 'time future' that has 'no image in space'. He is aware that the present cannot be avoided when he reveals that

We are the future. The last fight let us face.
In the second section Conford expresses his fear and worry over their conquest of Huesca. He had studied that the communist leaders had guided and shown them the way. While Dimitrov was alone in his battle they now have an army fighting for their cause. Yet the outcome is uncertain. Even if they were fighting for the right cause victory still hangs in the balance.

In the third section Cornford mentions how in England apart from his party he had home and friends around him to stand by him but -

Now with my party, I stand quite alone.
Hence he is played by
My private battle with my nerves,
and has to struggle to make himself hard and invincible.

And in the last section he turns to think of Germany, England and of freedom. He tries to communicate to the workers of the world that the war does not end in Spain until the workers all over realise the cause for which it is being fought. And with that realization they will uphold the red flag triumphantly for Communism and liberty.

There is hardly any picture of the scene of the storming of Huesca. The Spanish struggle does not surface as much as Cornford’s feelings for communism and its involvement in Spain.
4.4 Defeat

This brings us to the concluding section of this war poetry that is the poems on defeat.

The last or the final scene of the war Spender has called a 'victorius hurricane' in his poem 'Fall of a city'.

In the poem Spender has mentioned the fate of heroes like Fox and Lorca whose histories had once decorated the town halls. But after the nationalist victory they have been 'angrily deleted'.

But more pathetic than this censorship of Fox and Lorca was:

The young who learned to read
now blind
Their eyes with an archaic film
The peasant relapsed to a stumbling tune
These only remember to forget.

Spender sees the youth as a confused generation while in the case of the Spanish poets their youth represented the spirit that was not dead. To the Spanish poets they represented undying hope and commitment to the cause.

The Spanish poet Manual Altolaguirre has expressed such a hope in his poem 'I Demand the Ultimate Death' where he demands the death of the war. He expresses his desire that
his body be made use of like a tree. Only he wishes that the roots remain firm so that he will be able to witness the plight of those birds who would be homeless.

This reveals how the poet does not wish to be completely uprooted from his country and the reason for this he expresses in the next verse.

The poet states very optimistically that he will erupt like a dormant volcano and bear fruits that will be full of life. To quote

> Multiplied life from death
> Multiple are the rays of dawn.

'Rays of dawn' imply the future generation and just as these are the multiple rays out of the sun the poet has wished that his death should result in the birth of many more lives who will carry the spirit forward.

The poem has a certain richness and depth in the language. For example: 'grievous body mortified', 'absences of my arms', 'silence of the spring', 'insinuations of verdure and life', such phrases stress the importance of his body to serve Spain and his desire to die a meaningful death giving birth to a generation to carry on his spirit. These words lend an emphatic, determined tone to the poet's desire.

Words like demand, ultimate, current, mortified, tearing, profiting all enhance the vividness and make the poem more dramatic.
Though the poet has expressed so much hope and desire in this poem it is very touching to read his disappointment after the defeat in his poem 'Madrid'. He writes -

Before the glorious circle of fire
I can evoke nothing, nor anything from anyone,
There is no memory, pleasure lived before,
which I can call back from my past -
There is no absence, no legend, no hope to calm my agony with its illusion.

The poet has no more spirit left in him; he wonders whether the past itself had been an illusion.

Spain's geographical contours had changed so much, it had become a land of 'countless graves' so that Jack Lindsay wrote in his poem 'Looking at a Map of Spain on Devon Coast August 1937':

Oh, Map of Spain creviced with countless graves,
even now, even now, the storm of murder comes.
The burning face of day is blind with tears.
I stand at the Atlantic edge and look
Southwards and raise my hand to Spain,
Salute.

As the poet has suggested the most appropriate gesture today one can offer on recollecting the Spanish Civil War when one is blind with tears is just to raise hand and salute Spain.
4.5 Conclusion

On the basis of analysis of the poetry written on the Spanish Civil War by the British poets and some Spanish poets the following conclusions can be drawn.

The first pertains to the difference observed between the poetry by British and Spanish poets.

One observes a single-minded devotion to the cause of Spain dominant among the British poets. Their awareness of the Spanish cause on which depended the fate of humanity all over is very clear. The Spanish poets also wrote verses expressing their commitment to the cause. But what is noticeable is their loyalty first to the region of their birth and later to their country. Their feelings are more localized, and more often a Spanish poet regards himself as a poet of the State or the region from where he comes.

Very few poems that have survived on the Spanish Civil War are by British combatants. There are a couple of poems that describe action on the battlefield, a couple of poems that describe a devastated city while there are quite a few poems that express a poet's feelings towards foreign aid to Spain. While the British poets wrote on all these themes their poetry lacks immediacy. There is a certain distancing from the struggle in their poetry. In the poems by Auden, Spender and Warner one observes the clever, allusive style of the thirties that is used to describe the Spanish cause and that detracts from the urgency of the situation.
On the other hand the Spanish poets in their poems reveal a closeness to the land by mentioning the various states and the corresponding virtues of people. There is a clamorous expression of grief and the final verses of their poems are very typical. In their earlier poems there is a high sounding call to the people of all the nations to join hands with the Spanish Republic to fight fascism while in their later poems is voiced a strong hope that their future generation will carry on their struggle. We observe in their poems that even after defeat their spirit is not dead.

Thus we observe that even though the British poets identified themselves with the suffering of Spain, their language as observed in their poems appears rather contrived. This could probably be because of a difference of national temperament and national style. That is, a Spaniard might be more uninhibited in expression while the English were more reticent.

Lastly regarding the distinctive features of the poetry of this war one can say that the poetry by British poets reflects the allusive, erudite style of the thirties while only in the poetry by Spanish poets does one find more localizing of feelings.

Also one does not find the overall landscape of the Spanish scene. The poetry only has glimpses of the battlefield, the ravaged land and the dead. The poetry is not as
memorable as that written during the First World War or as that of the Second World War which will be observed in the next chapter.

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End Notes:

1. Miguel Hernández, *Viento del Pueblo* 
   (a) quoted in *Hispanic Horizon*, No.3, Monsoon 1986-87 
   Centre of Spanish studies. 
   Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. (p.15) from 
   (b) J. Descola, *Historia literaria de España*, 

2. Garcia Lorca, Quoted in 
   Dorothy Livesay's *Right Hand Left Hand*. 
   (Erin, Ontario, Porcupic, 1977), (p.255)

3. Hernández, El herido (The injured) 
   (a) quoted in *Hispanic Horizon - op.cit*, p.15. 
   (b) Jose Luis Cano, *Antología DeLáncereva. poesía 

4. Hernández, 'The Winds of People'. 
   Translated by A.C. Llyod in 
   *Poems for Spain* eds Stephen Spender and John 
   Lehmann. 

5. W.H. Auden, 'Spain' 
   ed. Robin Skelton, in *Penguin Poets, Poetry of the 

7. Warner, 'Arms in Spain'.
in Spender and Lehmann, op.cit, p.50.

8. H.B. Mallalieu, 'Spain'.
in Spender and Lehmann, op.cit. p.34.

9. Hernández, 'Hear This Voice'.
Spender and Lehmann, op.cit, p.21,22,23.

10. E. Ortega Arredondo, 'The Dead Poet'.
Romancero general de la guerra de España.
Translated. Hispanic Horizon. op.cit. 18.

11. Stephen Spender, 'Ultima Ratio Regum'.
Skelton, op.cit, p.148.

12. F.L. Lucas, 'Proud Motherhood'.
Spender and Lehmann, op.cit. p.78.

13. Manuel Altolaguirre, 'My Brother Luis'.
Translated by Inez and Stephen Spender in Spender and Lehmann, op.cit, p.90,91.

14. Laurie Lee, 'Music in A Spanish Town'.
Skelton, op.cit. 152.

15. Bernard Spencer, 'A Thousand Killed'
Skelton, ibid, p.141.

16. Stephen Spender, 'At Castellon'.

17. Tom Wintringham, 'Barcelona Nerves'.
Spender and Lehmann, ibid, p.29.

18. Anonymous Poet (International Brigade) 'Eyes'.
Spender and Lehmann, ibid, p.31.

Spender and Lehmann, ibid, p.33.
    Spender and Lehmann, ibid, p.40.

21. John Comford, Full Moon at Tierz: Before the 
    Storming of Huesca. 
    Skelton. op.cit, p.137,138,139.

22. Stephen Spender, Fall of a City. 
    Skelton. op.cit. p.154.

23. Manuel Altolaguirre, I Demand The Ultimate Death. 
    Trans. Inez and Spender 
    (Spender and Lehmann, op.cit.) pp.42,43.

    (Spender and Lehmann, ibid), pp.96,97.

25. Jack Lindsay, Looking At a Map of Span On The 
    Devon Coast, August 1937. 
    (Spender and Lehmann, ibid) pp.53,64.