CONCLUSION

Having examined the poetry of each war it is now appropriate to compare and contrast the poetry of each war.

During the First World War there was a large body of work done on the soldier, the dead, the ravaged land, the trench warfare and the enemy. In fact a landscape of the dead was built up by the soldier poets who constantly rendered concrete situations. The initial heroic warrior and noble death are contrasted later with the mangled body, a dishonourable death, and the survivor who was a gibbering mental case. The soldier poets rendered every moment of their lives in the trenches, the scene of action, and the different ways they were plagued by death. There is the picture of the distorted body lying in the dug-out, the shrapnel attacks, the choking to death by gas, or being shelled. The poet was all the time conscious of educating his audience at home on every aspect of war. This was possible because they were not far from home, the soldiers corresponded regularly with their people at home and in this way they may have wanted to reach out to a larger audience. Finally there was the enemy for whom there was widespread sympathy. The soldiers were deeply affected when they killed their enemy in face to face combat, and suffered at least momentary guilt.
Apart from these themes dealt with in minute detail, great care was taken in finding adequate language especially by poets like Rosenberg and Owen. Their letters reveal the number of drafts that were written before the poem took its final form. Rosenberg's handling of words and ideas, Owen's control over his language, his use of rhyme and pararhyme, Sassoon's ironical attack on the civilians and brass hats all these brought out the naked truths of war. Their poems revealed the horrors of modern warfare.

In the Spanish Civil War there were the British volunteers who were aware of the Spanish cause and also the fact that on the fate of Spain rested, the fate of humanity all over. Yet Spain was not their own land; they did not know it intimately, and one observes a distinct distancing in the feelings in the poems by British volunteers.

At the beginning of the war the British combatants and non-combatants, as well as the Spanish poets wrote on themes that projected the Republican cause and their commitment to it. For the Spanish poets patriotism meant not just devotion to Spain but an intense attachment to their own region. Here one can recall the initial patriotic fervour, a feeling free of hate (Grenfell and Brooke) that served as popular war propaganda during the First World War. It was their English dust, English soil, and everything English that reigned supreme in their minds but never the
localizing of such feelings to that part of England from where they originated. Another initial mood that can be gauged in the poems by Spanish poets is the urgency of tone, a note pleading to all the nations of the world to save Spain. This is because to the Spanish people it was their own people who were being affected. The other themes these poets wrote on were the ravaged land, civilian death, experience of the battle and lastly the bitterness of defeat. The Spanish towns, and cities, that were totally devastated, where each house looked like tomb reflect the More consciously projected in Spanish Civil War poetry are the civilian deaths. Here while the British poets describe the mass killings, or death of innocent youth, the Spanish poets mention fear over the fratricidal nature of war, the irony of a mother's fate, and the death of their beloved poet Lorca. These Spanish poets constantly strove to express their fear over the bloodshed while the British poets separated themselves from such feelings to express the struggle. Experience of the battle are descriptions of offensives at a particular place. It is the theme of defeat followed by optimism that the spirit is not dead that is again stressed by Spanish poets. To the Spanish poets their dead would give rise to a new generation that will carry on the struggle. An undying hope that the cause that they were fighting for would finally triumph is observed. Apart from the enemy referred to as the 'fascist threat' in poems expressing commitment to the Spanish cause
and those themes that express an undying hope, one cannot trace any feeling for the enemy. It was the struggle that mattered, not the friend or foe. While the Spanish poets conveyed the intense grief and pain of their sufferings, the British volunteers were in a way distanced from such emotions. Though the British volunteers sacrificed their lives to the cause of Spain, there were poets who mentioned how they were adding to the killings and thus inflicting more pain.

Due to the shortcomings of translated poems and the limitations in the availability of sufficient poetry on the Spanish war by British poets, one cannot generalise or comment much on the handling of these themes, as seen in poetry during the Spanish war. Yet from the poems analysed one can note a difference between the feelings of a Spanish poet and the detachment especially towards the human sufferings by the British poets. The British poet’s isonical attack about the aid from other nations, their view of the irony of fate with regard to civilian sufferings are explicitly brought out in their poems.

Now an attempt will be made to summarise the distinctive features of the poetry of the Second World War, where the theatre of war was not confined just to land, but extended for into alien civilizations, as well as air and sea. Hence poetry received attention from all these angles. Another distinct feature of the Second World War was the indefinite
period of time spent either awaiting action or when posted in alien civilizations. Here the poet's attention is automatically drawn to his surroundings; he becomes contemplative and is often observed moving away from a concrete situation while writing his poetry. Also one does not come across a large body of work on the dead or a landscape of the dead as seen in first world war poetry. Instead the poetry of this war covers themes like the 'New Learning, the bombings, awaiting action, the soldier, the enemy, the alien land, the POWs and the aftermath.

In the 'New Learning' section the poets reveal how the youth at school were educated to accept war, as natural. The method of instruction at the training camps, the gradual transformation of a young recruit into a soldier are also some of the themes in this section. The initial spirit is nothing akin to the First World War or the Spanish Civil War. There is no enthusiasm as was the case in the First World War, or any conscious sense of commitment as during the Spanish War. The poets saw that there was no alternative but to fight. Nazism had forced the war upon them but what they were doing was, in Day Lewis's phrase, to 'defend the bad against the worse' (although none of the poems discussed explicitly reflect this attitude). Here the mind is conditioned right from the schools, and in the training camps one observes the final reconciliation. While depicting these
moods the poet's tone is one of mockery, yet finally there is a gesture of acceptance.

Poems in the section 'awaiting action', or 'the soldier' reveal certain trends of modern warfare. The poet generally begins by describing a present experience but extricates himself from the concrete situation. He then philosophizes on various aspects of war like its horror, or shame; sometimes he sums up the life of a soldier. In trying to express such views the poem tends to become a long narrative, literary in form. And this way a poet also attempts to cover the war in its entirety. While there is not that uniform feeling of oneness with the soldiers on the opposite side that we find in the First World War poetry, the poetry of the Second World War includes several noteworthy poems expressing a range of attitudes to the enemy. The enemy either alive or dead destabilises the mind of a soldier. The enemy infuriates him before a combat. He gets a sense of relief when he kills him, and yet is moved to sympathy, when he looks over his dead mangled form. The soldier cannot resist praising the enemy for his precision and skill while being ashamed of his own shortcomings. And when the soldier kills his enemy from a place of hiding he compares himself to Cain in the jungle. Such methods of killing and also the vast destruction of human civilization often aroused brotherly feelings. The soldier tries to seek a relationship with the enemy dating from the origin of
mankind. He is moved by his youth, and he is sad to realise that in his killer the lover also is dead.

Here we observe how the enemy affects the feelings of the soldier. The enemy is no longer an individual like the soldier himself which was the First World War concept, nor is the enemy, another civilian forced into war by circumstances as was the case during the Spanish Civil War, but someone who disturbed the mental frame of a soldier.

This multifaceted relationship between the soldier and his enemy or a strange affinity that links the soldier and his enemy are well revealed in the poetry of the Second World War. It is indeed antithetical to say the soldier has done justice to his enemy!

The consequences of this war had to be faced by the entire population unlike the surviving soldiers of the First World War.

The poems in the aftermath section bring out this unending grief and pain in the eyes of those uncertain survivors. The poet rejects sympathy and tributes paid to honour him and wishes only that his children be looked after.

Though poetry here does not celebrate heroism or the courage of the soldiers the poets through these themes have captured to a maximum extent the epic proportion of this war. This the poets have done using three distinct styles,
sometimes being allusive, sometimes archaic, while sometimes skilfully manipulating the tones or voices.

Thus we can conclude that from the poetry of the First World War we have the complete landscape of death and of battle caused by the first modern warfare, while the poetry of the Spanish Civil War gives us a deeper insight into the Spanish struggle and the civilian destruction, and the poetry of the Second World War gives the picture of how the second war was in a greater sense a world war than the first and the poets attempt to universalize this experience in its entirety.

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