

Hero's Journey in the Poetry of Mahdi Akhavan Sales and T. S. Eliot: A Comparative Study

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Abstract : Myths have been an inseparable aspect of man's life in all nations and cultures across the world over time; however, it seems that the form and use of myths in the poetry of the 20th century have gained a new meaning and purpose. Among the poets of the time, T. S. Eliot in English and Mahdi Akhavan Sales in Persian are the two mostly referred to in this regard. In this paper, the pattern of heroic journey as the main theme in the poetry of Akhavan and Eliot will be reviewed, compared, and contrasted. Attempts have been made to find out how the myth of the hero's journey has been reflected in the century's well-known poetry and if myth allusions in these poems confirm or reject Campbell's claim that mythology can be an appropriate psychological cure for man's loneliness in today's life. T. S. Eliot (1888-1965), the English poet, essayist, playwright, publisher, and critic, is mostly known for his modernist poetry and the extensive allusions to mythologies and world literary masterpieces. At the same time, Mahdi Akhavan Sales (1929-1990) Iranian poet, one of the pioneers of modern Persian poetry, is also most well-known for his epic poetic style (Khorasani Style) and also his high amount of allusions to myths, especially Zoroastrian mythology, and his myth-making technique. Although their greatly different cultural background may cause the similarities in their poetic style and themes not to attract attention, at first sight, reading the poems closely through the light of the 20th century's life context and literary movements reveal interesting similarities in the way they understand and apply myth in their poetry. The present paper reviews the theme of the hero's journey in Akhavan's Chavooshi and Eliot's "Journey of the Magi" from the perspective of Campbell's notion of mono-myth or the pattern of mythic hero's journey. The poems will be reviewed in search of the steps of the inward journey the heroes make, the goals they pursue, and how successful they are in achieving the goals. The findings of the study reveal that while the difference in the social context of the poets makes the small differences in the stages of the journey, both journeys end in a gloomy atmosphere for the disappointedly isolated hero who is finally left alone in the godless and materialistic world of 20th century. It is also evident that both poets meant to fulfill their responsibility of reviving mythology in writing the poems.

Keywords : myth, Akhavan, Eliot, poetry, hero's journey

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