



A Comparative Study of Thanatos in T.S. Eliot's Poetry and the Poetry of Manouchehr Atashi and Ali Babachahi

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v12i2.6651>

Abstract

Death has always occupied man's mind as one of his major concerns and its traces can well be detected in his life. All forms of art, particularly literature, have embraced death and its accompanying elements as one of their prominent subjects. Moreover, this theme has not been confined to any specific realm which by itself hints at the universality of death. Beside the presumed affinities, different facets have also been attributed to death and thus it has not been perceived as one single entity by literary figures in all literary works. Despite the evident presence of death in western literature, it would be a mistake to confine the treatment of death as an angel-like figure merely to modern western poetry, for it dates back to ancient Greek mythology where Thanatos appears as the manifestation of death. Even though his initial attributes used to be those related to a deadly agent who would ruthlessly take man's life, before long it would be replaced by an angel-like image demonstrating a peaceful agent who would accompany human beings at the time of their death in a serene manner. Apparently, it has found its way into Eastern Literature as well. This study aims at establishing a comparative study of Thanatos or death-wish in some poems selected from both a Western poet from Great Britain, i.e. T. S. Eliot and two Persian poets from Southern Iran, i.e. Manouchehr Atashi and Ali Babachahi. In this comparative study, death-wish would be discussed based upon the chosen poems through the use of descriptive-analytical method. The selected poems have been contextualized in this study.

Keywords: *Thanatos or death-wish; T. S. Eliot; Manouchehr Atashi; Ali Babachahi; Comparative Literature*

Introduction

Death has always been one of man's fundamental concerns throughout different times and ages in history. Various images and symbols have been applied to depict death in different cultures and societies at different times. Cynthia Ozick's idea of the critical Hebraic understanding including all humankind in the human condition that ultimately means "each life is finite, ending in the same inevitable, unavoidable fact of death" (Atkins 2012, p.83) says it best why we precisely avoid and prevent its occurrence in any

possible way. The personification of death which is still popular in mass media dates back to ancient civilization. In Greek mythology, the personification of death is referred to as Thanatos. The poet Hesiod describes Thanatos as “pitiless...whomsoever of men he has once seized he holds fast” (qtd. in Berkson 2016, p.8), whereas in later times it has been depicted as an angel who can help someone in departing this world peacefully. This notion of death as an angel-like figure can also be noticed in Hebrew Bible, Christianity and Islam. Consequently, it has emerged in different literary forms as well; various poets and authors have endorsed death as their principle concern from among T.S. Eliot is a prominent one.

1. The Objectives of the Study

The chief objective of this paper is to study Thanatos or death-wish in some poems selected from both a Western poet from Great Britain, i.e. T. S. Eliot and two Persian poets from Southern Iran, i.e. Manouchehr Atashi and Ali Babachahi. The other objective of this study is to contextualize the selected poems.

2. Significance of the Study

Even though death has at times been studied in the works of all poets included in this paper previously, no comparative study discussing Thanatos or death wish in the poems chosen from cultures and territories as diverse as Persian and British ones in one paper has ever been done together before.

3. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This study is based on Remak’s theory about interdisciplinary studies. According to Remak’s “Comparative Literature: Its Definition and Function”, comparative literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts, on the other (Remak 1961, p.1-57). Comparative literature itself as A. Anushiravani observes, does not have a single definition and does not rely on a specific theory, approach and method. Basically, the vitality and the secret of the survival of comparative literature among the multitude of theories and criticism approaches and literary research methods, especially in the contemporary era, is due to its being dynamic and flexible (Aushiravani 2012, p.3). Thanatos or death wish has been inspected and analyzed poems through the use of descriptive-analytical method in the poems chosen for this study; the poems have been contextualized.

Discussion

1. Death in T. S. Eliot’s Poetry

As Heidegger observes in modern times only “a very few” have the ability to bring language back into life from “the death-in-life into which it has fallen” (qtd. in Cooper 2016, p.41). According to Douglas Atkins “Death bestrides the world of T. S. Eliot’s poems like a Colossus” (Atkins 2012, p.87). Cooper states that his reading of Charles Baudelaire mainly put him in touch with a poetic tradition in which he later found “personal resonance”. Baudelaire’s “synthesis of the morbid and of mordant self-scrutiny” moved across the language barrier” and spoke to Eliot directly. Based upon his later works in poetry and drama, these elements can be identified as the specific attributes in Baudelaire that have drawn his attention: “his unblinking awareness, for example, of the perpetual presence of death in the midst of life, or of the polluted materiality of the body in a culture which defines the spirit as the highest form of being” (Cooper 2016, p. 24).

Apparently, death has not been the same thing for Eliot at different times and different situations. It first appears in a pervasive and ubiquitous manner in his early poems one of which is “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1917) where it functions more as an image than a dreadful hazard. Then, in the

later poems like “Gerontion”, where the title character appears to be an older Prufrock death has taken a different form. It has acquired a physical status and its presence is a looming one. It is in *The Waste Land* (1922) that Eliot bleakly depicts death as “undoing” the “brown hordes” daily crossing London Bridge, who symbolize the “indifferent” lives only partly “lived” in the dead lands of the modern world” (Atkins 2012, p.87). The circumstances concerning death differ drastically in “The Hollow Men (1925)”. In this poem, death’s three kingdoms are introduced; that of the literal fact, death in life and “twilight kingdom,” which is to be explored by him in his later poems composed mainly after his resorting to Anglo-Catholicism and being thus confirmed in the church of England in 1927. According to Michael Grant, Reed Whittemore saw Eliot as “the poet of death, of a sense of death that lodged in the basic intellectual and emotional stance that the poems projected” (Grant 1982, p.56). Whittemore, who happened to be one of Eliot’s several admirers summed up his poetry as thus:

A poetry of death like his is no more a stance in the bad sense than the surge of the sea may be said to be a stance, the sea to which, to paraphrase the man, there is no end, no beginning—and certainly at the heart of it no contriving. To his admirers Eliot was a great poet of the sea. (56)

In *Ash Wednesday* (1930), death hardly appears as less threatening, for it is here that it is also empowered with a force that even the poet himself is experiencing afresh. This understanding of death and dying may not have emerged before a decade after that, but it is explicitly observed in *Four Quartets* (1943): “We die with the dying” and that “We are born with the dead.” (Eliot 12). Eliot’s pondering over death can be regarded as a journey leading towards awareness or at least some kind of understanding. According to Harold Bloom the literature in the West since Homer has represented an encounter with the dead. In “Burnt Norton” (originally published in 1935), which is the first poem of *Four Quartets*, “Eliot, perhaps surprisingly, ends with declared links among time (the poems’ ostensible subject), words, and death. That “we die with the dying” instances such “paradox as marks Eliot’s (Christian) understanding and requires of the reader some little effort to grasp” (87). He proceeds to the point that through words and how language is treated the reader is led to believe that the poet attains understanding “only” when the poem is completed.

If the journey towards attaining understanding is to reach its end in *Four Quartets*, then in *The Waste Land* failure in taking any journey to understanding is marked. Nevertheless, if we are to reach this point when we come to the former, then penetrating into the latter also necessitates knowing the former. Death is the key point in understanding *The Four Quartets*, for it plays key roles. Death is everywhere in *Four Quartets*. Its relation to life is precisely the point. Through the journey the pilgrim must pass through darkness and deprivation to find their path. It is in such situations that death does not appear as a dreadful being; instead, it is death now that as Douglas Atkins states “offers opportunity, plays a positive role, representing necessary means, or so it would often seem in Eliot’s poetry The words of the “familiar compound ghost” bear the capacity to burn through, purify, and refine the poem’s speaker. The dead know; they understand, being dead. (Atkins 2012, p.88).

The contrasts applied in the first and second epitaphs of *Four Quartets* both contribute to “evoking something outside language, outside the bounds of ordinary consciousness, and alien to the self” (Bloom 2007, p 35). In *The Four Quartets*, Eliot first returns to the words that “as he speaks them, ‘intersect’ with lives at last brought together, in ‘concord’ at ‘this intersection time’ and burning with meaning” (Atkins 2012, p. 65). Thus through the “enigma inscribed in the poem’s styles and structures, the reader can undertake an unusual, diverse mode of reading whose results are fundamentally unpredictable” (35). Unpredictability is death’s inevitable attribute.

Eliot appears to have quenched the desires at the end of *The Four Quartets*. Since the poems comprising this collection have been named after a place, both the journey through time and timelessness are suggested simultaneously. The end of the journey through time and place here is reminiscent of the end of another journey in the poems, i.e., “The Journey of the Magi” where Eliot marks the end by “We

are born with the dead.” Interestingly enough, beside Christian submission, moving closer to a magus can also be inferred. Eliot’s Magus “returned to his place” when he was “no longer at ease and apparently quite unable to make another beginning from an end, hence he concludes “I should be glad of another death”. As Bloom observes with the view of the religion Eliot has chosen at that time, the dominance of death over life in this poem is surprising. We find:

Line 5 “The very dead of winter”

Lines 35–36: “[. . .] were we led all that way for / Birth or Death?

There was a Birth [. . .]”

Lines 37–39: “[. . .] I had seen birth and death, / But had thought they were different; this Birth was / Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death”.

Line 43 (last line): “I should be glad of another death”. (Bloom 2007, p. 70)

That is why he goes on to conclude that “the poem’s reflective conclusion is, simply, a desire for death. Interestingly enough, beside Christian impact, “The reader’s expectation of an expression of spiritual eros (adoration or love of the divine child) is brought up against the reality of an artistic resolution consisting of the spiritual Thanatos felt by the poetic ‘I’: “I should be glad of another death” (70) That is how even “a weird echo of the death-wish attributed to the Cumaean Sibyl” (70) can also be inferred.

The fact that Magus does not “feel at ease”, for he is left among “an alien people clutching their gods” hints at the decline of religious beliefs during the modern era. The true believers cannot communicate comfortably with the non-believers and vice versa. That “journey toward understanding” that typically involves a metaphorical “progress” of growth and education results in newfound awareness of the self’s limitations alongside a growing respect for others and for being itself, and features, usually, the predicate of an encounter with death or the dead; it thus “climaxes in G. K. Chesterton’s paradox that you know nothing until you know nothing”. Eliot himself referred, after conversion to Anglo-Catholic Christianity, to this process as “the process of the mind of the intelligent believer” and to “the sequence which culminates in faith.” (Atkins 2012, p 4) The Eliot’s own “path” or progress was itself a journey toward understanding manifested in the poems and essays. To Eliot, dealing with this dilemma is looked upon through the process of artistic creation: “For order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered” (qtd. in Rainey 153). Even though most often changes do not occur slightly, they do tend to put some in a condition not much unlike that of an exile. Going through an exile is partly similar to saying farewell to the life lived before the exile and starting a new or at least dissimilar life. Indeed, “the poem’s concluding lines affirm that the birth the Magus witnessed was necessarily a kind of death, death to an old life and rebirth in the new” (Cooper 2016, p. 82).

As a matter of fact, is in only through recognition and acceptance of death as a part of life that comes the capacity to give, and giving in its own turn depends upon sympathy. Thus, “as Eliot suggests, and the Upanishads before him, as well as Homer, giving, sympathizing, and controlling are bound and wound together, perhaps inseparable from one another— a trinity” (Atkins 2012, p 25). Such a pattern persists and in a way varies in both texture and particulars. Eliot did not agree with Homer totally, for they differed specifically on the matter of “purgation”; he understood both the necessity instead of purification as a Christian and the insufficiency of self-control.

In “A Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock”, as Michael Grant observes instead of writing about Prufrock and explaining that this tragedy is the tragedy of “submerged passion”, T. S. Eliot “simply removes the covering from Prufrock’s mind: Prufrock’s mind, jumping quickly from actuality to memory and back again, like an animal, hunted, tormented, terribly and poignantly alive” (Grant 1982, p.88). Life appears to be absent or almost absent from this poem, for from the very beginning no lively image is there to describe the no-longer-young Prufrock who happens to be lost in some street or corridors. As Wolosky

states he is even very much inside his own mind. “The mind is deadened, like an etherized patient; his description of the sky reflects his own consciousness” (Wolosky 2001, p.192). The images given mostly bespeak of passivity and even the fog there is likened to a cat which is deprived of vitality and lively action:

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
 The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
 Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
 Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
 Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
 Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
 And seeing that it was a soft October night,
 Curled once about the house, and fell asleep. (Eliot 1962, p.17)

In “The Hollow Men” also in a way similar to “A Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock and “Gerontion,” passivity and silence are still noticeable; the expressive metaphor including the cat draws attention there as well. “It too has made a leap, but then, realizing the attraction and the safety of the circumambient softness, yields to the simulacrum of the death wish” (Atkins 2012, p. 137). The dryness described in “Shape without form, shade without color, / Paralyzed force, gesture without motion” depicts lack of action. The three kingdoms mentioned may not explicitly be suggestive of death and dying, but the hollowness of life focused upon cannot be disregarded. This type of hollow life is reminiscent of Euripidean question, ‘who knows if to be living be not death?’ (qtd. in Crawford 152). As Crawford argues if for Sweeney Agonistes ‘Death or life or life or death / Death is life and life is death’ , then “Certainly ‘death’s other kingdom’ (my italics) suggests that the speakers’ inane life is only another form of death” (152). Even though this poem can be regarded as between Eliot’s non- Christian and his Christian understanding, the focus is not only on death. Beside “Mistah Kurtz— he dead,” the epigraph taken from Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, some scenes in hell are also presented from the beginning. These scenes are demonstrated in a way that justifies the poet’s resorting to death-wish in his poetry when

life is “very” long:

Life is very long
 Between the desire
 And the spasm
 Between the potency
 And the existence
 Between the essence
 And the descent
 Falls the Shadow
 For Thine is the Kingdom
 For Thine is
 Life is
 For Thine is the
 This is the way the world ends
 This is the way the world ends
 This is the way the world ends
 Not with a bang but a whimper (Eliot 1962, p. 80)

In Eliot’s pre-Hollow Men poetry, “the positive, Death-side of his paradigmatic system was not only held in strong tension against the negative, LIFE-side, it was also subtly enriched by the (sublimation-oriented) development of the DEATH paradigm in the direction of a LIFE-IN-DEATH configuration which reverses physical death by transforming it into LIFE at a spiritual level” (Bloom 2007, p. 71). The Waste Land can be categorized as an American self-elegy entering the world of

mythological romance and epic with an eye on Christian irony. . As Ellman states “—”The Waste Land strives to give a face to death” (qtd. in Norris 51). In T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, death plays a fundamental role also in its basic pattern. Basically the structure of *The Wasteland* is comprised of five sections most of which are related to an element. Section I, “The Burial of the Dead,” is related to the element of earth. “A Game of Chess” relates to air; “The Fire Sermon” to fire; “Death by Water” to water. The fifth section, “What the Thunder Said,” apparently does not follow this pattern. Benjamin Lockerd argues “in Aethereal Rumors, that this section represents the aether, Aristotle’s concept of a distinct element, nonetheless working in consort with the others” (Bloom 2007, p. 163). There is something spiritual about this element which is not in the other four elements even though none is opposing the other. According to Lockerd “something happens here [in Section V] which is quite different from what we experience in the first four sections” (qtd. in Bloom 163).

One of the affinities joining all five sections together is the apparent use of “dead” or “dying” in all of them. It is also not merely confined to human beings as the ones used in “I was neither Living nor dead”, “Where the dead men lost their bones”, “And walked among the lowest of the dead”, “Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead”, “He who was living is now dead” and “We who were living are now dying”. When “April is the cruelest month” of the year, death appears to ruling over the whole setting from the title of the first section at the very beginning and in several distinct parts of the environment: “Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing Memory and desire”, “the dead tree gives no shelter”, “a dead sound on the final stroke of nine”, “Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit”. All these echo a comprehensive sense of death in the poem and it has most probably been aimed at, for they do not provide the environment with the harmony and unity they could have afforded. According to F. R. Leavis “the incessant rapid change that characterizes the Machine Age” (90) is to be blamed. The human culture together with the natural environment are both there in modern times, but in *The Wasteland* there occurs a juxtaposition, for there is no “no quickening to the human spirit. Sex here is sterile, breeding not life and fulfillment, but disgust, accidia, and unanswerable questions” (91). There is even no development or progression, for although thunder is there, it is incapable of bringing any rain which itself is a reviving factor. Despite all this, the speaker has got something on his mind that does not intend to conclude the last section devoid of hope; the journey towards understanding is eventually reaching its end and life is peacefully found in death. The serene hopeful atmosphere is assured through several various elements referred to in the concluding stanzas. Even though the speaker’s final words are foreign, they all bespeak of hopeful or at least positive entities, for “Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata” stand for “give, sympathize, and control” respectively. According to Atkins, the title of the fourth and penultimate section, “Death by Water.” In a way anticipates “the “Damyata” of “What the Thunder Said” (“The boat responded / Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar”) and the bones picked clean in the second poem of Ash Wednesday, with their obvious indication of spiritual cleansing. “Death by Water” echoes Christian understanding of water’s potentially saving grace” (91).

Bearing all the afore-mentioned points it would be no wonder to find Cleanth Brook’s statement describing *The Wasteland* as “at least an inchoate affirmation of Christian faith” (qtd in Winchell 165). He goes on making his point thus:

Eliot’s theme is not the statement of a faith held and agreed upon (Dante’s *Divine Comedy*) nor is it the projection of a “new” system of beliefs (Spenser’s *Faerie Queen*). Eliot’s theme is the rehabilitation of a system of beliefs, known but discredited ... To put the matter in still other terms: the Christian terminology is for the poet a mass of cliches. However "true" he may feel the terms to be, he is still sensitive to the fact that they operate superficially as *cliches*, and his method of necessity must be a process of bringing them to life again. The method adopted in the *Waste Land* is thus violent and radical, but thoroughly necessary. (qtd. in Winchell 165)

Even the felt hindrance in development and progression does not negate the sought-for relief the Waste Landers attained at the end of their journey. The conclusion does not necessarily connote death as a

destruction, for there can also be what the French philosopher Simone Weil calls decreation. It has been summarized by Frank Kermode as thus:

decreation is not a change from the created to nothingness, but from the created to the uncreated...the form in which Simone Weil expresses it is rather obscure, though she is quite clear that destruction" is a blameworthy substitute for decreation. The latter depends upon renunciation, considered as a creative act like that of God." (234)

2. Death in Persian Poetry

Death is in fact a shared concern among all people in all societies and cultures and it would certainly be a mistake to confine it to some specific cultures and nations in the world. Basically, all human beings go through various stages throughout their lives, and depending upon their status and environment they might get engaged in a life quite distinct from others, but they would all confront the same final point, that is death, eventually. All this have been depicted and reflected in the literature of all nations around the world regardless of their ethnicity and culture. The manifestation of death in Persian poetry has not been confined to the poetry of classical Persian poets like Sanaie, Attar and Molavi, for it can also be observed in contemporary Persian poetry that has regarded death as an undeniably principal issue. Southern Persian Poetry also appears to be replete with thoughts, images and depictions concerning death. Death abounds in the poetry of both Manouchehr Atashi and Ali Babachahi from among Iran's southern poets.

2.1. Death in Manouchehr Atashi's Poetry

The theme of death in life and life in death can also be noticed in the poetry of Manouchehr Atashi. According to Lahiji there are three type of life. The first kind is the one that is "vital to spiritual self-expression and relief is being repeated. The second type is the life that is attained due to the separation of the sensual characteristics and acquiring the attributes of the heart. The third type is the eternal life in an example of limbo or a heavenly one. You are called on as you die" (Lahiji 2004, p. 427). Along with hardships Atashi experienced due to loss of a child and failure in love, the color of sorrow and despair took over his poems. It was then that he appeared as the introverted and frustrated poet who would show aversion to vanities, worldly attachments and even beauty. According to Abu Saeid Abolkheir beliefs "all the fear is because of the self.; if you do not kill it, it will kill you" (Yasrebi 2001, p. 52). Atashi would seek freedom from all this unpleasant life of his: "In this heart-breaking moment void of love/I do not take you by myself/When the air is not filled with light/I would not start my life afresh" (78). "Oh hear arise!/There is no time for sleep/The water has spilled..." (Atashi 2011, p. 339).

Atashi also sees himself as the companion of all the world's sorrow and complains of his life thus:

"I'm familiar with all of the world's sorrow/With Sahara's sorrow/With the sea's sorrow/With animal's sorrow/With human's sorrow/With the silent and mysterious sorrow of the prophets..." (Atashi 2010, p.10). As Sajjadi observes "Death is about uprooting and destroying passion, for the self's life is dependant upon passion through which they comprehend their physical pleasure. Those who die of annihilating their passions are in fact alive through the right's guidance" (Sajjadi 2007, p. 746). Atashi appears to look more deeply into death and life in the other world: "Have you heard of her death/From others?/ Let me in another world / in the border of infinity / In the moment of creation / Alone / Alone / Alone long to write to you" (99). "Strange birds from the shore pass / Strange birds Whose names / Do not go through that green old tree." (Atashi 2011, p. 338). All the features attributed to the color green can in one way or another be applied to the interpretation of Atashi's poems. According to Ian Patterson the color green is said to have more variations than any other color" (186); it is one of the three additive primary colors. A symbol of hope; associated in medieval times with the Zodiac signs Libra and Taurus and with the planet Venus. It is also the holy color of Islam and used on the flags of many Muslim

countries. It is basically associated with fertility and growth. Interestingly enough “(as chromo therapists believe) the color green can help to staunch the flow of blood” (186) On the other hand, in English folklore green is widely supposed to bring misfortune especially when clothing is concerned, as in ‘wear green and you will soon wear black’. Patterson states “Why this should be so is uncertain but is sometimes explained by reference to the fact that green is the color taken to be worn by fairies who punish others for wearing it” (186).

By browsing through Atashi’s poems some evidences of understanding the problem of death and accepting it as an inseparable part of life can be found. As Mozaffari states, “just like other Southern poets he often has some fatalistic views” (Mozaffari 2014, p. 85). Although the concept of death as the other side of life compared with other concepts such as nativism, naturalism and love does not have a significant presence in the poet’s poems, its shadow can be clearly noticed on some of his poems especially in the poem "The Question" from the collection of poems *The Song of the Soil*. As the title of the poem suggests this problem has challenged his mind. “The poet creates a collection of parallels from death and states all the signs of death; symptoms like coffins, tearing chest, requiem, weeping, etc.” (Alavi 2014, p. 269).

Just like T.S. Eliot’s poetry, images and symbols suggesting destruction, bareness and abandonment have been applied in Atashi’s poetry in order to depict death and departing this world. The “passing birds” and the “traveler” are among those images that have almost been universally employed to imply death and moving away from the physical world:

These burned bereaved clouds/Where do they take the sun’s coffin? / These hungry, rabid and greedy winds/Are following the mirage of which garden/Tear their breast upon which horizon’s fence?/Now the desert’s bare tree/The end of disappointment/ is the beginning of which traveler’s fatigue?/The passing birds/death brings which lost herald/ From devious roads/To the village? (Atashi 2011, p. 149)

In fact, from what is apparent in this and many others of his poems, he looks upon death from his simple and unadorned life. That is not a sophisticated and unique look and across his poems we are not faced with doubts and cases of mysterious questions of nothingness. His attitude towards death is not Epicurian that tends towards nothingness, for he regards death as an organic phenomenon which has arisen from life and is another form of it. All the parts are connected to life’s components; it is not an external mechanical force. From this perspective, we do not see the hidden thoughts behind these poems that different and we just watch a simple signature of his upon the death screen: “The one lying under the sepulcher is alive/And the one weeping over the grave is dead/And in another look you will see/The one who is alive, is dead/And the one who is dead, is dead/And the sleepless dead from one cemetery to another cemetery/Take their coffins on their shoulders...” (434).

Once again we come across the notion of “life in death” and vice versa. Influenced by his worldview, he simply considers death as the natural sequence of life and at a glance depicts the dead as the living and the living as the dead. Then he substitutes their positions and under the influence of his religious beliefs counts it the secret of immortality: ““Death is the most beautiful word of our home / Death is the secret of our immortality / And we / Practice / The form of writing ...” (Atashi, 2001, p. 51). Also, as William Barret states “we are able to attain an authentic existence -only if we come face to face unblinkingly with the possibility of our death, for it is death that tears us out of the external banality of every day existence” (Barret 1964, p. 63). Thus for Abdoye Jat, the hero of one of his stories, he depicts a glorious death as if he were praising a rosy death: “From sand hills/Where/Suddenly/The enemies’ ten bullets flowered/And ten red copses/On Abdou’s broad chest/Blossomed...” (Atashi 2011, p.236).

The poet even in the poem "The Cornelian Only by the World Body" of the book of poems *Wheat and Cherry* goes a step further. He depicts death as a both abstract and concrete being and addresses it

asking to be given an opportunity to play the last song of his life by lute: “Give me a chance O death/To take my lute/And the last turn/Go to alleys/To cure the blind/And madden the seeing” (569). The use of lute alludes to the myth of Orpheus and his lute that is also referred to in Shakespeare’s *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and also the elegiac air of the myth when Orpheus “returned to Thrace and wandered through the land, mourning inconsolably and singing of his loss. Finally he was torn to pieces by Thracian women (or MAENADS)” (March 573). Through this allusion Atashi both considers the glorifying and healing talents with which poets are endowed and the theme of “death-rebirth” or “life in death”, hence Orpheus’s reunion with his beloved wife after his death. On this basis, he is not afraid of death and considers it as another birth: “It’s all up with me/But I am not afraid of death/I’m a fish/The elusive lotus on water/The impatient image of a tree/I’m in the waters of sleep tonight” (369). As Saunier observes, lotus is “a natural symbol for all forms of evolution” (Ciriot 1971, p.193). This unfolding of a flower on the surface of the water, that “generally, in oriental traditions, it is a lotus, and a rose or lis in the West” (193) is suggestive of “a further relationship between these flowers and the circumference as a symbol of the manifest world, as well as with the cosmic Wheel” (193). All this together with “fish”, tree” and “the waters of sleep” give a vivacious characteristic to death that is capable of bringing life in death for him. In a general sense it is through this state that death is not conceived of as the end of everything and it is through this circumstance that he says “Everyone is flowing on their own way” (Atashi 2001, p.36).

Throughout his poems we are confronted with a simple approach to the concept of death and it is just when he is mourning the death of his son Manley that he depicts the bitter and poisonous state of death. That is the time when he looks at this concept from a different melancholic perspective and remembers it as a separating factor that made him compose a lullaby for his green parrot: “You are asleep, apparently you’ve got sugar in dream, sleep!/ My green parrot, don’t stop having sugar, sleep/You are sleeping in the petal of flowers, why afraid of thorn’s sting?/Oh all over thorn-less petal! Sleep/May the horror of my lucubration be away from you/My fresh bud! Far from sleep and wake’s hurt, Sleep...” (Atashi,2006, p.538).

The same theme has also been noticeably manifested in the poetry of Ali Babachahi and has prompted him into creating themes upon this basis as well. In his poetry also death is undoubtedly followed by another birth that can be observed through a study in his poems: “This means that love is a commemoration of the copse/And the mirror in front of the naked noon/In front of the friend/It means that death/The love’s stream/The river’s stream/Gives them to the sea floor/It means that death loves you...” (Babachahi 2011, p. 381). In this and many other poems we see that it is the everyday experiences that provide the theme like death for the poet.

The concept of death like the concepts of love and life are all the time present in his mind and in his life; it can also be found in all parts of his poems. In fact, as if the life of the poet is a kind of death that touches every minute of it. Since death for Babachahi is not a halt in the beating of heart in a moment but an experience in the course of life. At times he even goes further and regards himself dead: “And I and this parrot/Play with my descendents/First of all with you/For playing under this very white sheet/Makes you and of course all aware of me...” (1001). He constantly through his lifetime feels its heavy shadow on his head as if his peace has gone: “You weary farmhand!/Let this dying young tree/With tear’s clear fruit/Through the storm/Be alone” (160). With such feelings he relates death to his life components and thus finds its bitterness, venomousness and blackness as sweet. In describing the tragic life, the inevitable staying, living and being forced to watching what he does not like, he just talks about death and finds a friend in it: “I’m dead / And in a few minutes all are more beautiful than others / And are dead ...” (748).

2.2. Death in Ali Babachahi’s Poetry

Death for Babachahi appears to be joy and liberation; as if it were freedom from the world in which there is no hope for living. Thus in every part of his poems he longs for death and thinks of it as an

outlet to set free from these circumstances: “The mirror from this word/The home from this word, a new song would add/All these words, all these colors, all these secrets/All these...” (Babachahi 2011, p.60). In fact, the poet thinks of the experience of living as equal to death, i.e. “death in life”, but at the same time, he also finds a new birth and a new life in it. The mirror according to Cirlot at times, “takes the mythic form of a door through which the soul may free itself ‘passing’ to the other side” (Cirlot 1971, p.211). The internal contradictions of human relations, the meaningless relationships between them and the painful conditions of living made him have the feeling of dying every moment.

A more concentrated color of this concept can well be noticed in the poems "The Night of the Strangers" and "The Burial" where the poet has chosen ideas and images from among those related to death. In these poems in a poignant tone he talks about the coffin, women in black, funeral, burial, mortuary, etc, all of which can be regarded as derived from the poet's being obsessed with death. “In the heavy night a gazelle peeps in from everywhere/Smells the purple birth certificates/And the lotus and lily petals/All around it turn the women in black on the false documents/All grown up men return/The scattered scores/To their children’s records...” (447). “On the mortuary door they still walk/Grave and solemn/So as to bury the last flower of the world/Put the false soil on head...” (457).

In fact, these evidences indicate that death in the eye of Babachahi has changed from a terrible and tragic state to a bare and clear form and has made an outlet out of which he can talk about his unconscious mind when confronted with realities. It is indeed somehow unusual that for a poet like Bababchahi death must be so tied up with his language and thought that he finds it as an everlasting freedom: “Even when a hundred years has passed since you are dead/ The lights in your house are still bright...” (746). Even all this processing of death’s cordial face in his poems is not a sign of destruction and oblivion; it most often brings him rebirth and moving forward. His approach to it is in fact accompanied with awareness: “The world remains and you /Even if you hide under the table will remain so big/And you will remain and a world this big...” (746).

This being obsessed with death occurs so noticeably in all aspects of this poet’s life that he does not differentiate between his life and death. He thus can be regarded as a death-oriented poet; this death-wish of his should also be considered in studying his intellectual foundations. It is death to which the poet rushes thus: “I have to go/With your far and remote thought I have to go/With your unsettled sorrow/As if today was enough for me...” (732). It is only when he is mourning the death of his mother and relatives that it takes another form when he composes poems. It is at a time like this that someone like Manouchehr Atashi also tastes the bitter taste of death: “The mass/The shadow that has been taken from us/It was the lucid winter wing of a butterfly/On the velvet shoulders of a deep death/To let the eastern sun’s angels in white/ Be a thorn/On our heads/...” (427).

It is love that can even beautify death and give it a significant value and meaning. At times, love appears to be stronger than death as if love was the only solution that could make Babachahi become interested in life and be taken away from being obsessed with death: “Give me some water I have fever/My pail was broken by the arrow of friends’ mockery and my clay bowl/Which was filled with love and the sun/Where was it gone with the wind with death?/The young death/Forever in love death/The death who blends a flower with its dark hair/A death that ah... / O love / Love / Step in from death! ...” (397).

This significant fact has however taken a different form in the viewpoint of some of Persian mystic poets like Sanaie, for at times the phenomenon of love takes man to the degree of insight that death does not appear as an eliminating factor. In fact, as Khorsandi states “through love man achieves a mental birth” (99) and everything is prepared for creating a rebirth or another life in death. Consequently, “the relation between man and grave turns into the relation between the lover and the beloved. In this vision, death is regarded as something pleasant and fearing death in the eye of the lover is something vain” (Khorsandi Shirghan, 2012, p.99).

Even though it is through resorting to love that Babachahi tries repelling obsession with death and also destruction and deterioration, the shadow of death can still be felt in his poetry. In Manouchehr Atashi's poetry by which Babchahi has been strongly influenced, such an extensive reflection cannot be found. Since Babachahi due to experiencing homesickness, loneliness and forced migration is constantly occupied with nostalgic feelings, this pushes him towards depression and hopelessness. He expresses this experience through images and words which are directly related to death: "I emblazoned the last seasons of fall/With my name..." (qtd in Khorsandi Shirghan 2012, p. 97).

Conclusion

Death is from among those inevitable issues that human beings have always confronted in their daily lives. In this respect, they have always been looking for an answer for the questions hidden in the mysterious nature of this phenomenon. Due to the universality of this theme, the poetry of the west and the east are brought together at some points. Its presence can well be noticed in most Eliot's poetry in various forms; our Southern poets Manouchehr Atashi and Ali Babachahi have also dealt with themes concerning death-wish or life in death in their poetry. Furthermore, they have also had the capability of applying their religious learnings in order to portray an aspect of the other world for their audience. Under the influence of various factors like misfortune and vicissitudes of life they all even managed to apply different methods of avoiding worldly life. Such methods can be noticed in their specific quantity and quality in their poetry. Although T.S. Eliot even reaches the point of decreation, it still does not equal destruction and nothingness and this very point by itself is suggestive of another creation or a rebirth, that is life in death. Even though in most of Atashi's poetry life's excitement and enthusiasm is still flowing and despite the fact that he has tasted the bitter taste of death for several times and might appear a frustrated poet, he thinks more of life in death and death does not equal total destruction to him either. On the other hand, many concepts concerning death have been reflected with various degrees of strength and weakness in their poetry. In this respect, Babachahi's share appears to be more than that of Atashi's; he has viewed this phenomenon and stated his viewpoint through various methods and in high frequency. It is as such that it can strongly be claimed that death is one of the fundamental thoughts in his poetry and through this thought a single world view is introduced. It is upon this basis that he is regarded as a death-oriented poet. Manouchehr Atashi has not gone this far in his poetry. Although at times Atashi would also wish for death to take him away from the world full of troubles in order to be in the other world. In fact, this prospect of death is to some extent due to lack of fluidity in their lives in the course of time that has altered their world view. That is the reason why the phenomenon of death and thoughts associated with it can be seen with this frequency in his poetry. Even with this prevalence their implication of death cannot be considered as surprising, for they have expressed it through applying specific and at times unique principle which they regard as the inseparable part of their life. In this sense, their views are absolutely identical; their remarkable difference is in the number and method of this phenomenon. In all the cases, death has changed from the terrible and tragic state to a differently distinct entity. On the whole it can be inferred that in their poems life and death exchange their positions and at times even become unified through all these three poets' deaths wish regardless of their at times totally dissimilar circumstances and even beliefs.

Funding Acknowledgments:

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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