

# Mythopoeia in Akhavan's & Eliot's Poetry

Mahin Pourmorad Naseri<sup>1,\*</sup>, Parvin Ghasemi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> English Department, Literature Faculty, Shiraz University, 71946-84334 Eram Sq. Shiraz, Iran

<sup>2</sup> English Department, Literature Faculty, Shiraz University, 71946-84334 Eram Sq. Shiraz, Iran

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\*Corresponding author email:

naseri391@yahoo.com

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## ABSTRACT

T. S. Eliot, the well-known English poet, and Mehdi Akhavan Sales, one of the pioneers of the Modern Persian Poetry, have applied mythologies in their poetry. The present study is an attempt to make a comparison between Eliot's early poems, i.e. "The Waste Land" and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", and Akhavan's two poems, "Qese-e Shahriar-e Shahr-e Sangestan" [The Story of the King of the Stoned City] and "Khan-e Hashtom va Adamak" [The Eighth Task and the Puppet] from a Tolkienian perspective of mythopoeia. Laying their arguments in Jost's fourth category of comparative studies (themes and motifs), the present authors attempt to depict the similarities and differences in the way the poets approach mythopoeia as a literary technic. In doing so, the mythic figures created by the poets are detected and the characteristics attributed to each are reviewed in the socio-political context of the poets' life. Then, the philosophical viewpoint implied in creating the myth will be discussed. The findings of the study reveal that while there are similarities in the literary devices and techniques (i.e., imagery, pattern of hero's journey, ...) that the poets have applied, there are differences in terms of poetic language and the kind of myths each poet creates or alludes to. Finally, it will be argued that in applying mythmaking, both poets seem to be warning their fellowmen against the evil life they are involved in. Thus, it is claimed that from a Tolkienian perspective, both poets are mythopoeic both in vision and method.

**Keywords:** Akhavan, Comparative Mythology, Eliot, Mythopoeia

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## 1. Introduction

The As a comparative study, the present paper bases its arguments on Jost's categorization for comparing literary works. In his forward in "Introduction to Comparative Literature", Jost (1974) classified all courses and publications in comparative literature into four categories. The first group, he believed, "shows works in relation to others with which they have organic affinities" (ibid). He included studies about movements and trends into the second group, and into the third, he placed "the analysis of literary works from the viewpoint of their inner and outer forms (or) their genre" (ibid). Finally, he considered studies of themes and motifs as the fourth category. He then elaborated on each category with the reminder that because literature is not a science but rather an art, it calls for value judgment and its detailed understanding requires "knowledge in the most diverse fields ranging from history to religion and to the fine arts" (p.ix).

Mythmaking is believed to be an ever-present technique when writing poetry. World-famous poets e.g., Dante, Shakespeare, Ferdowsi, and Milton, are usually referred to as mythmakers in their own right. However, literary scholars became inclined to view the poetic device of mythopoeia from scientific perspectives in the early 20th century. In trying to include the different roles myths have played in human societies, in each definition, they offered various comprehensive meanings for the term myth.

In her discussion on mythmaking in Romantic poetry, Hopper (2014) quoted Lincoln, who defined myth as an "ideology in narrative form" (p.4) and argued that Romantic poets applied myths to express their revolutionary ideologies. This is in contrast to Barthes who considered mythopoeia as a literary device in the hands of poets in order to approve the social structure of their time by confirming the long-standing values expressed in myths. She concluded that Romantic period mythopoeia was, in fact, a process through which poets demonstrated their philosophical notions.

The English writer, poet, and philosopher, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892- 1973), most well-known for his fancy novels like *The Hobbit*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *The Silmarillion*, is usually referred to as the mythmaker of the 20th century. In the prologue to his famous poem "Mythopoeia" he wrote: "To the one who said that myths were lies and therefore worthless, even though 'breathed through silver'."

Through the long poem, he tried to explain that mythologies originated from man's creative nature, as such they contain spiritual and fundamental truths. He took mythmaking to be "sub-creation", an ability God bestowed upon men in general and particularly on poets and artists. Alluding to the Bible, he noted that we are not just made but we are made in the form of our creator. Therefore, creating is our right: "We make still by the law in which we're made" (Tolkien, 2022).

In "On Fairy-stories", he emphasized that Fantasy is a natural human activity, one that defies neither rational thoughts nor scientific verification. It is, rather, a clue to our supernatural origins.

Accordingly, because of the importance of the epistemological reviews of the works of great literary men have in developing the socio-cultural values of nations, the present article argues that mythmaking in Akhavan's and Eliot's poetries can be studied not only as a literary device competently applied to enhance to the beauty of the poems, but they should also be discussed as a key feature to better understand the time and place in which the works were created. Mokhtari (2000) noted,

.... rather than judging about a few great people of our time, the outcome of such an analysis is a judgment about the history of thought and psychology of our own society, because the poets are the distinctive examples and obvious phenomena of our culture. So, the epistemological analyses of their works is the analyses of the manifestations of the same culture. (p. 434)

Concurrently, a brief review on the various ways the term mythopoeia has been used and understood, as well as the changes it has undergone due to socio-political and psychological factors, Freer & Bell (2016) explained how Matthew Arnold suggested a solution to compensate for the widespread wading of religious faith at the time in his book, *Literature and Dogma* (1873). Freer & Bell noted that Arnold attempted to defend Christianity by suggesting "the Bible to be read as the literary expression of moral history, rather than the source of a divinely inspired doctrine". He then explained reading the Bible as such can increase the power of literature to the level of the "primordial creator of human world" (66), and added that as a result of the new position and power literature has gained, the application of myth in the works of leading writers and poets at the time found new forms and modes. Freer & Bell,

thus, considered mythopoeia to be the mode of myth application in modernist great works:

Mythopoeia is the attempt to create, or recreate, the mental modality and sensibility of myth. This does not have to involve the use of existing myths for the mythic dimension lies in the mode of sensibility and perception. And where a known myth is used this may not be the actual locus of mythopoeia in the work but rather the sign under which the world of the work is to be understood. (p. 67)

In contrast, although from the same perspective, Freer (2015) took modernist mythopoeia as “a means of overcoming nihilism” and asserted that Nietzsche’s philosophy puts “much store into aesthetic salvation whereby elusive gnostic texts teach self-overcoming” (p.76). He, thus, concluded that, based on such an understanding of myth, Eliot’s “The Waste Land” is “mythopoeic in method but not in vision” (p.45).

However, in comparing Eliot’s and Akhavan’s poetries from a Tolkienian perspective, the present researchers try to reveal how the rhetorical device of mythopoeia embedded in Eliot’s “The Waste Land” and “The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock”, as well as Akhavan’s “Qese-e Shahriar-e Shahr-e Sangestan” and “Khan-e Hashtom va Adamak” help the poets express their socio-political viewpoints. The article will also argue that through the reading of the poems from a Tolkienian perspective allows the poets to be regarded as mythopoeic, both in method and in vision.

Among the contemporary Persian poets, Mehdi Akhavan Sales is considered as the one who has most frequently and conspicuously alluded to mythology, particularly Persian mythology, in his poetry. Similarly, the English poet, T. S. Eliot, is relatively well-known for the huge body of myths he has alluded to in his works. As such, the works of these two poets provide appropriate materials to review, compare, and contrast the important role mythopoeia plays in poetries of the 20th century. In addition, discovering the similarities and the differences in each poet’s application of mythopoeia as a literary technique informs us about the affinities of nations that are culturally and geographically far apart.

## 2. Prufrock vs. Shahriar

Eliot's Prufrock and Akhavan's Shahriar are usually referred to as anti-heroes or as among the creators of the myth of modern man in the 20th century. The two imaginary figures reveal so many characteristics to qualify them as representatives of the contemporary man and the problems he is challenged with.

1 - Like the heroes of ancient mythologies, Shahriar-e Shahr-e Sangestan was once a king that was apparently strong, brave, and fair. However, after the pirates attacked his land, his people suddenly turned into stone and were no longer able to take any action. From the birds' conversation on the tree, we learn that the king did all he could to bring his people back to life, but his attempts were all in vain.

Prufrock, as an educated middle-aged man living alone in the low-class section of the crowded and modernized city of London, had lost almost all his self-confidence. He compared himself with mythical figures such as John the Baptist, Lazarus, and Hamlet, and confessed that he is not like any of them. Yet, he readily admitted to his own likeness to Ptolonius, whom Hamlet referred to as a fool, whose love for his own voice led to his constant bobbling, "No! I am not prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;/ Am an attendant lord, one that will do/ To swell a progress, start a scene or two, / Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool" (15).

The other conspicuous feature that both Shahriar and Prufrock have is their divided self which makes them swing between hope and fear, as well as between pessimism and optimism. Xue (2009) attributed such dualism in Prufrock's character to 'Bradleyan Philosophy' which Eliot was studying while writing "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in 1910 - 1911.

In the poem, Prufrock is divided into two selves. One is persuading Prufrock to ask the "overwhelming question", while the other is trying to prevent it. They are never consistent throughout the poem. With this literary form, the poet attempted to reflect the predicament of human beings in modern world. (Xue, 2009:82)

Such instability is also easily detectable in Akhavan's hero, Shahriar, as he is seen to be quite disappointed in the beginning, gets motivated after listening to the birds talk and ends up sad and lonely.

2 - Both Prufrock and Shahriar, who are akin to mythic heroes, undergo journeys that ultimately bear no fruits.

We are told that Shahriar was once a great king who bravely fought against the invaders and voyaged through seas, mountains, and plains for years to find a way to help his people. But he ended up being hopeless, lying under a tree with his arms covering his eyes, as if he did not want to see the world:

نه جوید زال زر را تا بسوزاند پر سیمرغ و پرسد چاره و ترفند  
نه دارد انتظار هفت تن جاوید ورجاوند (95-96)

He is neither searching for Zal-e Zar to burn Simorgh's feather and ask him the solution of his problem/ Nor is he expecting the seven immortal angels from Varjavand (to come to his help). (95-96)

It should be mentioned that in this part, Akhavan alluded to two well-known Persian myths - in the first one, Rostam's father, Zal, gives him three of Simorgh's feathers and tells him to burn each of them when he is in danger and needs help; he (Simorgh) will be present to help him (Zal). The second allusion is to the myth of the seven immortal beings of Varjavand. According to Zoroastrian mythology, these angels or immortal beings will come to rescue the oppressed from the tyranny of the oppressive rulers at the end of the world.

According to these lines, it seems as though Shahriar has lost all his faith in the power of myths and is not looking forward to receiving any help from them. However, when the bird instructs him to perform the rituals of salvation, as taught in Zoroastrianism, he carefully follows them as told. Yet, these rituals also turn out to be useless to him.

Similarly, Eliot began "the Love song ..." with the sentence 'Let us go then you and I' to create an initial image of a journey in the mind. Immediately after the poet's allusion to "Inferno" in the prologue, the first line also implies a kind of comparison between Dante's and Prufrock's journeys. It has been widely discussed that in the case of Dante, guided by Virgil and Saint Mary, the journey in "Inferno" is symbolically a spiritual one, a kind of religious development in which the traveler is elevated more and more in faith and religion. In such a journey, the virtues and values gained make the believer deserves the joys of eternal life in God's promised

Paradise as the ultimate reward. On the contrary, in the case of Prufrock's journey, in playing the role of Virgil, he is ironically guiding us through our path to modern salvation. The first image Prufrock presented is as a patient being etherized on an operation table in the evening for the whole city, very much like a dead body. It (the evening) is said to be "spread out against the sky" to imply that in turning against the sky, the modern world has lost its faith and thus, there is no hope for him to move towards God. As such, by letting Prufrock be the narrator of the poem, Eliot seemed to be implying how sad and lonely man has become in the world without God. And that is why the outcome of his trip is just a wish for death rather than the bliss and salvation Dante experienced in Paradise at the end of his religious journey.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea/  
By sea-girls wreathed with  
seaweed red and brown/  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown. (17)

### 3. Merging of Myth and Reality

Self-transformation (metamorphoses) is another conspicuous feature of the characters in "The Waste Land". Basing her arguments on the facsimile copy of "The Waste Land" and Eliot's early poems like "The Death of Saint Narcissus" Comley (1979), Lyndall Gordon described Eliot's early poems as an exploration of "fascination with martyrdom and the cross at the end of the path.....the martyrdom is inspired not only by a struggle for belief but by Eliot's concern with the ancient struggle of flesh and spirit" (Comley, 1979: 281). Such a world view can be seen in the last lines of part III of "The Waste Land", The Fire Sermon, where Eliot refers to the cleansing power of the Fire,

To Carthage then I came  
Burning burning burning burning  
O Lord Thou pluckest me out  
O Lord thou pluckest  
burning (307-310)

Brooker considered "the tendency to move forward by spiraling back and refiguring the past" (1994:54) to be the defining characteristic of high modernism. He also tried to document and clarify this defining characteristic by reviewing Eliot's work as a paradigmatic model of modern poetry. He believed that the process in which "In Memory of Henry James" Eliot called "mastery and escape" is a common impulse for most modernists. Referring to Eliot's different critical articles, Brooker explained

that, to Eliot, only those who mastered an issue (tradition, emotion, ...) can escape it. Brooker then took “internationality” as the second major characteristic of modernism.

Self-transformation can also be detected in Akhavan’s poetry, to the same effect. “Khan-e Hashtom va Adamak” reads that the narrator enters a teahouse on a cold winter day where an orator tells the story of ‘Rostam’s Seven Tasks’ from *Shahnameh* to a group of humble audience in a warm and friendly atmosphere. The orator introduces himself as “MAS”, which is an acronym for the poet’s real name, i.e., Mehdi Akhavan Sales, and adds that he is going to narrate the last part of Rostam’s story, which he refers to as “The Eight Task”

خوان هشتم را من روایت می‌کنم اکنون  
من که نامم ماث (5-854)

The word “MAS” [in Persian, it sounds like “WE ARE”] is used to imply that the narrator is, in fact, speaking on behalf of the whole nation. Then, in the second part of the poem, “Adamak” (Puppet), the same scene at the teahouse is described, but instead of listening to the orator like in the previous episode, the people are silently watching TV, which the narrator of the poem refers as “the magic box”; the previous orator is now described to be sitting silently in a corner. He is shown to be leaving the teahouse sadly and silently in the end, causing the scene to look like an allusion to a line in *Shahnameh*,

هنر خوار شد جادویی ارجمند

(Art became humiliated, the magic respected)

Ansari (2016) explains that in Ferdowsi’s time magic meant evil and Akhavan uses the word in the same sense as Ferdowsi did. As such, describing the orator as an honest artist who tried to keep mythic heroes alive by telling their epics,

آنکه از پیشین نیاکان تا پسین فرزند رستم را به خاطر داشت (854)

Akhavan seemed to imply that when the TV, taken as a symbol of technology as well as imperialism, entered people’s life, the committed artist, who knew about the country’s glorious old times and tried to remind his people of that, was doomed to die and ultimately leaves the scene as Rostam did in the last battle of his life, which Akhavan referred to as Rostam’s Eight Heroic Task. Ansari wrote,



The hero of the Khan-e Hashtom was killed deceitfully, but as long as the orator was telling his story, his memory was alive! However, when the magic box killed the orator, the hero of Khan-e Hashtom died forever! It seems as if the real hero is the orator in the poem. (Para. 14)

In "The Waste Land", the characters Eliot created such as, Madam Sosostriis, Stetson, and Phlebas, seem to be very much like the myths of modern man in the desolated waste land of the 20th century. Eliot introduced Madam Sosostriis as a contemporary prophetic figure in contrast to the mythic figure he already introduced in the prologue of the poem, that is Sibyl of Cumae. While most of her predictions turned out to be true, Madam Sosostriis admitted that she cannot find the hanged man, which symbolizes Christ or religious faith, the feature that seems to be no longer present in men's life. Madam Sosostriis is, also, said to have a bad cold, implying her vulnerability against natural forces, and she is seen to be suspicious of the people around her, resulting in her carrying the horoscope herself. Her cards are referred to as wicked while in annotation to the poem, Eliot wrote that Tarot cards used to have religious value in the past.

Stetson is another figure Eliot created to represent an eternal man. He is the man the narrator recognizes as the one in the Mylae war. Eliot explained, "The battle of Mylae (260 B.C.E.) in the First Punic War. Very much like World War I, the First Punic War was fought for economic reasons." Stetson is now seen on London Bridge among the crowd and is said to have performed the mythical ritual of burying a corpse, as they do for the land's fertility, a performance which ironically refers to the death of so many people in the war.

The other character, Phlebas, is said to be dead and had forgotten the pleasure of profit and sorrow of loss, yet "He passed the stages of his age and youth/Entering the whirlpool" (317-8) and the readers are advised to remember him because he was once a young and beautiful man as they are now.

It can be observed that in describing such characters, Eliot intended to demonstrate a man's loneliness in a world without religious faith, a world in which even the long-lived mythical figure, Sybil, who once wished for an eternal life, ultimately longs for death.

#### 4. Myth & Modern Poetry

In *Modernist mythopoeia: The Twilight of the gods*, Freer asserted that the starting line of “The Waste Land”, that is, “April is the cruelest month...” indicates that opposite to Nietzsche and Frazer, “Eliot’s faith is not located in myth”, yet myth is important for Eliot because “the rejection of myth is important and part of religious message” (2015:45). Meanwhile, in their attempt to revive religious faith and combine Christianity with contemporary developments in science, modernist intellectuals offered new interpretations of some religion concepts. They denied Christian dogmas like Incarnation and Virgin Birth, instead, they insisted on “The inner voice” in the kind of relation they believed man should make with God. Eliot, however, did not agree with their argument. He believed that individual experience is not enough for such relations and the presence of a spiritual guide is required. Yet, as Rzepa noticed, the impact of the contact with modernist thinkers and contemplation on their notions is observed in Eliot’s later writings. She explained that in spite of the fact that Eliot openly opposed modernist thoughts, there are evidence that he was influenced by the way they interpreted religious notions in the end. Taking “The Journey of the Magi” as a multi-layer journey, Rzepa wrote,

It is a response in which Eliot probes into the hardships that a modern Magus faces on his hermeneutic journey to understand the dogma of the Incarnation—a journey that is an attempt to make the word (which is also the Word) yield “a full juice of meaning” from which a new world can be derived. (2016:114)

The Modernists’ view on myth and religious beliefs is present in Akhavan’s poetry. As a solution to Shahriar’s problem, the bird on the tree (symbolizing the divine inspiration) advised him to do the religious ritual of throwing stones into a nearby well while calling out the Zoroastrian angels by their names. Then, in the last stanza, Shahriar’s voice is heard sadly confabulating to a cave, saying that he had done all the rituals step by step, yet instead of water (life and fertility) smoke (devil) had risen up the well.

فکندم ریگها را یک به یک در چاه  
همه امشاسپندان را به نام آواز دادم لیک  
به جای آب دود از چاه سر یر کرد، گفتی دیو می گفت آه (83-81)

I threw all the stones one by one into the well

I called all the angels [Emshasepandan] by their names but

Instead of water smoke rose from the well, as if a monster was saying, 'Ah!' (81-83)

Sad and disappointed, Shahriar criticized the helpfulness of religious rituals, as if he doubted the reality of heaven and divinity,

مگر دیگر فروغ ایزدی آذر مقدس نیست؟  
مگر آن هفت انوشه خوابشان بس نیست؟  
زمین گندید آیا بر فراز آسمان کس نیست؟

Is not Azar, the divine light, sacred anymore?

Have not the seven angels been sleeping enough?

The earth is rotten, is not anybody there in heaven? (84-86)

Yet, there is an important point here. The poem ends with Shahriar's question echoed in the cave, not being answered. An implication of that can be that Akhavan intended on keeping the last rays of hope shining in the heart of his readers.

غم دل با تو گویم غار  
بگو آیا مرا دیگر امید رستگاری نیست؟  
صدای نالنده پاسخ داد  
آری نیست؟

I am telling you my sorrows, O Cave!

Tell me, Is not there any hope of salvation left for me?

And the cave sadly answered,

Is not there any? (87-90)

"Akhavan could have put a full stop at the end of the last sentence and made us sure (but he finished the poem with a question mark)" (Mokhtari, 479).

## 5. The Impact of classic literature

Another common feature observed in both Akhavan's and Eliot's poetries, which has deeply influenced their choice of myth and poetic styles, is their close affinity with and interest in classic literature, as well as their passion and knowledge for literary movements at the time. Having a critical mind can also be taken as another important factor in their creativity and innovation in blending the past and the present in their works. Describing the outstanding characteristics of Akhavan's poetic style, Qanbari Ghadivi (2008) wrote, "He had a deep affinity with Persian epical and historical literature and knew and appreciated national myths and heroes very well.

..... He knew classic and modern poetry perfectly” (pp.172-3). More importantly, given Akhavan’s admiration and passion for Ferdowsi, the most well-known Persian epic writer, his poetic style and language is very closely similar to that of Fredowski.

In the same way, Eliot’s vast knowledge about world mythology and classic literature is said to have roots in his childhood education and religious family background. Having grown up in a well-educated and religious family, along with his great talent and passion for literature, are said to be the main reasons for his affinity to classic literature. His frequent allusions to myths from different parts of the world, as well as his shifting to various languages have played an important role in making “The Waste Land” a modernist masterpiece.

## 6. Poet’s World View

In their discussion on the two types of mythmaking in contemporary poetry, Hoseinpour Alashti and Esmaeeli (2010) referred to myths as being made out of historical figures, as well as those made out of concepts and social events. Basing their arguments on the concept of “Eternal Return”, they wrote,

No matter how important the social events are, they will not be remembered by the masses, neither will their memories create poetic inspirations, unless an especial historical event becomes completely similar to a mythical one. (p. 44)

They noted that in “Qese Shahriar-e Shahr-e Sangestan”, Akhavan had, in fact, made a myth out of the concepts of depression and failure that overshadowed the whole atmosphere of the country after Mosadegh’s downfall. As such, the king of the stoned city, in his poem, should be taken as a mythical figure standing in for Dr. Mosadegh who did his best to improve the economic and political conditions of the country. However, people became so passive and disappointed after the coup in 1954 that it seemed as though they had turned into stone.

Similarly, in “Khan-e Hashtom”, it can be observed that “the orator in the teahouse”, like “the king of the stoned city”, is a mythical character made to stand in for the present time hero/savior, but he is also doomed to fail. It is evident that Akhavan was quite sure of the importance and practicality of the mythical stories he was alluding to, since by referring to some contemporary characters and events, he tried to mix myths with realities to make them believable:

همچنان می‌گفت و می‌گفت و قدم می‌زد:  
قصه است این قصه، آری قصه ی درد است

...  
این گلیم تیره بختی-هاست  
خیس خون داغ سهراب و سیاوش-ها،  
روکش تابوت تختی-هاست (27-35)

He was still saying and saying and walking:  
This is a story, a story, yes; it is a story of pains

...  
This is the carpet of misfortunes  
Wet by the blood of the Sohrabs and of the Siavashes  
It is the pall of the Takhtis (27-35)

He mentioned the name of the famous Iranian wrestler, Gholamreza Takhti, whose suspicious death was one of the hottest political issues in those days. Some people believed that Takhti was killed by the government because of his political activities. In reference to Takhti's death, while narrating Rostam's heroic stories, Akhavan implied that the societal activities national champions like Takhti were doing were quite comparable and closely similar to Rostam's heroic task of saving the country. According to the narrator of "Khan-e Hashtom", Rostam did not try to save himself in his final battle (Khan) even though he had the chance to do so. He did not fight for his life because he was tired of living in a world where there was no true love and friendship, and a brother was ready to kill his own brother in order to gain power and fortune. Thus, Akhavan made a comparison between the socio-political condition of the country of his time and that of Rostam's, i.e., Rostam and the oracle both preferred to leave the scene of life.

ور پیرسی راست، گویم راست  
قصه بی شک راست می‌گوید  
می‌توانست او اگر می‌خواست  
لیک .... (254-257)

And if you ask the truth, I will tell you the truth  
The story no doubt is telling the truth  
He could if he wished  
But ..... (254-257)

In a general reading of the poem, Shahriar's life story in "Qese-e Shahriar Shar-e Sangestan" embodies enough characteristics to make it a real example of a hero's fate in the 20th century. Some critical reviews took Shahriar to be standing in for Dr. Mosadegh, the beloved ex-prime minister of the time, whose political activities and attempts to save the country and, ultimately improve people's life, had ended in failure. In discussing the socio-political conditions of the country at the time, Akhavan wrote the poem, "Qese Shahriar-e Shahre-e Sangestan". Farzi (2012) noted,

The overall failure of the hero at the end, contrary to the mythical heroes, is because the poem is reflecting the uneasy and chaotic conditions of the contemporary world. Akhavan tried to show that in such a horrible condition even the attempts of the hero- savoir would be in vain. (p.34)

In "The Waste Land", there are parts when Eliot directly or indirectly referred to contemporary events and related them to those of the past. Perhaps the first impression one has while reading the poem is that the form, structure and even sometimes the theme look fragmented and apparently disordered. Then, towards the end of the poem, the poet asserts "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (431). An implication of this assertion might be that through composing such a fragmented work, he intends to remind people of their ruined culture and civilization, and to help these valuable but degenerated components of life not to collapse but to stay alive.

In another part of the poem, Eliot criticized men for neglecting redemption and spirituality in their greed for wealth and worldly pleasures. Describing how London citizens rush to work in a foggy morning without paying heed to the people around them, Eliot wrote,

Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,  
And each man has fixed his eyes before his feet.  
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,  
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours  
With dead sound on the final stroke of nine. (64-68)

Then, in the note to this part of the poem, he explained,

Saint Mary Woolnoth is a church in the City of London (the financial district); the crowd is flowing across London Bridge to work in the City.

According to the Bible, Jesus died at the ninth hour. (Greenblatt & Abrams, 2012: 2298)

War and its destructive traumatic effects on all aspects of a man's life is another issue Eliot touched on in this poem. In part V of "What the Thunder Said", he wrote about the women who cried out for their men lost in the war and there is no certainty that they will return home - "Murmur of maternal lamentation" (368). The unrecognizable troops rushed about in groups, acting wildly and violently on the land, encountering and losing numbers in trenches:

Who are those hooded hordes swarming  
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth (369-70).

The cities "over the mountains" (372), which were once like magnificent paradises, "fall in the violet air" (373), with "violet" as a color that signifies twilight (i.e., the end of a day). It also reminds us of something that was once unbelievably great, yet they are now covered in the violet light of the dusk, where everything seems almost "Unreal" (377). No one is able to grasp what has happened right before their eyes. The sketch which the poet produces here can be identified with what happened in most European countries during the World Wars. Towards the end of the poem, Eliot created perhaps a more perfect scenario of destruction:

"London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down" (427).

In "A Game of Chess", Eliot attempted to demonstrate another aspect of men's cruelty during his wasteful life by describing an unnamed woman's luxurious life in detail. Here, the narrator focused on a picture on the wall which shows a nightingale singing in the field, alluding to the Greek myth of "Philomel" and the story of the cruel King, he wrote,

The change of Philomel, by barbarous king  
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale  
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice  
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,  
"Jug Jug" to dirty ears. (99-103)

## 6. Conclusion

As the discussion has demonstrated, we see the similarities in Akhavan's and Eliot's approach to the notion of myth and mythmaking, which revealed the important role mythopoeia plays in the poetry of the 20th century.

Based on these similarities, it can be concluded that rather than approving the social structures of their time, with the hope and desire for a better life that people could have, both Akhavan and Eliot applied mythopoeia as a literary device to reflect on the evil their fellowmen were involved in. They did so to remain faithful to their commitment as poet-prophets of the time.

Noticeable differences could also be detected in the poetic language, literary style and the kind of myths the poets chose to allude to. It was noted in Eliot's poems that the characters suffered more from general psychological traumas, while the mythical figures alluded to are mostly among international mythologies. Eliot also intentionally inserted his knowledge of different languages and mythologies in his poetry. Meanwhile in Akhavan's poems, the myths are mostly Persian mythology; the language and poetic style seem to be more classic than modern Farsi. In this sense, Akhavan seems to be more concerned with the problems his fellow countrymen were suffering from, though the problems can be taken as a global issue as well. As such, compared to Eliot's international poetry, Akhavan's can be more appropriately called national poetry.

It was also discussed that the differences in the types of mythology and poetic language applied are related to the different socio-political context in which each poet lived. While Akhavan lived through the coup of 1953 which was a disappointing social event and regarded as the most important factor in creating the gloomy mood in Akhavan's poetry, Eliot experienced the two destructive World Wars and was so deeply traumatised that it greatly impacted his mind to the point that he could not see the problems that were limited to one single country.

Finally, since the two poets remained faithful to the notion of devoting their subcreativity to fight against the evil of their time, it can also be concluded that from a Tolkienian perspective, both Akhavan's and Eliot's poetries can be appropriately labeled as mythopoeic in form as well as in vision.



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