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SHORT COMMUNICATION

## **Spencer and Sepehri Mourning Demise of poet friends: A comparative study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Two poets mourning the death of their poet friends are Sepehri and Spencer in different contexts of Iran and England. The two poets who are dead are Forough and Sidney who have been great poets and have been admired by the mourning poets. To remember their friends, they have written poems to enliven the memory of their dead friends. Sepehri considers Forough, a female Iranian poet, a friend and a great poet. The methodology of this article is based on comparative literature with the emphasis on American school of comparative literature which considers aesthetics and attention to critique and analysis. This school regards literature as a universal phenomenon and in relation to other branches of human knowledge and fine arts. This school does not accept any boundaries in the field of comparative literature and believes in the study of literature as a whole, and compares literature with other arts and human sciences. The followers of this school believe that comparative literature is a method that broadens the view of man in the study of literary works and is an approach to go beyond national boundaries and believe the study of literary phenomena is between two or more different literatures or the study of the relation between a literary phenomenon and various sciences

**Keywords:** Spencer, Sepehri elegy, poet friends

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Mourning the death of a friend is not some unusual with the poets. Mourning a poet friend is common among all cultures. Poets who have had a poet friend are at a big loss, and had written poems to enliven the memories of their friends. This articles studies two such poets who are at the loss of a great poet. Spencer mourns the death of his poet friend Sidney in his poem “Astrophel” and Sohrab Sepehri mourns his friend Fourough in “Friend”. This article tries to examine how much the poems of this two poets about their dead friends are similar and different. The methodology of this article is based on American school of comparative literature. The American School of comparative literature, which was formed in the second half of the 20th century, considered aesthetics and attention to critique and analysis. This school regards literature as a universal phenomenon and in relation to other branches of human knowledge and fine arts. The followers of comparative literature hold that “whenever the same or a similar phenomenon appears in two separate literatures or in one literature and in another type of artistic expression, the comparative approach must include a fundamental theoretical element” [1]. Rene Wellek, the pioneer of the American comparative School, has reciprocated comparative works in comparative literature, and does not accept any boundaries in the field of comparative literature [2]. Wellek believes in the study of literature as a whole, and it is possible to compare literature with other arts and human sciences (ibid.). Rene Wellek believes that "any comparison and analysis is fundamentally critical in practice". [2] The other critic Alfred Owen Aldridge believes that comparative literature is a method that broadens the view of man in the study of literary works and is an approach to go beyond national boundaries. In general, from Aldridge's viewpoint of comparative literature, the study of literary phenomena is between two or more different literatures or the study of the relation between a literary phenomenon and various sciences. Some critics “conceived of comparative literature as a social science which, along with the world-literature canon it addresses, forms a basis for the politics of cosmopolitan democratic individualism” [3].

## **2. DISCUSSION**

Astrophel “A Pastorall Elegy upon the Death of the Most Noble and Valorous Knight, Sir Philip Sidney” is Spenser's homage to the memory of Sir Philip Sidney, who died in 1586. Spencer dedicated this poem “To the most beautifull and vertuous Ladie, the Countesse of Essex,” Frances Walsingham, Sidney’s widow. The poem begins with the following lines

Shepherds, that wont on Pipes of Oaten Reed,  
Oft-times to plain your Love's concealed Smart;  
And with your piteous Lays have learn'd to breed  
Compassion in a Country Lass's Heart;  
Hearken ye gentle shepherds to my Song,  
And place my doleful Plaint, your plaints emong.

To you alone I sing this mournful Verse,  
The mournful'st Verse that ever Man heard tell;  
To you whose softned Hearts it may empierce,

With Dolour's Dart, for Death of Astrophel:  
To you I sing, and to none other Wight;  
For well I wot my Rymes been rudely dight.

Spencer's poem is a pastoral elegy which has several key characteristics, like the appeal to the Muse, expression of the shepherd's, or poet's, grief, admiration of the dead, a diatribe against death, a detailing of the effects of this particular death upon nature, and in the end, the poet's concurrent recognition of death's inevitability and hope for immortality. Spencer calls his dead poet friend Astrophel who was born in Arcady. Spencer describes Sidney belonging to the gentlest race that ever Shepherd bore and kept his sheep, his little stock and store carefully day and night, in fairest Fields. In another stanza, Spencer one by one enumerates the qualities of Astrophel:

His Sports were fair, his Joyance innocent,  
Sweet without Sowre, and Honey without Gall;  
And he himself seem'd made for Merriment,  
Merrily masking both in Bower and Hall.  
There was no Pleasure nor delightful Play,  
When Astrophel so-ever was away. (Spence, 1877, 1414)

The words 'fair' and 'innocent', 'sweet', 'honey', and 'merriment' are used to describe Astrophel. The poet describes him as a great personage. Partly Spencer's description of Sidney is because Sidney seemed to the Elizabethans to exemplify all the qualities of character and personality they admired: he was Castiglione's perfect courtier come to life. Greenblatt AND others write "When he was killed in battle in the Low Countries at the age of thirty-two, fighting for the Protestant cause against the hated Spanish, all England mourned. Stories, possibly apocryphal, began immediately to circulate about his gallantry on the battlefield—grievously wounded, he gave his water to a dying footsoldier with the words "Thy necessity is yet greater than mine" (Greenblatt, 2012. 947)

This pastoral elegy then goes on and describes Sidney as a Shephard:

For he could pipe and dance, and carol sweet,  
Emongst the Shepherds in their shearing Feast;  
As Sommers Lark, that with her Song doth greet  
The dawning Day, forth coming from the East:  
And Layes of love he also could compose;  
Thrice happy she, whom he to praise did chose. (Spence, 1877, 1414)

Spencer goes through the life of the dead poet and talks about his marriage and other qualities. On the other hand Sepehri, the Iranian poet does not consider Forough as a shepherd since the poem is not a pastoral elegy. It is an elegy for the death of the great poetess. Sepehri start the poem as follows:

Friend  
She was great  
And belonged to the present time  
And had affinity with all bright horizons.  
And fathomed the language of the earth and water. (Sohrab, 2002, 246)

Sepehri praises Forough's quality and her greatness as a poet. Sepehri believes that Forough had affinities with all horizons. Forough, according to Sepehri, understood the language of nature. He continues his description of Forough in the next stanza:

Her voice  
Sounded like the sad tone of truth.  
Her eyelids  
Pointed  
To the heartbeats of elements.  
Her fingers  
Leafed through  
The generous air.  
And she directed kindness  
Towards our hearts. (Sohrab, 2002, 247)

Sepehri in the above lines considers Forough as a kind teacher who taught us to be kind. Forough based on the lines of the poem was a great follower of truth. Sepehri depicts Forough metaphorically the image of her loneliness. She blended with the elements and for the mirror she interpreted the most passionate moments of her own time. The last stanza of the poem is the concluding lines which talk about the untimely death of the friend:

Alas,  
She couldn't sit in full view of the pigeons  
And walked to the brink of Nil  
And stretched out beyond the patient Lights.  
And she did not mind at all  
How lonely we would feel  
To eat apples  
At the intervals of the distressing closing of doors! (Sohrab, 2002. 247-8)

### **3. CONCLUSION**

Both poets Spencer and Sidney take into account the untimely death of the fellow friends and poets. They believe the two dead poets should have lived more. In Spencer the poem is a pastoral elegy while in Sohrab the poem is not a pastoral elegy. Both poets describe the good qualities of their friends and rue the day these two great poets were dead.

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