The Other Land—A Study of Comparing People’s Common Sense about Afterlife and the Novel “The Great Blue Yonder”

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I. Introduction

Once there is birth, there is death. This has been the unchangeable theory since human existed. We were born with our strong mellow crying and our parents’ greeting us joyfully to this abstruse world. Then our life journey begins. We get older and older as time slowly passes. The very moment we stepped into this world, we will all be on the same train, the train heading the death. Have any of you ever wondered where the destination after life will be or what the world will look like after our death? There are more than dozens of explanation of life. Which one is the right one? All those questions above make us want to know about death, so we started to read some relative articles. We found out there are plenty of books that discuss about death, but they mostly explain death in a religious or scientific way, which are based on human logos. Unlike “The Great Blue Yonder”, this novel explains death in the first person point of view and dyes colorful color on death to make it not just dark, sorrow and misery. Death can be explained in a sensible way. Maybe we can’t really describe it as joyful or merry, but we can peel the scary outer skin of death and see what the real meaning of death is.

Slowly, people began to explore death and afterlife theories. People that come from different cultural backgrounds have various ways of explaining how the afterlife world looks like. And they finally conclude three major ideas that are most commonly accepted by people.

First of all, most of the westerners view that those who believe and worship Jesus Christ thus receiving the Holy spirit will go up to Heaven with comfort and joy, whereas part of Asians feel that people who have done good deeds during their lifetime will be able to reincarnate or to be reborn. This is commonly known as Karma by the Buddhists and Hindus. And both believe in there is a place, known as Hell, for punishing people who has done bad things when alive. Lastly, scientists assume that nothing exists after life, not even our soul or memories or nothingness. They strongly disagree with the theories of heaven and hell.

Despite three commonly accepted sayings above, we got interested in the novel “The Great Blue Yonder”. The Great Blue Yonder” is a fiction novel written by Alex Shearer. He has his own opinion on afterlife which are quite different from people’s common sense and religion, but his ideas are pretty special and creative, some of which even make you feel surprised.
II. Thesis

a. Summary:

The story begins with a little boy, Harry, who is killed in an accident just right after he quarrels with his sister. His soul goes up to a place called “The Other Land”.

Harry meets many people that has already passed away for hundreds of years and couldn’t move on. One of the boy who lives during the medieval time, with a top hat. Harry and the boy becomes good friends, they share their experience of death and discuss about their unfinished businesses.

Then Harry get trapped there and neither can he reincarnate nor go to the land called The Blue Yonder, being the ideal place for the death (people who pass away). So he goes back to complete his unfinished businesses.

In the beginning, we took The Other Land for the place like Heaven, but as we read farther we found out it isn’t. It is the place in between the death and the alive, which has been the first idea in this novel that we have cons. The place in between seems not ontological in people’s common sense of afterlife. And it is quite interesting that Harry seems not so afraid of being dead, which makes us think that the dark of death is just fear of human, but not it’s essence. Death is like an oral-telling story. As time passes, it becomes aggrandized. And because there is no way for us to really find out what it really is, the story just passes on from one generation to next generation and these unkown feelings make people afraid of death.

Among the alive, the only one who can feel his existence is Harry’s sister. He says sorry to his sister and tells her not to feel guilty about his death. The biggest regret for Harry is that he doesn’t say goodbye to his beloved ones.

At the end of the story, Harry finishes all his unfinished business and moves on to The Blue Yonder.

b. About the author:

Alex Shearer started his career as a scriptwriter and had made a great effort on it. His credits include The Two of Us, the 1990s sitcom starring Nicholas Lyndhurst.

c. Comparsion:
The idea of separate death use "unfinished" and "finished" from one another is quite opposite with the religious speaking. No matter how much bad things people have done when they are alive, everyone is equal in the afterlife. It sounds like "Death's Right". No existence of Heaven nor Hell. But to face those things that make you feel regretful. There is one more chance for you to complete it! The idea of going back to finish Harry's unfinished businesses creates the most attractive part of the novel because common beliefs assumes that the dead can neither return to the Ground nor communicate with the alive, but Alex Shearer brings forth a new idea and uses his vivid description to make the plot more surreal and draws our attention closer.

The writer is also trying to tell us that he thinks the dead is able to communicate by telepathy and mind reading with the alive ones, but only bound to their particular beloved ones. And the figure of the dead in this novel is quite "Human". We don't need to be afraid of them. They are just like normal people appearing in another form. Unlike the idea, most people will think it's a mad to say the dead can talk or communicate with the alive because they believe that the dead will always be separated from us. They are afraid of death, because ghosts are always described as evil and brings disasters to people in movies or stories. But is that true? We will leave a big question mark to this question.

The author has left an open-ending for us to use our imagination to create our own afterlife. We uses the last sentence "Wish me luck" as the clue, and we will say the writer doesn't think of death as sorrow; on the other hand, he thinks death is the most important thing for us to learn from. No sharp crying for one's death but quiet and peace. As for our opinion, we feel rejoiced for Harry and we believe deeply that his happy afterlife won't be too far behind him.

III. Conclusion:

We can found out there are tons of differences between "The Great Blue Yonder" and people's common beliefs. The death seems to be a taboo to discuss during our daily life, and that is because we don't know much about death. We will probably think the writer wants us to use our imagination to create a afterlife world instead of accepting all the ideas from old times and being afraid of death foolishly. A study of death is just a preview for everyone to care more about their life and find the meaning of their life. It's not to tell people that life is meaningless, so just wait Azrael to come to your bedside and carry you off. This is an important lesson that all of us should learn so that we
will fear less when we are close enough to death. Treat death as a positive process, and know it before we go through it. We believe that humans are not born to die; on the contrary, we have something more important to do during our lifetime. Death does not mean the end of everything. Great people can leave their spirit as symbols to our world, and inspire more and more people to follow their steps. Nobody really knows which saying is right or the closest to our world Beyond death. It is the biggest mystery in the world even in the universe, which is only for ourselves to experience it.

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