

**Subjectivity in Contemporary Kurdish Novels: Recasting Kurdish Society,
Nationalism, and Gender**

Kaveh Ghobadi

Submitted to the University of Exeter
as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Kurdish Studies

October 2015

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature:

Dedication

To Handren and all those who never compromised their ideals and sublime
values

Abstract

This study explores how subjectivity has been represented in a selection of Sorani Kurdish novels from Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan that were published in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Due to the statelessness and suffering of the Kurds caused by the political and cultural oppression, the first Sorani Kurdish novel emerged as late as 1961 and yet only established itself towards the end of the century. Within such an acute context, the novel became a tool in the hands of Kurdish authors which they utilised to preserve and promote Kurdish identity, culture and language. With the establishment of cultural centres and publishing houses in diaspora during the 1980s, the establishment of a quasi-independent Kurdish region in Iraq in 1991, and the Iranian government's easing of publication in Kurdish by the mid-1980, the Sorani Kurdish novelists seized the opportunity to redefine the relationship between political commitment and aesthetics and to consider the possibilities for an analysis of different forms of subjectivity.

All the twenty-first century Sorani Kurdish novels examined in this research have discarded, to one degree or another, the realist mode of writing which dominated the Sorani Kurdish novel until the early 1990s. That is, experimentation with new modes of writing and narrative techniques are the common feature of the novels examined here. By carrying out a close reading within a contextual framework and by drawing on Mikhail M. Bakhtin's theory of the novel, narratology, and theories of subjectivity, this study intends to illustrate the newly emergent modes of writing and discourses in selected twenty-first century Sorani novels and their implications for the representation of reality and subjectivity.

This study demonstrates that the Kurdish novelists from both Iraq and Iran all focus their attention on recent events, relevant to each region, and how they changed the ways subjectivity could be imagined and depicted. The more modernist and postmodernist in form and narration the selected novels are, the more

fragmented and passive subjectivity is; and the society that is represented in these novels appears to have separated from its high values and ideals.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my thanks to my supervisors Gerald MacLean and Clemence Scalbert-Yücel, for their constant support and guidance throughout this project. I am deeply grateful for their encouragement and personal kindness.

My special thanks goes to my friends Handren Ahmad, Bianka Spidel, Lynne Colley, Anas, Moid Zandi, and Farhad Rostami for their support. I also owe a deep debt of gratitude to my family, especially my grandmothers, for their love and support,

Last, but by no means the least, I would like to thank my partner Faranigs Ghaderi whose love, encouragement, and support were most needed to complete this journey.

Transliteration

To transcribe Kurdish texts, I have used a modified version of Bedirxan's Hawar alphabet to suit the Sorani dialect. Except for the names Anglicized by the writers themselves, I have transliterated the names of other Kurdish writers and scholars and those appeared in the Kurdish texts. Romanization is done according to the following list of transliteration.

| Vowels | | Digraphs | | Consonants | |
|--------|---|----------|----|------------|----|
| ئا، ا | a | ر | rr | ء | ' |
| ە | e | غ | gh | ب | b |
| ۆ | o | ل | ll | پ | p |
| ئى | ê | | | ت | t |
| وو | û | | | ج | c |
| و | u | | | چ | ç |
| ى، ىى | î | | | ح | h' |
| ى، يى | i | | | خ | x |
| | | | | د | d |
| | | | | ر | r |
| | | | | ز | Z |
| | | | | ژ | J |
| | | | | س | S |
| | | | | شى | Ş |
| | | | | ع | ' |
| | | | | ف | F |
| | | | | ثفا | V |
| | | | | ق | Q |
| | | | | ك | K |
| | | | | گ | G |
| | | | | ل | L |
| | | | | م | M |
| | | | | ن | N |
| | | | | و | W |
| | | | | ھ | H |
| | | | | ى | Y |

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Subjectivity in Contemporary Kurdish Novels: Recasting Kurdish Society, Nationalism, and Gender..... | 1 |
| Dedication | 2 |
| Abstract | 3 |
| Acknowledgments | 5 |
| Transliteration..... | 6 |
| CHAPTER ONE..... | 10 |
| Introduction..... | 10 |
| 1.1. The Kurdish novel: from writing in Kurdish as a political act to aesthetic political writing | 10 |
| 1.2. Research Questions..... | 22 |
| 1.3. Kurdish literary criticism: the lack of analytical and theoretical close reading of Kurdish novels | 23 |
| 1.4. (Magical) realism, modernism and postmodernism: a clarification | 27 |
| 1.5. Theoretical framework..... | 33 |
| 1.6. Methodology..... | 37 |
| 1.7. The criteria for selecting the novels | 39 |
| 1.8. Dissertation outline..... | 43 |
| CHAPTER TWO | 46 |
| A prophet for our time in Bachtyar Ali's <i>Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyeke</i> : magical realism and subjectivity | 46 |
| 2.1. <i>Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyeke</i> - a self-reflexive magical realist novel: the realm of new subjectivities? | 49 |
| 2.2 Mozart: a divine magical music..... | 57 |
| 2.3. The return to folk tale heroes | 60 |
| 2.4. "Angel" or "villain": a narrow presentation of Womanhood | 68 |
| 2.5. Love: reinforcing an unequal relationship between two sexes? | 72 |
| 2.6. The transformation of subjectivity in a moment of epiphany..... | 77 |
| 2.7. The diminishing of the official nationalist discourse | 80 |
| CHAPTER THREE | 89 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| The decline of a heroic culture: subjectivity in the labyrinth of Kurdish folklore in Hassan's <i>Temî Ser Xerend</i> | 89 |
| 3.1. Realist in form, modernist in content..... | 92 |
| 3.2. Post-civil war Kurdistan: Frustrated subjects in a disintegrated community | 100 |
| 3.3. Discursive formation of subjectivity through popular and official discourses | 103 |
| CHAPTER FOUR | 114 |
| The world of uncertainties in Ata Nahae's <i>Ballindekanî Dem Ba: a</i> (post)modernist narrative | 114 |
| 4.1. A (post)modernist approach to narration, representation, and subjectivity | 118 |
| 4.2. A farewell to idealism: tragic reaction to reality..... | 128 |
| 4.3. Female subjectivity, the past and present..... | 134 |
| CHAPTER FIVE | 142 |
| Space, sex, and nationalism: the fall of Utopia in Sharam Qawami's <i>Siweyla</i> .. | 142 |
| 5.1. The polyphonic narration of subjectivity..... | 145 |
| 5.2. <i>Siweyla</i> , a novel of many worlds..... | 149 |
| 5.3. From tea-house heroes to mountain heroes..... | 155 |
| 5.4. Virile men, passive women | 167 |
| CHAPTER SIX..... | 178 |
| Revolution, nationalism, and gender: overthrowing the dictatorship, reproducing Patriarchy in Amiri's <i>Zindexew</i> | 178 |
| 6.1. The world of certainties: from representing to reinforcing reality | 181 |
| 6.2. Challenging the essentialist perception of ethnic/national identity | 185 |
| 6.3. Insane women, sane men: (re)construction and the representation of the ideal man and woman ... | 187 |
| CHAPTER SEVEN | 202 |
| Conclusion..... | 202 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 214 |

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This study explores subjectivity in a close reading of five Sorani Kurdish novels from Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan that were published in the first decade of the twenty-first century. I focus on the twenty-first century Kurdish novel because it was only during the last years of the twentieth century that Kurdish writers became obsessed with the aesthetic and formal aspects of the novel. Under the influence of the Western novel, either directly or indirectly through translation, some Kurdish novelists from both parts of Kurdistan recognized the significance of form in presenting new subjectivities in an unstable and changing environment as well as in forming the readers' perception of themselves and of reality. Before progressing to further details of previous works concerning the Kurdish novel, the criteria for selecting the novels, the purpose of this study and the theoretical framework, I shall briefly discuss the emergence and development of the Kurdish novel by focusing on the Sorani novel produced in both Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan.

1.1. The Kurdish novel: from writing in Kurdish as a political act to aesthetic political writing

Kurdish history has been notoriously disconnected and conflict-ridden since it abounds with political failures, rebellions, and massacres, and a story that is still unfolding in most parts of Kurdistan.¹ For centuries, Kurdistan was governed by the

¹ The Kurdish issue is only to some extent resolved in Iraqi Kurdistan since the Kurds enjoy a semi-autonomous regional government. However, they did not achieve this democratically through the dialogic process, but rather, as a result of decades of severe war with Iraqi central governments. In Turkey, over three decades of warfare between the PKK and the Turkish government came to an end in 2012 and a vulnerable peace- negotiation has been under way since then. After the civil war in Syria escalated, the Kurds took the opportunity to establish the de facto independent Kurdish regions there. However, in the past few months, at the time of writing they have

semi-autonomous principalities (Emirates), some of which, including the Marvanids of Diyarbekir achieved total autonomy (McDowall 1992, p. 26). Kurdistan, as Amir Hassanpour notes, “looked like a mosaic of principalities, tribes, towns, and cities.” (2003, p. 109). As such, they were recognized by central governments, in exchange for tribute payments or the provision of troops when needed. For the first time in history, after the Treaty of Zohab in 1639 Kurdistan was divided between Ottoman and Safavid, three-quarters of which remained under Ottoman’s suzerainty. By the mid-nineteenth century, the centralization policies of the Ottoman and Safavid empires had eventually brought an end to the life of the Kurdish principalities.

Yet again the Kurds faced further fragmentation politically, socially, and culturally when they found themselves appropriated as minorities in some of the new modern nation-states which replaced the Ottoman and Qajar empires after World War I. Furthermore, the nation-states hosting the Kurds showed a great intolerance and brutality towards Kurdish culture and language. Except for Iraqi Kurdistan, education and publication in the Kurdish language was not recognized by the hosting countries. Yet, Turkey’s policies towards Kurdish identity and language were more relentless than in the other countries where Kurds lived. The new leaders of modern Turkey denied the existence of the Kurdish people, and consequently the Kurdish language, altogether and labelled the Kurds as “mountain Turks”. (See Hassanpour 1992; McDowall 2004). Hassanpour regards Turkey’s and Syria’s policies towards the Kurdish language as “linguicide” or “linguistic genocide” (1992, p. 124). Although Iran did not take such extreme measures against the Kurdish language, it did not acknowledge the right of education in the Kurdish language and either banned its publication or severely restricted it.

It does not then come as a surprise that within such severe circumstances, Kurdish literature in all its forms suffered. Yet among literary genres, Kurdish fiction,

been defending themselves against the so-called Islamic State (also known as ISIS and ISIL). In Iran the Kurdish
up

which was born only in the second decade of the twentieth century, found it extremely difficult to establish itself. The scholars have attributed the late emergence of the Kurdish novel and its further delay in establishing itself to socio-political and economic barriers. Sabir Reşîd rightly points out that the undeveloped publishing houses and journalism as well as the high rate of illiteracy among the Kurds, especially in the first decades of the twentieth century, were the main barriers in the way of the rise and development of the Kurdish novel (2007, p. 68). Looking for the reasons for the late emergence of the Kurdish novel, Ibrahim Qadir Muh'emed proposed that it was the political circumstances in Kurdistan which underlay the undeveloped publishing houses and illiteracy. He argues that the political repression in Kurdistan for the greater part of twentieth century made it extremely difficult for novel writing since it takes time and concentration compared with other genres (1990, pp. 15-16). Ata Nahae however, argues that apart from the political impediment, the rural structure of Iranian Kurdistan (this was also the case with other parts of Kurdistan) and the lack of developed cities since fiction is an urban phenomenon, were the main problems hampering the development of the Kurdish novel in Iranian Kurdistan (cited in Ahmadzadeh 2003, p. 168).

The novel is a genre that requires considerable time and effort much more than a short story or poetry; a stable life, and a financial source for the author which, except for the Kurds living in the Soviet Union, did not exist in any part of Kurdistan before the 1990s, is also necessary. The length of time before a novel is published, (sometimes long after its author's death) also contributed to the difficulties faced by Kurdish authors who were experimenting with the novel form in the first eight decades of the twentieth century. I shall now briefly outline the fortune of the first Kurdish novels written in Iraqi Kurdistan between 1920 and 1970, which from the outset of the establishment of modern Iraq enjoyed a relative cultural freedom. However, during the same period no Kurdish novel was published in Iran, Turkey, and Syria due to the central governments' suppression of any aspect of Kurdish identity.

Although there is disagreement among Kurdish scholars whether to classify it as a novel or a short story (which I shall discuss later in this section), the first novel was written in 1927 or 1928 by Eh'med Moxtar Caf (1899-1935) entitled *Meseley Wijdan* [The Question of Conscience]. However, the novel was published as late as 1970, forty two or forty three years after it was written and thirty five years after its author's death. Less than three decades later, Ibrahim Ahmed (1914 - 2000), a prominent Iraqi Kurdish politician and writer, wrote his first novel, entitled *Janî Gel* [The Suffering of a Nation] in 1956. One year later, in 1957 he was arrested. His novel, together with his notes were kept by his friend until 1967 (Ahmadzadeh 2003, p. 173) and the novel was published in 1972, sixteen years after it was written. The novels, *Agirî Bin Ka* [Fire beneath the Hay] by Se'îd Nakam and *Rêga* [The Road] written by Muh'emed Mewlûd (better known as Mem) also suffered the same fate as their predecessors. They were both written prior to 1970 and came first and second, respectively, in a literary competition held in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1991 (Reşîd 2007, p. 73). However, none of the authors could have their novels published until the 1990s: *Rêga* was published in 1992 and *Agirî Bin Ka* in 1999. This was because there were great hurdles in the way of cultural activities, including literature, in Iraqi Kurdistan—the only part of Kurdistan where the central government had, at least, acknowledged the cultural rights of its Kurdish population. However, the situation for a minority of Kurds living in the former Soviet Union was by far better than that in other parts of Kurdistan.² The rise of the first Kurdish novels here shows the significance of political stability and financial support for any cultural activity and especially for the novel.

Terry Eagleton defines the novel as a genre characterized by its resistance to “exact definition” which makes it difficult to say “when the form first arose” (2005, pp. 1-2). Apart from the lack of a single definition of the novel, the political and geographical complexities of a divided Kurdistan make it yet more difficult to

² The precise number of Kurds living in the Soviet Union is not clear. However, as Vanly says, “Soviet Kurds themselves give estimates that range from approximately 300,000 to a precise figure of 1,120,000 [in the early 1990s].” (1992, p. 163).

determine the first Kurdish novel. As Hashem Ahmadzadeh points out, when talking about the first Kurdish novel, we have to take into consideration the “divided nature of the Kurdish speech community and the lack of any organic relationship between its divided parts.” (2003, p. 169). He argues that the linguistic and political barriers, has made it impossible to pinpoint the first Kurdish novel “in the framework of a Kurdish national unity.” Instead, Ahmadzadeh suggests the possibility of the ‘first Kurdish novels’ (ibid.). That said, I shall discuss the rise of the first Kurdish novel regardless of its dialect or the region it comes from and then the emergence and development of the novel in Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan which is the focus of this study.

The state’s sponsoring of the ethnic minorities in the former Soviet Union provided a great opportunity for the Kurdish writers who lived there. The Kurds mainly lived in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenia of the Soviet Union. However, according to Ismet C. Vanly, Armenia was the only Soviet republic which,

[P]reserved and protected Kurdish cultural infrastructures after the persecutions under Stalin. The Kurdish intelligentsia is mostly from Armenia, which is largely due to the fact that the Armenian Kurds have been able to be educated in their own language at primary and secondary level except in scientific subjects. The Writers' Union of Armenia has a Kurdish section and there is a flourishing department of Kurdish studies in the Oriental Studies Institute of the Armenian Academy of Sciences with a joint Armenian-Kurdish faculty board. A large number of books including textbooks, literary and scientific works as well as translations of foreign authors have been and continue to be published in Kurdish. Kurds are represented politically on the Central Committee of the Armenian Communist Party, in parliament and in the government while the Armenian radio broadcasts news, music and other programmes in Kurdish. (1992, p. 164)

Under such favourable conditions Kurdish writers found the stability and the financial support needed for experimenting with the novel which, as I have noted, is a time-consuming and strenuous work. Erebe Şemo (1898-1978) from the former Soviet Union (known as Arab Shamilov in the Soviet Union) wrote the first Kurdish novel in 1935 entitled *Şivanê Kurmanca* [The Kurdish Shepherd] which was published in Yerevan (Reşîd 2007; Ahmadzadeh 2003). This novel, along with his other two novels, *Kurdê Elegozê* [The Kurds of Elegoz] (1958) and *Berbang* [The Dawn]

(1958), together with the work of another Soviet writer Elîyê Evdirrehman entitled, *Xatê Xanim* [Mrs Xate] (1958) were the earliest Kurdish novels to be published.³ Before these works, no Kurdish novels existed in other parts of Kurdistan.

There is, however, some dispute among Kurdish scholars over the first Kurdish novel in Iraqi Kurdistan. A great number of critics consider Caf's, *Meseley Wijdan* as the first Kurdish novel in Iraqi Kurdistan. Its generic features are issues of dispute among the scholars as to whether it is a novel or not, but in any case, the fact that it remained unpublished until 1970 makes it pointless to speculate over the possibility of it being the first Iraqi Kurdistan's novel. Those critics who classify *Meseley Wijdan* as a novel argue that the size of a work is not the only criterion in defining it as a novel or a short story. Muh'emed, for example, contends that *Meseley Wijdan* is a novel because it has the main elements to be found in this genre, that is, characters, theme, plot development, and the protagonist's transformation (1990, p. 6). However, as Kawan Othman Arif rightly points out, these elements are not unique to the novel; they could also be found in a short story or a novella (2009, p. 4). Ahmadzadeh (2003, p. 172), Reşîd (2007, p. 66), and 'Adill Germyanî (1996, p. 27) are also among those scholars who consider Caf's work as a novel. On the other hand, Ih'san Foad in his introduction to the first edition of *Meseley Wijdan* places it somewhere between a short story and the novel (2007, p. 70.) Among the critics who share the same opinion one can name H'isên 'Arif (1977, p. 30-35; 1987, p. 149), 'Umer Berzincî (1978, p. 24), and Himdad H'isên (2007, p. 101). I do agree with the latter's argument in considering *Mesley Wijdan* as a short story, since this work is composed of only forty three medium sized pages which lack a unique feature that distinguishes it from other short stories.

What is then, the first Iraqi Kurdish novel? The first Kurdish novel in Iraqi Kurdistan was about to be born after Muh'emed 'Elî Kurdî published three instalments of his novel, *Nazdar ya Kiçî Kurd le Ladê* [Nazadar, or the Kurdish Girl in

³ The information is taken from Ahmadzadeh (2003).

the Village], in issues 7, 9, and 11 of a Kurdish journal entitled *Runaki* in 1936. However, the novel was never completed because the journal closed down. Nor was the complete version of the novel published later, unlike most of the earlier Kurdish novels (Kawan 2009, p. 5; Ahmadzadeh 2003, p. 172). Ahmadzadeh, then, considers Eh'med's *Janî Gel* (1972) to be the first Iraqi Kurdish novel (2003, p. 173). However, this contradicts an earlier statement which he wrote in a footnote, that *Meseley Wijdan* meets the criterion of a novel. In another footnote he listed the novels published in Iraq by 1990. In the list, *Aşti Kurdistan* [Kurdistan's Peace] is cited as the second novel published in Iraq after Reh'im Qazî's *Pêşmerge* which was written by an Iranian Kurd (2003, p. 167). Then, according to his claims, either *Meseley Wijdan* or *Aşti Kurdistan* must be the first Iraqi Kurdish novel. Since, as I argued, *Meseley Wijdan* is a short story, I would regard *Aşti Kurdistan* (1970) as the first published Iraqi Kurdish novel (cf. Arif 2009, p. 5).

After Eh'med's *Janî Gel* in 1972, no Kurdish novel emerged until the 1980s. In effect, the Kurdish novel in Iraqi Kurdistan could only establish itself by the mid-1980s when some significant works were produced,⁴ and then flourished in the 1990s. 1991 became a turning point in the history of Iraqi Kurdistan. Three decades of resistance against Iraqi governments finally came to fruition and it became a quasi-autonomous region within the borders of Iraq.⁵ Although the 1991 uprising led

⁴ These novels are: *Şar* (1986) (first vol.) by H'usên 'Arif; *Kwêxa Sêwê* (1986) by 'Ezîzî Melay Reş, Hisam Berzincî's *Kangay Bella* (1988), Ghefûr S. 'Ebdulla's *Tiwanewe* (1988), and Himdad H'isên's *Mallawa Gullî Xem* (1988). During the same period some other Kurdish novels were published clandestinely, known as Edebyatî şax (Mountain Literature). These novels are, *Heres* (first vol.) (1985) by Muhemed Mukrî. *Tulle and Heres* (second vol.) by the same author published in 1985 and 1987. *Kuçî Sûr* (1989) by Heme Kerîm Arif. *Kêwî Mezin* (1989) by Karwan Ebdullah (this information is taken from Reşîd (2007, p. 12)).

⁵ The Iraqi government occupied Kuwait in 1990. Before long a U.S-led coalition intervened and launched severe aerial and ground attacks on the Iraqi troops. In the meantime, the Iraqi Kurds took the opportunity and freed some parts of the Kurdish areas in Iraq. However, as soon as Iraqi regime signed a cease-fire with the allies, they relentlessly carried out violence and retook the freed Kurdish areas. It led to the mass flight of 1500,000 to 2000,000 Kurdish civilians to Turkish and Iranian borders in the bitter winter of Kurdistan and under Saddam's bombardment. Many thousands died before crossing the borders (McDowall 2004, p. 373). The images of such a massive atrocity in suppression of the Kurds were reflected in the world media and impressed public opinion. UN Security Council members passed Resolution 688 on 5 April in order to protect the Kurdish civilians. The Resolution 688 paved the ground

to a relative autonomy and freedom for the Iraqi Kurds, the economy was not so promising. Before long, the Iraqi regime's economic siege, which itself was under the UN's embargo, tightened the noose around the newly established Kurdistan Regional Government, the KRG's neck, as a result of which Iraqi Kurdistan faced a "double embargo".⁶ Consequently the situation deteriorated as the economic embargos on the region intensified the old rivalry between the two main parties, namely, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (the PDK) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (the PUK), which finally led to a severe civil war from 1994 to 1998.

Despite the economic hardship and a devastating civil war, the Kurdish novel made unprecedented progress in this decade both quantitatively and qualitatively (Reşîd, 2007, p. 8; Ahmadzadeh 2003, p. 177; Arif 2009, p. 10). The division of Iraqi Kurdistan between the two main parties and the severe conflict between them, as Ahmadzadeh notes, not only failed to prevent Kurdish printing, but caused it to thrive, since the rival parties promoted it "as a propaganda weapon against each other." (2003, p. 148). In Erbil alone, the capital of KRG which was controlled by the PDK, some forty five Kurdish journals and newspapers were published. The situation in the city of Sulaimani was even slightly better since it produced fifty Kurdish journals, magazines, and periodicals (ibid.). The increasing number of cultural centres and publishing houses in turn, facilitated publication of the Kurdish novel and its development in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Discussing the first Iranian Kurdish novel is not a controversial and complicated issue as in the Iraqi Kurdistan case. The first Sorani Kurdish novel was written by Reh'îm Qazî who was an Iranian Kurd. However, he had to publish his novel entitled *Pêşmerga* [Guerrilla] in Baghdad in 1961 due to the political and cultural oppression of Iranian Kurdistan by the central government. Moreover, during the time of the Republic of Mahabad in 1946 Qazî was sent to the former Soviet Union to study,

for establishing a "no-fly zone" and "safe haven" by the United States, though reluctantly, under which the Kurds remained safe from Saddam's aerial bombardments (ibid.).

⁶ For more information on the political and economic circumstances of Iraqi Kurdistan during the 1990s, see (McDowall 2004, pp. 376-392; Yildiz 2004, p. 50).

together with several others. Since the Republic of Mahabad fell in the same year, he had to stay in the Soviet Union for the rest of his life; he died in 1991. Since the creation of modern Iran in 1925 until the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty, both Pahlavis undertook a denial and oppression policy towards the Kurdish language and culture. I shall briefly discuss the cultural activity in general, and novel-writing, specifically, in Iranian Kurdistan and the problems faced under the Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic regimes.

Reza Khan seized power in a British-backed coup d'état against the government of Qajar in 1921 and in 1925 declared himself the King of Persia (1925-41) (Hassanpour 1992, p. 125). Before long, Reza Shah attempted to take full control of the loosely integrated state. In order to centralize a multi-ethnic society, "among other coercive measures," as Hassanpour says, he implemented, "the exclusive use of the Persian language in education, administration, and the mass media." (1992, p. 126). Furthermore, he imposed the "elements of uniform dress on urban, agrarian and pastoral peoples" (McDowall 2004, p. 225) and consequently banned "all Kurdish cultural traditions, dress, literature, music and dance." (Hassanpour 1992, p. 126). Reza Shah prohibited the use of the Kurdish language, first at school and then in public in both spoken and written forms. People could be humiliated and tortured on charges of simply speaking in Kurdish (McDowall 2004, p. 225; Hassanpour 1992, p. 126).

The Iranian Kurds' situation slightly improved with the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941. His successor, Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-79), undertook a less extreme measure against the Kurdish language and culture, especially, "whenever the government was weak or threatened." (Hassanpour 1992, p. 130). His government initiated and sponsored limited and controlled cultural activities, for example, the "initiation and expansion of Kurdish broadcasting, limited publication in the Kurdish language" which was mainly a response to the regional developments (ibid.). That said, none of these activities, as Sheyholislami points out, enhanced "the status of Kurdish [language]. It was still considered a "dialect" of Persian, was not taught in

schools, and more importantly was not the medium of instruction in the formal school system.” (2012, p. 28). Mohammad Reza Shah then, more or less followed his father’s policies with respect to “Persianization” and the assimilation of minorities. Participating along with other peoples of Iran in the events leading to the 1979 Iranian revolution, the Kurds hoped to achieve their political and cultural rights.

It soon became obvious that the new Islamic regime had not changed in terms of its attitude towards, the “multilingual and multicultural nature of Iran.” (Hassanpour 1992, p. 131). They even refused to implement the limited cultural freedom stipulated in Article 15 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

[T]he official and common language and script of the people of Iran is Persian. Official documents, correspondence and statements, as well as textbooks, shall be written in this language and script, however, the use of local and ethnic languages in the press and mass media is allowed. The teaching of ethnic literature in the school, together with Persian language instruction, is also permitted. (Cited in Hassanpour 1992, p. 131)

“The teaching of ethnic literature in the school” never took place in Iranian Kurdistan,⁷ but remarkably, publication in Kurdish, both private and state sponsored increased after the revolution. (Hassanpour 1992, p. 131; Sheyholislami 2012, p. 33). “The rather relaxed policy on the use of Kurdish in broadcast and print media,” Hassanpour argues, “can be explained by the political situation prevailing in Kurdistan and the region.” (1992, p. 131).

Sirwe [Morning Breeze], a state-backed monthly literary and cultural magazine,⁸ was the first publication in Kurdish to emerge after the 1979 revolution with the prominent Kurdish poet, Muh’med Emin Şêxolislamî (better known as Hêmin), (1921-1986), as its editor. Between the early 1990s and the mid-2000s and especially

⁷ After a last minute cancellation of a B.A. programme in the Kurdish Language and Literature at the University of Kurdistan in Sine (Sanandaj) in the academic year of 2003-2004, the government of Hassan Rohani announced that this module will be inaugurated in the academic year of 2015-2016 (for more information, see

http://www.bbc.com/persian/iran/2015/07/150725_i26_iran_kurdish_language_kurdistan_university).

⁸ At first *Sirwe* was published quarterly; but after a few years it became a monthly magazine.

during the government of the reformist president Khatami (1997-2005) as many as twenty Kurdish periodicals were published (Sheyholislami 2012, p. 33).⁹ However, *Sirwe* was still the most significant literary and cultural journal that played a remarkable role in encouraging Kurdish prose and literature in Iranian Kurdistan, and for years it was the only venue for the Kurdish writers in Iran to publish their works (also see Blau 2010, p. 27).¹⁰ With the end of Khatami's presidency and Ahmadinejad's coming to power, the relative cultural relaxation gave way to a relentless cultural oppression: most of the Kurdish periodicals, one after another were shut down either due to "financial difficulties or political restrictions." (ibid.) Even *Sirwe* which was backed by the state was not immune to Ahmadinejad's oppressive policies and was closed down in 2010.¹¹

As it was the only literary journal during the 1980s *Sirwe* paved the way for the emergence of the first Kurdish novel in Iran and the second Iranian Kurdish novel after Qazî's *Pêşmerge*. Having started his literary career in *Sirwe*, Fatah Amiri wrote his first novel entitled *Hawarebere* [Boisterous] in 1990. Since then, the Iranian Kurdish novel has thrived, in both quantity and quality. According to Ahmadzadeh, by 2004 as many as twenty Iranian Kurdish novels were available, of which "seven were published abroad, four in Iraqî Kurdistan and nine in Iranian Kurdistan." (2005, p. 35). The development of the Iranian Kurdish novel therefore is both due to the occasional relative cultural relaxation after the 1979 revolution and, over and above, the establishment of a quasi-independent Kurdistan in Iraq which has provided Kurdish

⁹ One can name, among others, Awêne, Aştî, Sîrwan, Rojhellat, Merdum, Aso, Zirêbar, Didgah, Riskan, Peyamî Kurdistan, Mehabad (Mahabad), and Pûşper (see Sheyholislami 2012, p. 33).

¹⁰ For example, Ata Nahae and Fatah Amiri are two prominent Iranian Kurdish novelists who started their literary careers by writing columns or short stories in *Sirwe*.

¹¹ Like Hassnapour (1992), Sheyholislami argues that the Islamic Republic's relative support of Kurdish publication in Iran, especially *Sirwe*, was not a genuine shift in the government's attitude towards the Kurdish language and culture. Rather, he holds that "the central government had its own propaganda objective in supporting *Sirwe* [...] the government was desperate to reach Kurdish audiences after several years of civil war in the region. The authorities probably hoped that having a controlled, well-circulated Kurdish magazine would quench the thirst of Kurdish readers and writers for a literary venue, so that they would not resort to clandestine publications and media run by Kurdish oppositional groups." (2012, p. 33).

writers in Iran with an alternative means of publication when rejected by the Iranian authorities. As Philip Kreybroek argues, while the Kurmanji dialect developed entirely in diaspora (1992, p. 68), and Kurmanji literature mainly flourished there (for more information, see Ahmadzadeh 2003, p. 165; Galip 2012, p. 15; Scalbert Yücel 2011, p. 172), the Sorani dialect and Sorani literature have mainly developed in Iraqi Kurdistan and in Iranian Kurdistan. Yet a good deal of Sorani works have been published in diaspora. There were twenty two Sorani novels published in diaspora by the early 2000s, seventeen of which were written by the Iraqi Kurds and the remainder by the Iranian Kurds (ibid. p. 166).

The earlier Kurdish novelists, both from Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan, who wrote novels during the severe conflicts between these governments and their Kurdish population, opted to preserve and promote Kurdish identity, culture, and language. Within such an acute context, then, their novels presented and validated a form of conformist and one-dimensional subjectivity. The characters in these novels were at one with their society and were guided by a predetermined and unquestionable duty to willingly sacrifice their lives for their homeland, that is, Kurdistan. In other words, these novels foregrounded conformity and eliminated any manifestation of individuality and transgression of the social norms. With the improvement of the socio-political circumstances in Iraqi and, to a lesser extent, in Iranian Kurdistan by the 1990s, there was a significant shift in the form and content of the Kurdish novels produced in both parts of Kurdistan.

The dissatisfaction with the Kurdish government which had been established in Iraq in 1991 led to a split in the hitherto unified subjectivity which was in congruence with the society and defined by its place in it, as represented in the novels prior to 1991. The Iraqi Kurdish novelists, therefore, found realism inadequate to represent a newly emerged individual character which gained its subjectivity by opposing the political system and the prevailing social norms. They experimented with the new modes of writing of, predominantly, modernism and magical realism in order to portray a form of subjectivity that was at odds with its society and to explore the

possibility of a different subjectivity in an alternative world, respectively. The Kurdish armed-struggle in Iranian Kurdistan unlike that in Iraqi Kurdistan did not secure any form of autonomy or federalism, which was what the main Kurdish parties demanded, to become disillusioned and disappointed in the case of its failure. Yet the frustration and disappointment had prevailed Iranian Kurdistan by late 1980s due to an unsuccessful revolution in 1979 along with a decade of fruitless severe war with the new regime. Consequently a new generation of novelists appealed to modernist and postmodernist modes of writing towards the end of 1990s in order to portray a fragmented subjectivity in search of meaning and the lost values in a “morally bankrupted” society.¹²

1.2. Research Questions

I take a textual analysis to examine subjectivity in the contemporary Sorani Kurdish novels. Whereas most of the scholarly works on identity in Kurdish studies have focused on national identity, this study foregrounds individual identity. In effect, it seeks to investigate how various discourses, for example, of nationalism, gender and sexuality, on the one hand, and the socio-political circumstances, on the other, affects subjectivity and accordingly the aesthetic modes and narrative techniques through which it is represented.

The current research, then, opts to seek an answer to the following question: What are the dominant modes of writing (realism, magical realism, modernism, and post-modernism) in the selected novels and what are their implications for the representation of subjectivity? How do the novels here present Kurdistan and Kurdish nationalism and deal with the issue of political commitment and how does it affect the subjectivity represented? How are women and men represented in these

¹² As in the case of any literary movement, the shift in literary orientation from realism and social realism to modernism and post-modernism in Sorani Kurdish novel did not happen overnight. But this shift occurred over time and in a process accelerated by the social circumstances and historical events.

texts? What do these novels say about gender and sexual differences? And how do the representations of male and female sexuality can reproduce the whole patriarchal order?

By examining these novels which are all written in the first decade of the twenty-first century, that is, after the failure of Kurdish uprising in Iranian Kurdistan in securing autonomy for its Kurdish population and establishment of a de facto Kurdish state in Iraq, we get to know the new dilemmas, concerns, and political agendas both reflected in and raised by literary texts. I will also be able to show that the literary modes and narrative techniques utilized result from such rapid social changes which directly affect the way subjectivity is represented.

1 3. Kurdish literary criticism: the lack of analytical and theoretical close reading of Kurdish novels

Sorani Kurdish literary criticism has been mainly developed in Iraqi Kurdistan and in diaspora. As discussed previously, in Iranian Kurdistan, Kurdish literature is not yet taught at school; and Kurdish literature as a B.A. programme is to open at Sanandaj University in the 2015-2016 academic year. Given the limited and controlled Kurdish journals and publishing in Kurdish in Iran, a rather small number of Iranian Kurds who are active in Kurdish literature usually have their works published in Iraqi Kurdistan in which a great number of Kurdish journals and publishing houses are active. Diaspora (in mainly European Countries and especially Sweden), although to a lesser extent in comparison to Kurmanji literature, also provided a great opportunity for the development of Sorani literature. The first PhD thesis on Kurdish novels, both Kurmanji and Sorani in diaspora was submitted by Ahmadzadeh to Stockholm University in 2003. Since then, he has published some articles on Kurdish novels both in English and Kurdish. A decade later, in 2012, Ozlem Galip was awarded a PhD in Kurdish Studies from the University of Exeter. In a comparative analysis, she examines the representation of homeland and its relationship with identity in the novelistic discourse of 100 Kurmanji novels. Since her

study is concerned solely with Kurmanji novels, I will not examine it in this research. In the next section I shall briefly outline the literary analysis of Sorani novels both in the English and Kurdish languages.

The first Kurdish literary criticism in Iraqi Kurdistan was an article that examined *Janî Gel* in 1973.¹³ Between 1973 and 1989 all Kurdish literary analyses were in the form of articles published in periodicals. Muh'emed's M.A. entitled *Romanî Kurdî le Êraqda* [The Kurdish Novel in Iraq] became the first Kurdish academic work to study the Sorani novel (Reşîd 2004, p. 71). With the establishment of a de facto Kurdish government in 1991 the number of M.A. and PhD graduates in Kurdish literature has enjoyed an unprecedented increase. Consequently, apart from the Master and PhD theses, in parallel with the rising number of literary activities in Iraqi Kurdistan, a great number of literary analyses of Kurdish literature, including the novel, also developed.

With the exception of a few works, the Kurdish analyses of Kurdish novels failed to meet the basic standards of an acceptable academic literary analysis.¹⁴ Since they were not grounded in a given theory, they were merely summaries of the plot, characters, and the story of the novel. Over and above that, as Hendrên Eh'med (better known as Hendrên) argues that, the literary analysis in Iraqi Kurdistan after 1991 has been either an ungrounded praise or criticism of the critic's favourite or hated writers, respectively (2008, p. 83). He explains,¹⁵

There is an established trend in the Kurdish criticism: the critics apply the theories and critical schools on a literary text without having a sufficient knowledge of them. They

¹³ This article, "On the Story of Janî Gel", was written by Sebah' Ghalib and published in the Hawkarî newspaper (cited in Reşîd 2004, p. 10).

¹⁴ Drawing on narratology theory, Sharam Qawami in a monograph examines one of Bachtyar Ali's novel entitled *Şarî Mosiqare Sipyekan*. Grounded in theory, Qawami's work, unlike most of the Kurdish analyses, is a good example of close reading which is not trapped in simply summarizing the plot and story of the novel. That said, the downside of this work is that it does not reference to the quoted statements, directly or indirectly, and does not have a bibliography. Also, 'Ebdulxaliq Ye'qubî, as we shall see in chapter four, has conducted a revealing study, though in passing, of Ata Nahae's *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*.

¹⁵ All translations are mine unless stated otherwise.

have either received these theories from a third or fourth hand or simply imitate the Arabic or Persian critics, or they just cut some lines from the works of figures such as Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Freud and sail into a literary text and stamp it out (2008, p. 53).¹⁶

In short, these works either lack any theoretical framework or they make only a passing reference to some Western philosophers and literary critics without engaging in their theories in order to analyze the Kurdish novels.

An example of this is Himdad H'isen's work entitled *Derwazeyêk bo Rexney Edebî Kurdî* [An Introduction to the Kurdish Literary Criticism] (2007) which covers all literary genera, namely, novel, drama, and poetry. After a brief discussion of the types of characters in the novels he studies, for example, those that are, "flat" and "ground", the "primary" and the "secondary", he then lists some characters' names as primary and some others as secondary. However, his reading of the novel does not shed any new light on this text because it simply states the obvious. In the same vein, Sabir Reşhîd (2007) in his work, *Romanî Kurdî: Xwêndinewe û Pirsyar* (The Kurdish Novel: Reading and Queries), examines some Kurdish novels and novellas. Except for one novel by Ata Nahae, all the novels selected are those of Iraqi Kurdish novelists and the work simply describes the characters, plot, theme, time, place, and the narrator in the novels concerned. As such, the work is a summary of the story of the novel and a list of the characters which does not reveal anything new for the reader.

To my knowledge, there are only two PhD theses and a couple of articles in English on the Sorani novels; and *Nation and Novel: a study of Persian and Kurdish Narrative Discourse* (2003) by Ahmadzadeh is the first. His study is divided into two main parts: the first, which includes some two-thirds of his study, examines the rise

¹⁶ [Ê]sta le bwarî rexnesazî Kurdîda bwete mode ke rexnegir, bê ewey şarezayîkî pêwîstî lew tiore w rêbaze rexneyîanewe hebêt, be hanke hankewe deqêkî şîrî, yan edebî w hunerî dexate ber rehmetî tiorîyekewe, ke be lîngawqûçî le destî sêyem û çwaremî werîgirtûwe, yan be lasayîkirdnewey rexney nûsergelêkî Erebî w Farsî, yan be qirtandinî çend dêrêkî wek Drîda, Rolan Bart, Froyd û ... le kitêbêkî Farsî yan Erebîyewe ber debête gyanî deqêkewe w le qallibî deda.

of the Kurdish and Persian novel and its relationship with the creation of modern nation-states in the region. Then, he traces the factors which have contributed to the emergence and development of the Kurdish and Persian novel, for example: modernity and “modernization”, Iranian and Kurdish nationalism, printing, journalism, and translation of world literature into Persian and Kurdish languages. The second part of his work deals with the formal features and the “formation and construction of identities” in five Kurdish and five Persian novels (ibid. p. 23).

I shall not dwell on the first part of Ahmadzadeh’s work as it is beyond the scope of this study. However, I shall briefly discuss the second part which is concerned with a close reading of the novels and representation of identity in the Kurdish and Persian novelistic worlds. He divides his analysis into the subcategories, “characters”, “plot summary”, “point of view and style”, “time and place”, “the world of the novel”, and “identity” and examines each element separately without building an organic relationship between them. Tracing the construction of identity and especially national identity in the selected Kurdish novels, Ahmadzadeh reviews those dialogues, events, and conflicts which have affected the characters’ identities. However, in so doing, he mainly repeats the story of the novel already mentioned in the “plot summary” section, rather than conducting an analytic study in order to grasp “identity” and its complexities.

Another PhD thesis on Kurdish novels was submitted to the University of Sulaimani by Arif in 2009. His study is more analytical than other studies in the Kurdish departments of Iraqi Kurdistan universities, both by PhD students and lecturers. Yet, as in the Kurdish works, Arif’s study lacks cohesiveness since it is mechanically divided into various sections without a strong link between them. Moreover, he has failed to incorporate the often-quoted Western literary critics’ statements into his argument. Like Ahmadzadeh, Arif follows the typical online student study guides such as “CliffsNotes” and “Sparknotes” in approaching the Kurdish novels: he examines the novels by dividing them into categories of, among

others, plot, characterization, theme, setting, space, and time, in a disjointed manner.

1.4. (Magical) realism, modernism and postmodernism: a clarification

Unlike poetry, Kurdish fiction, in all its forms, is a non-native literary form. In the early part of the twentieth-century the Kurdish writers became familiar with short story and later with novel through Russian, Turkish, Persian, and Arabic works - new literary forms which, in turn, emerged and developed under the influence of Western fiction in the last decades of the nineteenth century and through twentieth-century. Kurdish novel, which is indirectly modelled on Western novel, though different at the same time, has to be studied in relation to and in contrast with the Western tradition of novel writing. The examined novels in this research take on a wide range of forms and aesthetic modes: from realism to magical realism to modernism and postmodernism. In this section I shall briefly discuss the stylistic and formal characteristics of these modes of writing and their underlying politics in the Western context, on the one hand, and the similarities and differences between them and their adopted forms in Kurdish novels, on the other.

Realism was the defining characteristic of the novel since its inception in the early eighteenth-century which differentiated it from the previous literary forms (Watt 1963, p. 10). This mode which dominated fiction until the beginning of the twentieth-century is grounded in the premise that, Ian Watt argues, "truth can be discovered by the individual through his senses" (ibid., p. 12). That is, for realism, "reality" and "truth" does exist out there which could be discovered through one's senses. Realist ideology, as Bran Nicol points out, is not simply just an "aesthetic practice": it is also "a system of belief which revolves around the conviction that the work of art not only is capable of replicating the "sensible" world ... but has a duty to do so" (2009, p. 18). The realist literature thus has opted to "objectively" reflect "reality" (to be a mimesis of reality) and attempted to sustain the illusion that what it reflects is a "slice of life" by way of utilizing especial techniques and strategies.

In order to give the illusion to the reader that they are dealing with a reflection of the real world, the realist novelists had to provide the *seemingly* “useless” and “futile” details to create what Roland Barthes called “the reality effect” (1989, p. 142), an effect underlying the realist narrative from the nineteenth century onwards.

Regarding language as a medium through which knowledge and “reality” could be transmitted, realist novels utilize language in a way that is familiar for the reader and thus masks its fictionality. As for stylistic characteristics and structure, the European nineteenth century realist novels have enjoyed a linear, cause-and-effect narration with a stigma at the basis of its plot and an conspicuous beginning, middle, and closure. By the end of the novel, all the conflicts are resolved, the enigmas are solved, and the characters fit back in the society. The supremacy of realist form which had dominated narrative in the West for almost two centuries started to vanish, though temporarily, in the first decade of the twentieth-century. A new generation of writers such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and D.H. Lawrence challenged and abandoned realist mode of writing and experimented with the new forms and techniques, which later became known as “modernism”.

Turn of the century saw dramatic changes in social relations and disillusionment with the promising prosperity of modernity, to be secured through unprecedented technological advancements. The writers like Marcel Proust, Woolf, and Joyce, among others, found conventional methods of literary realism incapable of conveying “the feel of modern life ongoing, the definitive quality of a person, or the changing forms of human relationships” (Matz, p. 24). Its plot, techniques, and compositional strategies could not “include the new experiences modernity offered up ... and could not get at the feelings and landscapes modernity created” (ibid., p. 23). Literature had to “modernize” itself, that is, Woolf writes, to depose “tyrant” of plot and narrative conventions and abandon writing about “unimportant things”. Instead, she invites the writers to “look within” where the “spirit of life” resides, to attempt to “come closer to life” by examining “an ordinary mind on an ordinary day” which “receives a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of the

steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms” (Woolf 1984, p. 160).

As the above argument shows, modernism and realism converge on the presupposition that there exists a “reality” beyond fiction. Yet their definition of that “reality” and their method to get at it is different. Jesse Matz lists some differences between the two aesthetic modes in their attempt to represent “truth”:

Rather than try for objectivity, modern novels emphasized *perspective*. Rather than try for some fully correct, neutral, finished version of a story, they limited their stories to some haphazard, incomplete, mistaken, or limited point of view. They did so in order to get at experiential truth. An objective narrator – apart from the action, fully informed – might get the whole truth, but the truth could not feel real, because no real person ever gets the whole truth. Much better to give the partial truth, because in real life truth is always only partial. So the omniscient, panoramic, impersonal standpoint gave way to the limited, focused, personal point of view. Objectivity gave way to focalization; the flawed perspective became the hallmark of truth. (p. 51)

The modern literature might have assumed the existence of “truth” beyond fiction but, unlike realist mode, it has never confined itself to reflecting that “truth” objectively. In his article “Capitalism, Modernism, and Postmodernism”, Terry Eagleton argues that the early twentieth century avant-garde modernism “spurned the notion of artistic ‘representation’ for an art which would be less ‘reflection’ than material intervention and organizing force” (1986, p. 133). Likewise, Matz notes that modern novel’s concern is much more than the question of representation: they “meant to face modernity with a sense that literary form could redeem it – that it could make a supreme difference to the very life of human culture” (2004, p. 10). However, before long, modernist novel lost its popularity and gave way to “antimodernist” literature in 1930s and later to postmodern novel.

The nature of the relationship between modernism and postmodernism is a matter of dispute: some critics argue that postmodernism is the continuation of modernism while some others see a rupture between the two. Detailed discussion of this subject is beyond the scope of this study, suffice it to say that the former position states that modernism and postmodernism share “self-consciousness” or “reliance,

however ironic, on tradition” (Hutcheon 2002, p. 27). The latter, however, points out a “fundamental differences” in “socio-economic organization; in the aesthetic and moral position of the artist; in the concept of knowledge and its relation to power; in philosophical orientation; in the notion of where meaning inheres in art; in the relation of message to addressee/addresser” (ibid.). Whether critics believe in a “model” of rupture or continuity between modernism and postmodernism, they would acknowledge some basic differences between the two.

Furthermore, there is a lack of consensus on what postmodernism is or when it emerged. That said, there are certain features which most critics agree on that differentiate postmodernism from other aesthetic modes. Eagleton’s definition of postmodernism and postmodernity succinctly summarizes the fundamental characteristics attributed to them by most critics:

The word Postmodernism generally refers to a form of contemporary culture, whereas the term postmodernity alludes to a specific historical period. Postmodernity is a style of thought which is suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity and objectivity, of the idea of universal progress or emancipation, of single frameworks, grand narratives or ultimate grounds of explanation. Against these enlightenment norms, it sees the world as contingent, ungrounded, diverse, unstable, indeterminate, a set of disunified cultures or interpretations which breed a degree of scepticism about the objectivity of truth, history and norms, the givenness of nature and the coherence of identities. ... Postmodernism is a style of culture which reflects something of this epochal change, in a depthless, decentred, ungrounded, self-reflexive, playful, derivative, eclectic, pluralistic art which blurs the boundaries between 'high' and 'popular' culture, as well as between art and everyday experience. (Eagleton 1996b, p. vii).

Postmodernism emerged and prevailed in a historical period different from that which gave rise to modernism: postmodernity is an era of late capitalism, consumerism and culture industry in which “the service, finance and information industries triumph over traditional manufacture” (Eagleton 1996b, p. vii). In short, Postmodernist aesthetics discards modernism’s stress on, among other things, “formalism, rationality, authenticity, depth, [and] originality” (Nicol 2009, p. 2), and instead favours, for example, parodying the original, decentring the centre, self-reflexivity, eclecticism, and plurality.

A number of critics consider magical realism as a “strain” of postmodernism (for example, McHale 1987; Hutcheon 2002 [1989]). This relation, Theo D’hae argues, is a “hierarchical” one “whereby the latter comes to denote a particular strain of the contemporary movement covered by the former” (1995, p. 194). As the word “magical realism” denotes, this aesthetic mode is produced by commingling “magic” with “reality”, in a way that the supernatural sounds “an ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence – admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism (Zamora and Faris 1995, p. 3). Magical realism, then, might be concerned with reality and its representation, yet it refutes the existence of a universal or singular “reality” and the possibility of its representation objectively. This eccentric policy is the underlying feature which differentiae it from literary realism, also a defining feature in postmodernism. Another key feature which further supports the idea that magical realism is a particular strain of postmodernism is its suitability for “exploring – and transgressing - boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic” (ibid.).

Whereas in the West novel has developed over a span of four hundred years or so and in a dialectical relationship with its immediate socio-political and economic context, it is rather a new and adopted literary form in all parts of Kurdistan as well as the neighbouring countries. Since the appearance of first Sorani Kurdish novel in 1961 up until early 1990s literary realism has been the dominant aesthetic mode of Kurdish novel. What Stefan G. Meyer says about Arabic novel’s development is, more or less, applicable to Kurdish novel: “the Arabic novel has followed a pattern of development that has echoed or paralleled the development of the Western novel ... albeit with a historically different time frame and at a highly accelerated rate (2001, p. 5). That said, while Arabic (as well as Persian and Turkish) novel have enjoyed a continual development in the past century and have experimented with aesthetic modes of (magical)realism, modernism, and postmodernism in a broader span of time, Kurdish novel has witnessed an intermittent development in a much shorter period.

We have to bear in mind that, given different historical, socio-political, and economic backgrounds, experimenting with, for example, modernism and postmodernism in Kurdish novel has yielded aesthetic modes different from its Western counterpart. Instead of a universal and singular model of modernism or postmodernism, as Meyer rightly notes, we may “speak of distinct literary modernisms [and postmodernisms] that have each evolved with a different set of characteristics, depending upon the nature of their historical antecedents” (2001, p. 1). Of the novels examined here, as I will show in detail in the chapters dealing with each novel, *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* appears to be a magical realist text for including fantastic and extraordinary events; however, they have not been utilized in a way to serve the ultimate purpose of magical realism, namely, transgressing boundaries and challenging authorities. The next three novels in this study have combined elements from two or more aesthetic modes: *Temî Ser Xerend* is, by and large, a realist text in terms of form and stylistic characteristics and at the same time bears similarities with mainstream modernist novels for dealing with alienation and the demise of high values in the society. *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* has successfully utilized postmodernist techniques of, among other ones, self-reflexivity, plurality, and uncertainty. Yet its predominant concern with the tragic consequences of Iranian uprising leading to 1979 revolution has made it politically engaged, which gives it a modernist tone. *Siweyla*, on the other hand, has drawn on modernist techniques of, for example, “limited point of view”, “flawed perspective”, and “stream of consciousness”, though it never reaches the pinnacle of Western literary modernism as James Joyce and Woolf did. Unlike *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* which has a great deal in common with literary postmodernism, the only salient postmodernist feature in *Siweyla* is the commingling of low and high culture. The last novel in this study is *Zindexew* which largely abides by the conventions of literary realism.

1.5. Theoretical framework

Being a textual and contextual analysis, this research mainly draws on two groups of theories to shed light on subjectivity in the novelistic world of the selected Kurdish novels: literary and feminist theories. In the light of writings of literary theorists like Woolf, Watt, Eagleton, McHale, Hutcheon, and Zamora and Faris on literary modes of realism, magical realism, modernism, and postmodernism, as I discussed in the previous section, this thesis has opted to examine the formal characteristics of the Kurdish novels under scrutiny here and their implications for subjectivity.

The Russian Mikhail M. Bakhtin, is another key literary critic in this thesis. I particularly employ his notions of “polyphony”, “heteroglossia”, and “dialogic” in order to examine the narrative structure of the selected novels with respect to the formation and representation of subjectivity. Bakhtin’s definition of novel would cast light on the characteristic features of these terms: “[T]he novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized” (1981, p. 262). Social speech types are “the internal stratification of any single national language into [among other ones] social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, [and] generic language” (ibid., p. 262) which comprises heteroglossia. These speech types could enter the novel with the help of “[a]uthorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, [and] the speech of characters” (ibid., p. 263). Thus, “[T]he novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech type and by the different individual voices that flourish under such conditions” (ibid.). It could be inferred from the above quotes that heteroglossia refers to the stratification of an apparently unified language, while polyphony, as its literal meaning, “many voicednes”, implicates, is composed of the “individual voices”, that is, character’s voices in the novel. Yet the mere presence of these voices does not make a novel dialogic. This could only be achieved on condition that the characterial voices would be in the

same plane with the authorial and narratorial voices with none taking precedence over the others. To put it this way, what makes a novel polyphonic and dialogic, according to Bakhtin, is the “freedom” and “independence” of its characters “in the very structure of the novel, vis-à-vis the author-or, more accurately, their freedom vis-à-vis the usual externalizing and finalizing authorial definitions” (1984, p.13).

The independence and freedom of the characters, however, does not mean that they act beyond their author’s will. On the contrary a character’s independence and freedom “is precisely what is incorporated into the author’s design. This design, as it were, predestines the character for freedom (a relative freedom, of course), and incorporates him as such into the strict and carefully calculated plan of the whole” (Bakhtin 1984, p. 13). Bakhtin points out that the character’s independence does not contradict the fact that s/he is a fictional being created by an author: “In fact there is no such contradiction. The character’s freedom ... exists within the limits of the artistic design and in that sense is just as much a created thing as is the unfreedom of the objectivized hero (1984, p. 64). It goes without saying that the characters of a novel are created by an author’s imagination. But creation, as Bakhtin argues, is different from invention: “Every creative act is bound by its own special laws, as well as by the laws of the material with which it works” (ibid.). Thus, the author of a polyphonic novel is required to create a character’s discourse “in such a way that it can develop to the full its inner logic and independence as someone else’s discourse, the word of the character himself” (ibid., p. 65). Whereas in a monologic novel the author’s voice becomes dominant and the character is denied of freely constructing his/her subjectivity, in a polyphonic novel, as the authorial and narratorial voices are not granted the ultimate authority, independent voices are created and, hence, a univocal constitution of subjectivity is avoided.

I also draw on Feminist theories to deconstruct subjectivity as a gendered entity. Human subject, as Butler notes, is transformed into a “gendered subject” from the very moment it acquires its subjectivity by entering into language and culture (1999, pp. 141-51). In the light of feminist theories, especially the ones which are grounded

in poststructuralist theories of subjectivity, this study opts to engage in deconstructing the essentialized “gendered subjectivity” by placing it in the context of discourses which constitute it. In what follows, I will briefly discuss the ways feminists have been dealing with the question of representation of women in literature and will also clarify which feminist criticism this research would turn to in order to examine gendered subjectivity in the novels under scrutiny.

Since Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* appeared in 1949, the feminist critics have been addressing, in one way or another, the question of the “representation” of women. De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* along with another pioneering text, Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* was concerned with the image of women as represented in the patriarchal representational system and male-authored literary texts. In *The Second Sex* de Beauvoir traces the mystification of femininity within biology, philosophy, psychology, history, and literature. In *Sexual Politics* Millett also conducts a sociological and literary analysis arguing that male domination and superiority in society is preserved by way of representing, and hence naturalizing, an image of woman as passive and subordinate. She turns to literature to uncover the “power-structured relationships, arrangements” underlying the seemingly natural sexual relations whereby women are controlled by men, a process which she calls “sexual politics” (Millett 1969, p. 23). For Millett, as Mary Eagleton rightly points out, literature was a site for “the creation, expression and maintenance of a sexual politics that oppressed women” (2007, p. 120). Hence, one can infer from Millett’s work that the emancipation of women required the deconstruction of their representation in literature.

During the 1970s, however, some feminist writers challenged the earlier works for focusing on literature written by men and the representation of women from the male’s perspective. Instead they opted to study literature written by women and for women which became known as “gynocriticism,” a term coined by *Elaine Showalter* in her essay “Towards a Feminist Poetics”. For example, Showalter argues that: “If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics, and the limited roles

women play in literary history, we are not learning what women have felt and experienced, but only what men have thought women should be” (1979, p. 27). However, this viewpoint raises a question: Given that the representational system or language has historically been a male dominated, how could women even begin to achieve their own literature without deconstructing the patriarchal representational economy? To deconstruct the “representation” of woman in literary texts written by men might not lead to a positive change in women’s status, yet it is a first step towards undoing the patriarchal system of representation; a necessary step that paves the way for women to rewrite gender and sexuality, to express their own desires, dilemmas, and experiences in “a literature of their own”. While the critical debate on women in the West has transcended the once dominated “image of women” tradition, it is still in its “infancy” in the Kurdish society.¹⁷ This is due to both the scarcity of literary texts, especially novel, written by women and the lack of a progressive feminism in the Kurdish society to beget a critical dialogue on the peculiarities of Kurdish women.

This thesis might resemble the early feminist criticisms which focused on the image of woman in male-authored literature, or, in Toril Moi’s words, the “Images of Women” criticism (2002, p. 41). Yet, despite having similarities with them, the current study bears considerable differences in its approach to literature and its underlying theoretical premises. The so-called “Images of Women” criticism shares with “realism” the idea that, in Pam Morris’s words, “realities do exist ‘out there’ beyond linguistic networks” which literature is required to reflect faithfully and objectively (2003, p. 93). This research, however, refutes such “empiricist” approach which, as Moi notes, “fails to consider the proposition that the real is not only something we construct, but a controversial construct at that” (2002, p. 44). Viewing “reality” as discursively constructed, thus, this study does not presuppose a pre-linguistic

¹⁷ The “images of women” criticism, as Fedwa Malti-Douglas notes, also dominates the Arab world. See Malti-Douglas (1991, p. 3). *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Word: Gender and Discourse in Arabo-Islamic Writing*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

femininity and masculinity against which the represented images of women and men are to be measured.

In the light of Judith Butler's notion of gender as "performativity," I will demonstrate how a woman *becomes* a woman and a man *becomes* a man in the novelistic discourse of the novels under scrutiny in this study. Butler denies any pre-linguistic existence of gender. For her, gender is a process which has neither origin nor end, it is something that we "do" rather than "are." Gender as "performativity," then, as Butler argues, "is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (1999, p. 43). Following her "genealogical critique" of gender, by extension, I seek to reveal the ways in which the novels here might perpetuate essentialist gendered subjectivity or destabilize it. As Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore in their introduction to *The Feminist Reader* have pointed out, any form of interpretation is always political and certain ways of reading would "inevitably militate for or against the process of change." Reading a work of art, they continue "is always to address, whether explicitly or implicitly, certain kinds of issues about what it says" (1997, p. 1). In the same vein, I shall examine gendered subjectivity in this novel from a feminist perspective and to do this I shall ask such questions as, "how the text represents women [and men], what it says about gender relations, [and] how it defines sexual difference" (ibid.).

1.6. Methodology

The earlier works which examined identity in the Kurdish novels, both Sorani and Kurmanji, have mainly focused on the national identity. However, this study seeks to fill the gap in current Kurdish literary criticism by exploring subjectivity in contemporary Kurdish society as it is represented in twenty-first century Sorani Kurdish novels. I prefer, in this analysis, to use the concept of subjectivity, rather than identity, because the former embodies one's various identities, for example, regional, national, gendered, and personal. Equally important, subjectivity is a

“critical concept [which] invites us to consider the question of how and from where identity arises, to what extent it is understandable, and to what degree it is something over which we have any measure of influence or control”. (Hall 2004, pp. 3-4). To that end, I shall interrogate subjectivity in its “broadest range of senses” which, as Regenia Gagnier in her investigation of Victorian self-representation argues includes:

First, the subject is a subject to itself, an “I,” however difficult or even impossible it may be for others to understand this “I” from its own viewpoint, within its own experience. Simultaneously, the subject is a subject to, and of, others [...] This construction of self in opposition to others, it will be seen, is a characteristic of groups, communities, classes, and nations, as it is of individuals, as in the self-conception of Chartists, or “the working classes,” or schoolboys, or ladies, or, today, “Women,” or “the Third World.” Third, the subject is also a subject of knowledge, most familiarly perhaps of the discourse of social institutions that circumscribe its terms of being. Fourth, the subject is a body that is separate (except in the case of pregnant women) from other human bodies; and the body, and therefore the subject, is closely dependent upon its physical environment. (1991, p. 8)

Gender and Nation are two significant “categories” or aspects of subjectivity in the novels under discussion which greatly affect the characters’ understanding of their subjectivity. Equally, these categories, more than any other aspect of subjectivity, determine the characters’ place in the world and their relation to their environment. This study’s close reading, in Daniel R. Schartz’s words, “within an historical contextual framework” (2005, p. 1) then, embarks on an examination of these “categories” of subjectivity, as well as other aspects, in and through language, ideologies and discourses that have been presented in the novels under discussion. I do not seek to strictly apply a given theory in this research, rather, I have chosen a pluralistic approach which allows me to examine subjectivity from different perspectives in the novelistic discourse of the selected texts. I frequently refer to the Russian literary critic, Bakhtin, in this study and in particular, I employ his notions of “polyphony”, “heteroglossia”, and “dialogism” in order to examine the narrative structure of the selected novels with respect to the formation and representation of subjectivity. I also employ narratology theories to analyse the structural and formal features of the novels. However, in order to understand any novel we need, as

Eagleton points out, to do more than interpret their symbolism, study their literary history and add footnotes about sociological facts which enter into them.” (2002, p. 6). Before that, we need to “understand the complex, indirect relations between those works and the ideological worlds they inhabit – relations which emerge not just in ‘themes’ and ‘preoccupations’, but in style, rhythm, image, quality and [...] *form*.” (ibid.). Exploring these ideologies and discourses in the novelistic world of the selected texts is the main concern of the present research. Understanding these ideologies, that is, “the ideas, values, and feelings by which men experience their societies at various times,” (Eagleton 2002, p. vii) would allow us a better grasp of subjectivity.

This study examines both the form and content of the selected novels in order to yield a deeper understanding of subjectivity. In a textual analysis of these novels I will show the relation between socio-political circumstances in Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan and literary forms and techniques employed by their authors, on the one hand, and their implication for the subjectivity represented in their novelistic world, on the other. Each chapter examines the literary mode of the novels against the Western or Latin American mainstream literary aesthetics which they have, by and large, modelled and what this might signify for the representation of subjectivity. This formal analysis is followed by a discursive analysis which seeks to deconstruct the hidden power-relations in the apparently neutral, among other ones, dialogues, descriptions, and metaphors which shapes and naturalizes certain modes of subjectivity.

1.7. The criteria for selecting the novels

The politically and linguistically fragmented and divided Kurdish community has made it difficult, if not impossible, for the development and establishment of a “unified” Kurdish literature. As Clemence Scalbert Yücel rightly notes, “the definition of literature is still very dependent on the political, nationalist and sociolinguistic context.” (2011, p. 184). Regardless of the reality of the fragmented and divided

nature of Kurdish literature, the Kurdish nationalists and a great number of Kurdish scholars emphasize its unity. As Scalbert Yücel argues, this reluctance on the part of these scholars is especially understandable taking into account the fact that “the nation has been negated for many decades, and since actual language diversity may reinforce the view that the nation is divided, the quest for unity may be stronger and is definitely reflected in anthologies” (2011, p. 176).

However, these anthologies cannot create national literature simply by assembling “different elements of a still scattered literature” (Scalbert Yücel, 2011, p. 177). In Ahmadzadeh’s words, to effect this, an “organic relationship” between literary circles in the different parts of Kurdistan, is needed (2003, p. 135). Until the last decade of the twentieth century there was very little contact between the Kurds from different parts of Kurdistan. Since 1991, the quasi-independent Iraqi Kurdistan has become a cultural centre bringing together Kurds from all parts of Kurdistan. In this respect, Ahmadzadeh writes:

[T]he level of cultural contacts between Iraqi and Iranian Kurds has reached a relatively official stage. Various ‘cultural delegations’ from Iranian Kurdistan have regularly visited Iraqi Kurdistan [...] The availability of Iraqi Kurdish journals in Iranian Kurdistan has influenced some of the young Kurdish writers in Iranian Kurdistan [...] In the Kurdish journals published in Iraqi Kurdistan there are many articles and translations which are written and done by Kurds from Iranian Kurdistan. (p. 142)

Scalbert Yücel also mentions that while “[u]ntil quite recently, effective relationships across the borders [of Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan] were absent,” the establishment of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) following the fall of Saddam in Iraq in 2003 “has eased relationships between the two sides of the border” (2011, p. 177). She maintains that,

Literary events in Iraqi Kurdistan tend to include increasing numbers of Kurdish writers, publishers and booksellers from Turkey, and nowadays several Kurdish writers or publishers travel regularly from Diyarbakır or Istanbul to Erbil or Dohuk [...]. At the same time, as travel becomes easier, cultural and literary festivals organized by pro-Kurdish municipalities in Turkey also create opportunities to invite writers from other parts of Kurdistan. (2011, p. 177)

All these rapid changes in the region could be promising for the formation of a “unified” Kurdish literature in future. Despite all the efforts so far, to create a Kurdish national literature, it is still, although to a lesser extent, divided and fragmented. It is true that the cross-border relationship between the Kurds has never been at such a high level in the twentieth century, yet there are still serious barriers in the way of establishing a Kurdish national literature. Except for Iraqi Kurdistan, there is a lack of a political system in the countries in which the Kurds live to secure their political, economic and cultural rights, along with the diversity of the Kurdish language. Kurmanji literature cannot find a sizable readership among Sorani speakers, nor can Sorani literature among the Kurmanji population. As such, it would be more acceptable to talk about Sorani literature and Kurmanji literature when it comes to mutual understanding and readership. Despite his argument that Kurdish literature is “discontinuous” and “fragmented”, Ahmadzadeh defines “Kurdish literature” as “all the literary texts which are written in the Kurdish language regardless of their particular dialect and geographical origins.” (2003, p. 135). Unlike him, in accordance with my argument, I choose only Sorani novels in this thesis due to the mutual effect the Iraqi and Iranian Kurdish writers have had on each other and due to the increasing cultural contacts between the two parts of Kurdistan which have, to some extent, created a unified Sorani literature, including the novel.

For this study I have chosen two novels from Iraqi Kurdistan and three others from Iranian Kurdistan, all of which were published in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Looking for ‘reliable methods’ to select the novels to suit his study, Ahmadzadeh in *Nation and Novel: A Study of Persian and Kurdish Narrative Discourse* cites five criteria: “1) the literary quality of the work 2) the general perception of the work in the society 3) the circulation of the work 4) the frequency of its editions and reprinting and 5) the expressed ideas and evaluations of the literary critics” (2003, p. 31). We should, however, bear in mind that these methods are neither objective nor reliable. A text that has drawn a considerable number of critics’ attention or that has been circulated in large numbers does not necessarily have a

better “quality” than other texts which have not gained a similar amount of attention. In effect, as Eagleton argues, “the value judgments by which [literature] is constituted” are not only “historically variable, but that these value-judgments themselves have a close relation to social ideologies. They refer in the end not simply to private taste, but to the assumptions by which certain social groups exercise and maintain power over others” (1996a, p. 14).¹⁸ Equally, I do not claim that the novels in this study are the best Sorani Kurdish novels, or that they have been selected in a completely objective way.

Due to different political contexts in Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan, with the former enjoying some sort of autonomy, the criteria for selecting the novels from these regions was not exactly the same. Since 1991 education has been conducted in the Kurdish language at all school levels. While there was only one university in Iraqi Kurdistan before 1991, there are now fourteen government and twelve private universities.¹⁹ Nine of the government universities offer programmes in the Kurdish language, and literature at B.A., M.A., and PhD levels. The school curriculum and university programmes of Kurdish literature together with tens of literary journals and magazines have all, in one way or another, formed a literary canon in Iraqi Kurdistan. The two novels that I have selected from this part of Kurdistan have been written by novelists who have definitely secured a decent place for themselves in this canon. However, I did not include these novels in this study merely because of their popularity or the amount of attention they have received both from critics and readers. I was interested in them because they seem to distance themselves from the realist Kurdish novels and to experiment with new forms and narrative techniques (I shall further discuss it in the chapters which deal with these novels). I wanted to see whether the different mode of writing has any implications for the type

¹⁸ In the preface of *The English Novel: an Introduction*, Eagleton says: “I must apologize for confining myself so high-mindedly to the reality canon, but this was determined by the need to discuss authors whom students are at present most likely to encounter in their work.

¹⁹ See the Ministry of Higher Education website for the list of these universities and further information about them: <http://www.mhe-krq.org/ku/node/112>

of subjectivity presented in these works.²⁰ Without education in Kurdish and universities to offer programmes in Kurdish literature, it would be pointless to talk about a literary canon in Iranian Kurdistan. With a handful of Iranian Kurdish novels published in the twenty-first century, it was not a difficult task to choose three novels for this study, especially taking into account that most Kurdish novels have a simple narration and structure. As in the case of Iraqi Kurdish novels, I chose the novels with innovative forms and techniques and more complicated structures.²¹

1.8. Dissertation outline

The following Chapters are organized on the basis of the authors' home region; that is, the novels from Iraqi Kurdistan are placed immediately after each other in Chapters Two and Three and these are followed by the other novels, from Iranian Kurdistan, in Chapters Four to Six. The reason for this is that the novels written by novelists from the same region, to a great extent, are concerned with the same historical events and social issues. However, the order of the chapters does not indicate any historical or literary significance as all the novels were published within a three-year period, from 2002 to 2005.

Chapter two is concerned with the narrative structure of Ali's *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan* [The City of White Musicians] (2005), the historical framework in which the novel unfolds and the implications for the characters' national identity and subjectivity. The chapter argues that *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan* is a self-reflexive novel with a plot that abounds with magical and fantastic elements. However, these formal techniques are not used by Ali to challenge the existing order and create a

²⁰ This is not to say that they were the only novelists in Iraqi Kurdistan or the first ones to experiment with modernist and postmodernist innovative techniques.

²¹ The selected novels are as follows: From Iraqi Kurdistan there are: *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan* [The City of White Musicians] (2005) by Bachtyar Ali and *Temî Ser Xerend* [The Misty Canyon] (2003) by Sherzad Hassan; *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* [The Birds Soaring on the Wind] (2002) by Ata Nahae; *Siweyla* [a female proper name and the name of a character in the novel] (2004) by Sharam Qawami; and *Zindexew* [Nightmare] (2003) by Fatah Amiri are the three novels from Iranian Kurdistan.

different world in his novel, but to reproduce and reinforce the already existing power structure in Iraq's Kurdish society. In order to do this, the chapter examines how different voices and discourse are orchestrated in the novel.

Chapter three examines how subjectivity is affected and transformed under severe conditions as well as the role of, for example, folkloric and religious discourses in the formation of subjectivity in Hassan's *Temî Ser Xered* [The Misty Canyon] (2003). I argue that Hassan has produced a formally conventional work with politically radical implications by combining the realist and modernist narrative techniques and epistemological premises. This chapter also explores the relationship between the characters and a transformed society following the civil war. It shows that the conflict between the modern Kurdish individual as represented in *Temî Ser Xerend's* protagonist and his transformed society would never resolve and leads to his frustration and alienation.

Chapter four outlines the radical and unconventional methods of "representation" in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* [The Birds Soaring on the Wind] (2002). It examines the modernist and postmodernist narrative techniques and compositional strategies which are used to deconstruct the perception of reality and subjectivity as well as to convey a sense of indeterminacy and relativism. The chapter argues that Nahae's novel is political and at the same time it experiments with innovative forms and techniques.

Chapter five also examines the narrative structure of *Siweyla* (2004) written by Qawami with the focus on its characterization and its representation of subjectivity. It argues that the novel has a fragmented and disjointed plot in tune with its "stream of consciousness" as the dominant mode of narration. *Siweyla* presents a significant period in the modern history of Iranian Kurdistan, that is, the 1979 revolution and the years following it. The chapter examines the characters' subjectivity in a rapidly changing environment. It also explores both the prevailing pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary discourses, and their implications for the represented subjectivity.

Chapter six is concerned with the premise underlying the representation, that is, the narrative techniques and strategies used in the novel to achieve it and its implication for subjectivity. It examines the nature of the relationship between the main characters and their society and the representation of the Kurds' "other" in the novel. The chapter shows that *Zindexew* shares the premise with the realist novels that the reality, out there, could be reflected objectively. To do that, Amiri presents a detailed description of the external features of places and characters in order to evoke a sense of certainty and familiarity for the reader. It argues that while the main characters in the novel are shown to be in conflict with the political system, they are in tune with the cultural and social norms and values. It also demonstrates that the novel relativizes and deconstructs the national identity but reproduces and reinforces a conservative gendered identity through validating the discourses which support the status quo.

CHAPTER TWO

A prophet for our time in Bachtyar Ali's *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*: magical realism and subjectivity

Bachtyar Ali was born in 1960 in the city of Sulaimani in Iraqi Kurdistan and during the early eighties, he entered the University of Sulaimani in the same city. At that time he participated in an anti-governmental demonstration which was violently suppressed by the Iraqi regime; and he was among the wounded students shot by the police force. Consequently, he left the university and in 1983 decided to migrate to a European country, which ended in failure. Twelve years later he packed his luggage for the second time and in 1994 he left Iraq for Germany. By that time three years had passed since Iraqi Kurdistan's de-facto autonomy had been established in 1991. Yet a full-blown civil war between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (PDK) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the two main Kurdish parties in Iraqi Kurdistan, had brought the region to the brink of collapse.²² The situation at home, together with a long-standing desire to live in a Western European Country, prompted the young Ali to immigrate. However, it is easy to detect that most of his novels rehearse those dark years in the history of Iraqi Kurdistan and the socio-political aftermath of the civil war.

Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan is the continuation of a formal and thematic shift in the novels published in Iraqi Kurdistan after 1991, the year in which the Iraqi Kurds established an autonomous region known as the Kurdistan Regional Government. This turning point in the political life of Iraqi Kurds brought about a radical change

²² The Iraqi Kurdish civil war broke out in 1994 between PDK and PUK over the control of the financial resources of the liberated Iraqi Kurdistan (see McDowall 2004, pp. 387-91). This cruel war, which was called "birakojî" [fratricide] by the Iraqi Kurds, lasted for over four years, nearly destroyed all the historic achievements of the Iraqi Kurds and made people extremely frustrated with Kurdish nationalism.

both in the quantity and quality of novels. Before 1991, Kurdish novelists in Iraqi Kurdistan mainly employed the novel form to propagate Kurdish nationalist discourse and demonstrate the social and cultural problems in their society; they assumed it to be their prophecy to awaken and enlighten people and to demonstrate the legitimacy of Kurdish nationalism.²³

After 1991, Kurdish novelists focused more on the formal aspects of the novel and attempted to reflect the complexities of modern life. A great number of these novelists discarded the realist mode of narration and experimented with other literary modes in order to better portray a new subjectivity in a different socio-political situation in Iraqi Kurdistan. Among them, the Magical realist novels of Latin America together with modernist novels greatly influenced younger novelists (for more information, see Reşîd, 2007).²⁴ Magical realism is especially popular in Iraqi Kurdistan. Before Ali, other writers such as, 'Ebdulla Serac and Kake Mem Botani experimented with this narrative mode. Yet Ali is believed, by some critics, to be the most successful Kurdish novelist writing in this genre.

Ali's first novel, *Mergî Taqaney Dûhem* [The Death of the Second Only Child], was published in 1996. Soon after this he became popular, mainly among Iraqi Kurds, and today some critics deem him to be one of the best of the Kurdish writers. He has been highly praised by some critics for being a ground-breaking novelist who has successfully incorporated magical realism into the Kurdish novel.²⁵ Ahmadzadeh, for example, argues that magical realism in Ali's works has, "become

²³ The novels published before 1991 in Iraqi Kurdistan mainly reflected and criticized the social and political situation of Kurdish society, that is, its poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, and suppression by the Iraqi government. Of these novels one can mention *Janî Gel* (1976) written by Ibrahim Ehmed; *Kuçî Sûr* (1999) by Heme Kerim Arif; *Kwêxa Sêwê* (1986) by Ezizî Melay Resh, *Kangay Bella* (1988) by Hisam Berzinci, *Helkişan berew Lûtke* (1989) by Ebdolla Serrac, and *Hiç* (1991) by Xosrew Caf.

²⁴ There might be no Kurdish novel in Iraqi Kurdistan that has greatly complied with modernist narratives like those of James Joyce and Virginia Wolf. Yet, even those novelists still writing in a realist mode of narration have distanced themselves from a purely Victorian classical realism's characterization, plot, and ending, for example, and have incorporated some modernist narrative techniques into their novels.

²⁵ Sherzad Hassan, an Iraqi Kurdish novelist, for example, contended that "Bachtyar deserves the Nobel prize" [in literature] (2006, p. 14, cited in Ahmadzadeh 2009, p. 288).

a native device to narrate the social and political situation of the Kurds and the story of individual lives in such a context.” (2011, p. 298). Ali’s magical realist novel, he continues, which aroused “unprecedented interest” among Kurdish readers “shows how a discourse of disturbed realism can be successful in highlighting the bitter realities of a Kurdish experience” (ibid. p. 299). Equally, Arif holds that although Ali is not the pioneer of experimentation with the magical realist mode in Kurdish literature, yet he is the most successful writer that “introduces magical realism to a full extent” (2009, p. 128).

On the other hand, Ali has faced severe criticism by other critics for the narrative structure of his works and his misunderstanding and misapplication of magical realism. Of these critics one can refer to Sharam Qawami and H’eme S. H’esen. Qawami argues that the oft-quoted fantastic and extraordinary events in Ali’s *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* [The City of White Musicians] are arbitrary and do not serve the plot (2007, pp. 6-9). He also criticizes this novel for being monologic and for its polarization of the characters, preferring one group to the other because he shares the implied author’s ideas, or vice versa. (ibid., pp. 156-7). Like Qawami, H’esen holds that Ali has failed to achieve polyphony in his novels by solely “creating a number of characters with different names but common worldviews.” (2007, p. 51). Furthermore, he argues that the fantastic and magical elements in Ali’s novels sound lack veracity as they are not grounded in “mythology” and “national folklore” (ibid., p. 56).

In this chapter I shall explore the discursive formation of subjectivity by conducting a close reading of the novel within the socio-political and historical contexts against which its story unfolds. To that end, in the first section I wish to examine the “self-reflexive” aspect of Ali’s *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* [The City of White Musicians] (2005). I shall also “situate” it, in Nasrin Rahimieh’s words, “within the currents of magical realism” (1990, p. 6) in order to explore its magical elements in the light of Lois P. Zamora and Wendy B. Faris’s and Maggie A. Bowers’s definition of magical realism. In the second section I shall look at the ways of dealing

with characterization and the formal techniques Ali employs to present the characters and, hence, their subjectivities. The third section deals with the representation of Womanhood in the novel. In the light of Judith Butler's and Kate Millet's writings on gender, I examine how gendered identity is constructed in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*. The evolution or transformation of the characters is another issue that is covered in the fourth section. Drawing on Bakhtin's notion of the "polyphonic" novel, I shall examine the sudden changes that the characters undergo. The last section discusses the representation of Kurdistan in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* and its implications for the Kurdish national identity.

2.1. *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* - a self-reflexive magical realist novel: the realm of new subjectivities?

As he does in previous novels, in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* Ali employs magic and fantastic elements to express, among other things, his political, cultural, and aesthetic concerns. The novel opens in an airport in Germany in which Şarox Mehdî Şarox, a ghost-like character, mysteriously meets E'î Şerefyar, the external narrator, and asks him to deliver a parcel to a woman named Rewşenî Mistefay Seqiz in Kurdistan. However, when he contacts her and asks for her address to deliver the parcel, she explains that they want him to write the story of Celadet the Dove. From a very young age Celadet shows a great enthusiasm for music and is magically able to play Western classical music without any education in this field. By the time that he is about eighteen years old, the Iraqi regime launches a massive attack on the Kurds in which tens of thousands of them are taken away from their homes to southern deserts of Iraq and massacred. Celadet is also captured and taken away to the South. However, his magical music saves his life and he refugees in a remote city in the South of Iraq, known as "the city of yellow dusts". There he witnesses and narrates the persecution, displacement, genocide, and the mass graves of the

victims of the Anfal campaigns.²⁶ In this city he meets Daliya Siracedîn, a young woman who works in a brothel. She, together with Dr. Mûsa Babek, protects Celadet from the Iraqi regime. Along with some other characters they opt to challenge both Saddam's authoritarianism and later the brutality of Kurdish parties, after a de facto Kurdish government was established in 1991, by way of spreading and protecting sublime art and music, mainly its Western form. He is kidnapped and killed by one of the main Kurdish political parties for the precious secret files at his disposal which exposes the details of the massacre of the Kurds by Saddam. Thereafter he elevates from Celadet the Dove to Celadet the Phoenix and continues his prophecy of saving "true art".

The novel, composed of a prologue and five chapters, is narrated by E'îf Şerefiyar, an external third person narrator, and Celadet the Dove, the first person narrator and protagonist. The first, third, and last chapters are narrated by Şerefiyar, the second, by Celadet and the fourth by both Şerefiyar and Celadet. The novel is set in various locations in Iraq, including Kurdistan, Baghdad, and the deserts of southern Iraq, and covers a period between the last years of the nineteen-eighties and the early nineties.

Addressing the reader in the prologue, the narrator, Şerefiyar, recounts his strange meeting with Şarox in the airport and how it led to the writing of this novel. He also discusses the formal and narratological characteristic features and the extraordinary events that the reader will face in the course of the novel. *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*, then, could be classified as a magical realist novel and, at the same time, a metafiction or self-reflexive writing, as I will demonstrate below.

²⁶ Anfal, originating from a "sura" in Quran with the same name, literally means "the spoils of war", refers to a series of eight military campaigns, from 1987 to 1988 during which the Iraqi Kurds were "trucked southward to the Arab heartland of Iraq in large numbers and then disappeared" (Black 1993, pp. xiv-xv). Some 100,000 to 180,000 persons, mostly women and children, were massacred during these campaigns (see Kelly. J. M. (2008) *Ghosts of Halabja: Saddam Hussein and the Kurdish Genocide*. London: Greenwood Publishing Group; Black, G. (1993) *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal campaign against the Kurds*. London: Human Rights Watch; Yildiz, K. (2004) *The Kurds in Iraq: The Past, Present and Future*. London: Pluto Press.

Bran Nicol identifies three elements that “dominate” the postmodern texts (2009, p. xvi). One of these elements is found in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*, that is: “a self-reflexive acknowledgement of a text’s own status as constructed, aesthetic artefact” (ibid.) known as metafiction. Metafiction, literally meaning “fiction about fiction” (Hawthorn 2010, p. 235), is a new term, but its practice is, at least, as old as writing the novel (Waugh 1984, p. 5). Patricia Waugh argues that metafiction “is not so much a sub-genre of the novel as a tendency within the novel which operates through exaggeration of the tensions and oppositions inherent in all novels: of frame and frame-break, of technique and counter-technique, of construction and deconstruction of illusion” (ibid. p.14). It foregrounds the state of their “fictitiousness”, as Ali does in this novel:

The novel you are reading now is the result of a fantastic and weird meeting I had with that boy [Celadet the Dove] a few years ago [...] that was the first time that I accepted to write a book which I had seen its real hero, and to reduce my role as the author to give a remarkable power to one of the heroes. The only thing you need to know is the odd agreement I made from the very beginning with Celadet the Dove: that I have the right to narrate parts of the story and also revise the parts he was going to write in terms of style and structure (p 10).²⁷

Readers are reminded that they are dealing with a constructed, fictional world as well as the significance of “perspective”, and “voice” in the construction and representation of events and characters.

The metafictional novel, as Waugh argues in *Metafiction*, operates an “opposition” between “the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion” (1984, p 6). In so doing, it aims to challenge the idea of objectively representing or mirroring the world outside fiction and reminds the

²⁷ (e)m romaney emrro êwe deyxwênnewe, berhemî ew çaw pêkewtine xeyallî u seyre bû ke çend sallêk lemew ber le nêwan min û ew kurre da ruy da [Celadet the Dove] (...) ewe yekem car bû qebûllî bikem kitêbêk binûsim pallewane rasteqînekey binasim û bibînim, qebûlî bikem rollî xom wek nûser kurt bikemewe u desellatêkî zor bidem be yekêk le pallewanekan. Teniya şitêk êsta pêwîste bîzanin ew rêkewtine seyreye ke le seretawe le gell celdetî kotir da bestim, ewey min mafî ewem hebêt, beşêkî h’îkayeteke bigêrmewe, mafî ewem hebêt lew beşane da ke ew deygêrêtewe deskarî darriştin û şewazî h’îkayet û siroştî ziman bikem.

reader that it is merely “a combination of words on a page that we must make sense of by relating them to other texts, not the external worlds.” (Nicol 2009, p. 16). In *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*, however, Ali gives a brief account of how he decided to write this novel and share its writing with the protagonist. Apart from that, not only do we fail to see any feature common to metafictional writings, but also, the novel follows the conventions of realist fiction, in Waugh’s words, by “concealing” or “mystifying” the power structure (1984, p.11).

At the same time, as in modernist fiction, a rejection and critique of the realist mode of narration underlies the contemporary metafictional writing (Waugh 1984, p. 7; Nicol 2009, p. xvi). In modernist fiction the “struggle for personal autonomy can be continued only through opposition to existing social institutions and conventions”, but, the foci in metafictional writings have shifted to “their own medium of expression, in order to examine the relationship between fictional form and social reality” (Waugh 1984, p.11). That is, writers of metafictional novels have directly targeted language as their “object of ‘opposition’” to uncover its role in “concealing” or “mystifying” the power structures (ibid.). This is done, according to them, by a perpetual process of “naturalization” in the realistic novels “whereby forms of oppression are constructed in apparently ‘innocent’ representations” (ibid.).

If we accept that the underlying features of a metafictional writing are its “self-reference” and deconstruction or demystification of the natural and taken-for-granted power structures, *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*, would not be regarded as metafictional, since it does not focus on its medium of expression, that is, the language employed. Neither does the novel address readers directly, asking them questions, or challenging their conventions of reading, as is sometimes the case with many metafictional novels. Nor does Ali seek to deliver to its reader, as Waugh argues, that which metafictional writings tended to do, since, “reality or history are provisional: no longer a world of eternal verities but a series of constructions, artifices, impermanent structures” (1984, p 7). Neither does Ali foreground the characters as fictional, constructed entities. Rather, in the course of the novel he

conceals the fictional and constructed nature of, among other things, the characters' subjectivities, truth, beauty, and justice. As such, Ali constructs a "fictional illusion" which not only conceals that illusion, but also creates a "world of eternal verities". Even the magical realist element in the novel, as we shall see, is not employed by the author in order to highlight and transgress the hierarchical power structure in the world outside his fiction.

Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan abounds with the elements of hyperbole, fantasy, and magic which have, ostensibly, made it a magical realist fiction. Playing a kind of music similar to that of composers such as Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, Ish'âq and his two students, Celadet and Serheng, are able to greatly impress other characters in the novel and at times do extraordinary things such as save people's lives. "One night they played music for an injured person who was bleeding profusely; after a few minutes his bleeding stopped and he stood up. Another night, they played music for a lame man who had not been able to walk for years. Tranquilized by the music, he stood up and danced on his crippled legs" (p. 36).²⁸ Yet, Kurds, and especially ordinary Kurds, are rarely aware of such miraculous "healing". Moreover, readers might suspect that most Kurds might not even enjoy or understand Western classical music; and that its amazing power as it is depicted here, might seem quite weird and improbable to a Kurdish reader.

Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan does not share the core characteristic feature of magical realist novels, that is, incredible events happening in a "realist matter-of-fact", with the "realist tone of its narrative when presenting magical happenings" (Bowers 2004, p. 3). Whereas, for example, Latin American, Indian, and African novelists experimenting with magical realism (mainly from those countries which

²⁸ Şewêk mosîqaiyan bo jinêk lêda ke be ser janewe bû, mosîqakeyan karîgerîyêkî efsûnawî le ser kar asanî hebû bo janekanî, şewêkyan mosîqayan bo birîndarêk lêda ke berdewam xwênî le ber derroy, paş kemêk xwênpijanî westa u hestaye ser pê. Şewêkî dike mosîqayan bo piyawêkî şel lêda ke demê sall bû neydetwanî birrwat. Le katî parçe awazêkî mest da helldestaye ser pê u le ser qaçe iflîcekanî seamy dekird.

have been colonized in the past) “are concerned with the incorporation of oral culture and indigenous myth into the dominant Western cultural form of the novel” (Bowers, 2004, p. 48), in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* Ali does not draw on Kurdish mythology and folklore. Accordingly the extraordinary happenings in the novel appear to be more like fabrication than, in Rushdie’s words, a “commingling of the improbable and mundane” (1982, p. 9). In effect, the magical elements in the iconic magic realist novels by, say, Alejo Carpentier, Gabriel García Márquez, and Salman Rushdie, are rooted in indigenous mythology, which makes them seem familiar for their reader.²⁹ The return to native tradition by magic realist writers of Latin America (as well as other post-colonial countries), Bowers notes, was a “shift away from a position of marginal cultural production in which all things European were esteemed”. Although, like other colonized countries, Iraq and its Kurdish region were exploited by Britain both during the mandatory period and after Iraq’s independence in 1932, Ali in his works does not turn to this certain form of magical realism which is grounded in indigenous mythology and folklore to oppose the hegemony of Western cultural manifestations. On the contrary and ironically, by using magical realism, he reinforces that position of “marginal cultural production” in which everything European is viewed with awe, which will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Apart from the lack of a magical realism rooted in native tradition, *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* is filled with repeated and unnecessary extraordinary events that seem to the reader to be arbitrary and appear to have no real purpose (cf. Qawami 2007, pp. 7-9). For example, the narrator describes the supernatural power of Ish’aq, Celadet, and Serheng as follows: “they were doing magic with their music, rain out of sun, were making sunshine out of rain, turning the night into day and the other way

²⁹ For example, in Carpentier’s magic realist novel, *The Kingdom of this World*, the shape-shifter characters which “change shape at will and are able to fly away when they die” are taken from “West African mythology” (Bowers 2004, p. 35). Likewise Rushdie in his works “draws on Indian mythological epic such as Mahabharata” (ibid., p. 54).

around [...] and some nights with the help of music they were flying from one side of the mountain to the other.” (p. 37). A few pages later, however, they descend from the high place of the prophets where they believe themselves capable of doing extraordinary things. When surrounded by some Iraqi soldiers they find that they are absolutely helpless and, to the reader’s surprise, they cannot work their magic and are easily arrested by them. The reader might question why they did not play their music to stun the soldiers; and as there is no explanation for the failure to work a “miracle”, this seems rather odd. Since the author has, up until this point in the novel, endowed these characters with a supernatural gift, why, when it is most needed, are they suddenly turned into normal people bereft of extraordinary abilities?

There are the transgressive and subversive aspects of magical realism, such as, “their in-between-ness, their all at oneness that encourages resistance to monological political and cultural structures” (Zamora and Faris 1995, p. 6) that has made it so popular among the writers. It seems that under the influence of writers from, for example, Latin America such as García Márquez, Ali draws on magical realism as a suitable form for political resistance. Like García Márquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* ([1967]1970), Ali in *Şarî Mosîqare Sîpiyekan* utilizes magical realism both to reflect the civil war, corruption, dictatorship and authoritarianism in a poetic and unrealistic way and also to present an alternative reality. However, closer inspection will prove the otherwise: on the one hand, he criticizes, for example, widespread corruption and authoritarianism amongst the Kurdish parties ruling over Iraqi Kurdistan after 1991, but on the other he creates an alternative world in his novel which is founded on authoritative and monologic definition of, among others, Kurdish nationalism, beauty, art, justice, and subjectivity. Granting a partial supernatural power to Celadet, Ali has created a character who has the illusion that he is the prophet of modern times, the messenger of “true” and “eternal” art and beauty (see, for example, pp. 36, 131, 248, 416, 425) and, as such, he views himself as the carrier of the solitary path to eternity and happiness, as other prophets have done before him. Addressing the reader, Celadet remarks,

I assure you that immortality is not that something is remembered and thought of still, after death; it is, rather, a place, a big city, a district of the undiscovered districts of existence [...] that we can travel to. It is a city nearby; it is with us [...] Satan's job is to imprison us in the slots of time and small places so that we won't be able to travel to the very end of the world, beyond these places and times (pp. 131-2).³⁰

This city is that of the white musicians, a city, says Celadet, "that is neither limited to beautiful pieces of music, nor immortal and nice poems, nor Mozart, Shakespeare, and Goran;³¹ [...] but also there is a place for those people with huge suffering, with great wishes and desires, with big dreams" (p. 420).³² Celadet, then, promises a heaven beyond this world where only artists and those poor people who cannot fulfill their dreams of creating true art are allowed to enter. The rest of the world, those who have not conceded to his prophecy, infallibility, and world view, have no place in this city.

By overemphasizing Western music and connecting it to eternity from cover to cover, *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan* downgrades Kurdish music by ignoring it. The only exception is Mezher Xaliqî whose name is mentioned along with Western musicians (see p. 277).³³ However, the author seldom mentions his name nor does he offer any details of his artistic life and works. Yet, Western classical composers, and above all Mozart, are always at the tip of his pen. Below I will examine the representation of Western classical music and its significance in the construction of subjectivity, and a new world.

³⁰ Min dillniyatan dekem cawîdan ewe niye ke le dway mirdiniîş ême le yadî şitêk da bîn û bîrman neçêtewe u hemîşe bigerrêynewe serî, cawîdan şitêkî tire, cawîdan şwêne, şarêkî gewreye, herêmeke le herême nedozrawe u nadiyarekanî wicûd ... ke deşêt seferî bo bikeyn. Cawîdan şarêkî nizîke le xomanewe, le Gellman daye ... Ehrîmen îşî eweye ke ême le naw satewextekan da, le naw cêga biçûke kanda weha dîl bikat, tiwanay ew geştaman nebêt berew ew berî em şwên û katane.

³¹ Abdullah Goran (1904-1962) is known as the father of modern Kurdish poetry.

³² [t]enya Mozart û Şikispîr û Goran nabînêtewe [...] bellkû ew mirovaneş debînêtewe ke hellgirî azarî gewren, hellgirî oxzgey kujrawin, hellgirî xewnî gewren.

³³ Mezher Xaliqî (1938-) is a renowned Iranian Kurdish singer.

2.2 Mozart: a divine magical music

In this novel, Western classical music, and above all Mozart's is highly valorised and represented as the "true" and only acceptable form of music (for example, see pp. 250 and 427). Addressing a band of musicians, called *Belemî Befir*, Celadet says, "the biggest catastrophe ... is, not to differentiate between Mozart and the trivial and untalented musicians" (p. 425).³⁴ Celadet and his army of "true art" saviours strive to avoid what they see as low quality music in order to achieve music which is so sublime that it could only be found, they claim, in Western classical music. However, throughout the novel the characters do not clarify what characterizes music that is classified as true, magical, and enthralling. Neither do they outline the technical and formal features of Western classical music. Rather they try to introduce this form of music as a means through which one can achieve eternity and immortality. Yet it is not clear what is inherent in Western classical music that connects it to supernatural elements and is lacking in other forms of music.

According to Ish'aq, to become a musician one has to purify his soul through becoming one with nature: "We have to reunite with wind, rain, and sun. Our body is a river in which the wind and sun flows if only you abandon other things and open your eyes. Day after day the sun penetrates a bit deeper into your soul and body, day after day the rain penetrates deeper and speaks to your soul" (p. 23).³⁵ According to this method, vanquishing sensual desire is the first and foremost step to learning Mozartian music and becoming a true musician, as it is with Sufism, since, "the only way that can lead to the emergence of a noble character" is nothing but "devoting oneself to the purification of the soul" (Geoffroy 2010, p. 12). Sedgwick's is another definition that will further serve to illustrate the point as he perceives Sufism

³⁴ Karesatî here gewrey miletêk ... eweye ke le nêwan Mozart û ew mosîqare bê behre u biçûkane da çiyazwazîyêk nemênêt.

³⁵ Debêt pêş hemû şîtêk peywendîman le gell ba u baran û hetaw da girê bideynewe, leşman cogeyêke şitekanî piya tê deperrêt, bay piya derrwat, hetawî piya derrwat, ger sebir biken, ger waz le şitekanî tir bihênin û xotan bikenewe. Roj dway roj hetaw tozêk qûlltir be nawtan da deçête xwar, roj dway roj baran kemêk ziyatir pêstekantan debrêt û le nawewe qisetan le gell da dekat.

as “a practical program for learning to control the nafs.”³⁶ Once the nafs has been subdued and a space made for God in the heart, God may be expected to fill that place with Himself.” Replacing “God” with “Mozart” we can, more or less, summarize Ish’aq’s approach to Mozartian music as: “once the nafs has been subdued and a space made for Mozart in the heart, Mozart may be expected to fill that place with Himself”. Hence, Mozart can simply be learnt through meditation, inspiration and subduing carnal desires, without spending years of hard work in order to master Western classical music.

In the light of the above comparisons, one might say that in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyeke* music is viewed as a kind of Sufism in the sense that it is a path to eternity and true beauty, and musicians, like the Sufi, take that path. As Haeri puts it, “Sufism is primarily concerned with the heart that reflects the truth which exists within it, beyond time and in time. The Sufi is the whole human being. He recognises that his reality is beyond time and space” (1990, p. 27). Like the Sufi, the Musician, as is the case with Ish’aq and Celadet, is someone who “should not be doomed to live within the incidents, time, history, and so forth, [...] [someone who] is only connected to eternity” (p. 21).³⁷ The Musician has been bestowed a place above other people, a place above history, time and place, that is, he is God-like. His vocation is to prophesy, to bring happiness to human beings by playing such music that God would forgive their sins: “we have to play such music”, says Ish’aq to his two students, “that has never been heard before. We must make God forgive not only our sins but those of all human beings”. (p. 30).³⁸ Like Sufis, the musicians that follow Mozart’s music believe that there is a special relationship between them and God. Haeri argues that the Sufi is “an enlightened being”, (1990, p. 26), whom “God has enabled to purify

³⁶ Carnal self

³⁷ Mosiqarekan nabêt meh’kûm bin be jîyan le naw rûdaw û zeman û mêjû u em şitane da [...] ew teniya peywendî le gell ebediyet da heye.

³⁸ [ş]itêk bijenîn ne asiman, ne aw pêş ême neyanbîstibêt, debêt xoda wa lê bikeiyn be awazêk le hemû gonahekanman xoş bêt, teniya gonahekanî xoman na, gonahî hemû ademîzadekan.

his 'heart' and to establish his relationship with Him and His creation through treading upon the correct path" (1990, p.3).

Ali has taken Sufistic ideas of "inner awakening", "purification of the heart", asceticism and truth seeking, as described by Haeri, and, ostensibly, has provided a new perspective on music, and a new understanding and representation of sophisticated Western classical music as a key to immortality and eternity. At the same time, "the music played by Mozart, Hayden, and Beethoven," Qawami states, "is an earthly music and not a heavenly one. It is a kind of music more evocative of thought than mystical feelings [...] This music not only cannot heal the Kurdish individuals who are sick, but it might make them sick as they are used to a different kind of music" (2007 p 29).³⁹ So, in effect, the copious paragraphs and passages on Western classical music in the novel, have nothing to do with this genre whatsoever. What is presented as Mozartian music is but an amalgamation of: Sufism, Mithraism, and Manichaeian ideas (ibid. pp. 158-170). This group of musician Sufis, seem to be more similar to disengaged Sufis who have, more or less, abandoned worldly issues and focused on divine matters. Although, the novel is supposedly concerned with the thousands of Kurds that have been massacred in the Anfal camps, apparently, these musicians, artists, and true art saviours are striving to attain an immortal music or art.

Kurdish music, which is, in all its forms, a significant aspect of Kurdish culture is barely mentioned throughout the novel. Since it is rooted in Kurdish folklore, myths, ballads, and epic stories, Kurdish music is one of the major elements of culture through which individual and national identity is reproduced and represented. It seems that narrators and other characters that belong to the army of true art saviours assume that everything related to Kurdish culture is of low quality and has to be abandoned while they strive to replace it with its Western counterpart, be it

³⁹ Mosîqay serdemî Mozar û Haydin û Bithovin, mosîqay zewîne nek asman; mosîqay endêşeye nek hestî sofiyane [...] Em mosîqaye nek her natwanê nexoşî kurd çak katewe; bellkû lewaney mirovî rahatû be mosîqay meqamî rojhellatî nexoşîş bixat.

music, painting, literature or other cultural forms. Therefore, they attempt to take on a different identity other than Kurdishness by turning their backs on Kurdish music and culture and embracing everything coming from the West; their ultimate goal is to become copies of Mozart, Beethoven, and Bach.

In response to a “little panegyric” for Slavoj Žižek publicized on Aljazeera in 2013, Hamid Dabashi raised this question, “Why is it that if Mozart sneezes it is ‘music’ (and I am quite sure the great genius even sneezed melodiously) but the most sophisticated Indian musical ragas are the subject of ‘ethnomusicology’?” The same question could be asked of Ali’s representation of Kurdish music, as being inferior to its Western counterpart, with the exception, perhaps of Xaliqi and Goran. Dabashi traced the “self-confidence”, “audacity”, “universality” and “globality” of the West to its imperial heritage which “once enabled [its] Eurocentrism”. However, he maintained that “Eurocentrism” has come to its end and the rest of the people outside Europe have recognized their ability “to think beyond the confinements of that Eurocentrism” (ibid.). Dabashi argued that along with people from other parts of the world, the Arab and the Muslim, “is going through world historic changes” as a result of which poets, artists, and thinkers are produced who are capable of “thinking and acting in terms at once domestic to their immediate geography and yet global in its consequences” (ibid.). Having said that, *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* not only fails to challenge “Eurocentrism”, it freely and submissively surrenders to its hegemony and presents Western art as “true” art (for example, see, pp. 248, 425). Over and above that, Ali polarizes the characters in his novel into two groups: one that dedicates itself to learning and disseminating Western classical music, and the other, which is ignorant of such music. The former is presented as the embodiment of good and the latter as the embodiment of evil.

2.3. The return to folk tale heroes

Although I have argued that the magic and fantastic elements in his stories are not based in Kurdish folklore and myth, nevertheless, Ali has created heroes that are

similar to those found in myth and folk tales. The heroes of *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*, in Jesse Matz's words, are, "epic heroes of myth and legend", and are "far better than average, superior to their environments, and destined for triumph" (2004, p 45). As is the case with folk tales and myths, in Ali's novels there are two groups of characters: the good people and the bad people, the heroes and the villains. Having supernatural power, the first group opts for building a Utopia in order to save "beauty" and "true" art and with this mission they seek to triumph over the villains. That is to say, good defeats evil.

In *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* Ali polarizes Kurdish society in Iraqi Kurdistan, since on the one hand, a minority fights for the preservation of beauty and seeks to achieve an immortal art, and on the other there is that part of the society, which is ignorant of "true" art. In effect, this novel is a battlefield in which these two groups face each other. The narrator, however, does not remain neutral in this battle and, directly or indirectly, takes the side of the "true" art saviours. As the narrator, and leader of the "true" artists, Celadet, does not allow the opposite group, that is, that part of the society ignorant of Mozartian music, to talk for themselves, to express and defend their views about art, or to narrate the story of their lives from their own perspectives. That being the case, I shall predominantly examine the formation of some of the characters' subjectivity and identity from the group of 'true' art saviours and only one character from the opposite group, whose name is Şanaz Selîm, since she is the only that the narrators described in detail.

Celadet's function, along with several other characters: Ish'âq lêwzêrrîn, Serheng Qasim, Şarox, Mûsa Babek, Cemîl Baran, and Moh'emed Firdewsî, to name the most important ones that belong to his group, is to broadcast the prevailing theory of art and aesthetics in the novel. Şerefyar the narrator explains that at the age of only six months Celadet lost his mother, and this was due to all the sufferings she had gone through since her husband had not allowed her to see her two sons. Recounting these details, the narrator, ascribes Celadet's extraordinary capability, "to escape from death and its lethal deception and charms", to "his mother's short

and trivial life” (p. 12). However, although it seems as though the narrator suggests that somehow there is a link between Celadet’s mother’s death and his supernatural power, it is not explained, which is apt to confuse the reader.

The next determining event in his life is that which occurs after the death of his neighbour, Sermed Tahir, Celadet learns that he has bequeathed his flute to him. Playing the flute for the first time in his life, surprisingly, Celadet, is able to play those songs that he heard Sermed play. It is not long before he acquires a reputation for having a great talent in music (pp. 13-14). Shortly after, he learns most of the other musical instruments. “He listened to the world’s top sonatas and symphonies day and night and was able to recognize the great musicians of the world and their songs” (p. 14).⁴⁰ Together with Serheng Qasim, another talented boy, they play magical music. In short, they dedicate their life to it and spend all their time listening to, Mozart, Beethoven and Bach.

In order to excel in his potential magical power in playing music and become a messenger of true art, Celadet needed yet another incident to happen in his life. Becoming aware of Celadet’s reputation for music, Ish’aq travelled all the way from a town on the Iraqi Kurdistan border to meet him. He is looking for “two students to whom he could transfer his knowledge of music and wisdom” (p. 17).⁴¹ Finding the most talented boys in music, that is, Celadet and Serheng, he takes them with him to his home and promptly begins the project. However, as the Iraq-Iran war and the conflict between the Kurdish parties and central government escalate, they have to leave Ish’aq’s house and take refuge in the mountains (pp. 33-34). During their short journey to the valleys, and mountains, Ish’aq begins to teach music to his two students.

⁴⁰ Şew û roj le tomarêkî biçûkewe gwêy le sonata u semfoniyeke daniya degirt ... deytiwanî hemû mosîqare gewreke daniya u awazekaniyan le dûrewe binasêtewe.

⁴¹ [B]e diway dû qotabî mosîqada bigerêt, bellû bitwanêt mosîqa u h’ikmetî xoîyan fêr bikat.

While searching for a safe refuge they are arrested by a group of Iraqi soldiers and taken to the Anfal camps to be executed. Hence, after only a few months the music course has ended; but this was a course that was nothing but some lessons on meditation, Sufism and other religious teachings. Because the author grants him the role of an immortal prophet, Celadet, however, is to be rescued in order to carry out his mission of saving “true” art and “beauty”. Drawing on magical elements, the author seeks to save Celadet whose life is the most precious thing that the beauty saviours have to protect, at any cost. An example of this is when Celadet is to be executed and another musician takes his place and is shot by Samir Babilî. Under the influence of the musician’s magical music, Samir regrets his action and suggests that he saves his life. However, the musician’s response is: “it’s early Samir, a day will come that you shall save a musician; one night a musician will be killed by you. But you will remember this enchanted music, you will cry and regret, run into the desert and save him. That musician is not me, and you can’t save my life” (p. 176).⁴² Hence, that night everyone except Celadet, including Ish’aq and Serheng Qasim, is executed by the Iraqi soldiers. However, since he is stunned by the heavenly music, Samir shoots him in such a way that he survives. A few days later Samir returns to the desert to save Celadet and take him to the nearest city. There in the “city of yellow dusts” he is protected by Doctor Mûsa and Daliya Siracedîn, and recovers his health.

Celadet is the chosen one. His place in this novel is elevated to that of a prophet; he was born to spread justice, happiness, and real beauty among people. The following comments and examples from the novel demonstrate how Celadet is viewed as a prophet by both narrators and some of the other characters. To begin with, there was no obvious reason why God chose a certain person to be a prophet and those selected were not necessarily, the more clever persons. Rather they were

⁴² Hêştta ziwe, rojêk dêt, debêt firay mosîqarêk bikewît, şewêk dêt, wek emşew mosîqarêk dekojît, bellam le nakaw em awaze sih’rawîyane dênewe bîrit, degrît û peşîman debîtewe, be she’ra da ra dekeyt, cestey dedey be kollit da u rizgarî dekeyt. Bellam min ew mosîqare nîm, to natwanît min rizgar bikeyt.

granted massive powers and infinite knowledge by God, and as such, became prophets simply because He willed it so. In the same way, the author's relationship towards his protagonist, Celadet, is, more or less, a God-prophet one. Like prophets, Celadet is destined for prophethood, and not because he had great intellectual or other capabilities. Daliya believes that he is both stupid and a good musician. "For her I was such a stupid boy", says Celadet, "she truly believed that she had never seen a man as stupid as I am. She was wondering why God has appointed me to pass on such an important message" (p. 126).⁴³ Furthermore, his ability to play great music, that is, Western classical music, is not something that he had achieved through hard effort and great talent. As Celadet claims, he became an expert in Western classical music and a brilliant musician in the twinkling of an eye.

The birds that follow and fly over Celadet and his crucifixion and resurrection also serve as symbols representing him as a prophet. The former event alludes to the cloud that hovered above Prophet Mohammad and protected him against the intense heat, and the latter, to Jesus Christ's crucifixion. He could also do extraordinary things with his musical talent, such as, heal the sick as mentioned earlier, and travel to the "death territory" and return from it. As for Celadet's power to travel to other worlds, Şerefyar says:

Celadet was one of those winged creatures capable of travelling to the death territory and return from it [...] he has done it three times. The first time goes back to when he, together with a children's band, faced a tragic accident and was the only one to survive. On the second occasion he was one of the very few people to survive a ruthless massacre in which hundreds of thousands of Kurds were executed. And the last time was when he found himself in the city of white musicians (p. 521).⁴⁴

⁴³ [M]in le ber çawî ew gemjeyêkî gewre bûm, ew le dillewe bawerrî wa bû ke hîç piyawêkî tirî le jiyânî da nebîniwe be endazey min gemje bê. Xesarî lewe dehat, xoda minî bo geiyandinî peyamêkî weha gewre diyarî kirdiwe.

⁴⁴ Celadet lew baldarane bû ke be naw mirdin da derroyşt û degerrayewe ... sê car be nêw mirdin da têpwerrîwe u hestawetewe, carî yekem ew katey le gell tîpêkî mosîqay mindallan da tûşî rûdawêkî tirsnak debin û em tenya kesêke diway bêhoşîyêkî dûr û dirêj helldestêtewe, carî dûem ke le kuştare gewrekanî başûr da, lew serdeme da ke sedan hezar kurd le başûr tîrbaran dekrên, ew yekêke lew kese degmenaney be naw agireke da derrwat û lew ser be zindûyî dêtewe derê, carî sêhemîş ew careye ke deygeyênête şarî mosîqare sipiyekan.

The ability to travel to the death territory and return from it three times, elevates Celadet's status from a dove to a phoenix and his name is changed to Celadet the Phoenix [Celadetî Qeqnes]. As a phoenix his vocation is to burn and "bring to life the beauty that was killed upon earth from the death territory" (p. 466).⁴⁵ The Phoenix is a creature, as Ish'aq explains to Celadet, "who travels between death and life, someone who can travel to the city of white musicians and return, who is a soul who travels between the beauties that were killed and the world [...] Celadet it is your duty to bring back into the world some of these dead beauties, the songs, the books and the paintings that have been killed" (p. 529).⁴⁶ As we shall see, the other characters face a prophet narrator/character with a historical vocation that has been appointed by the author and non-compliance will not be tolerated.

Like other characters, Mûsa Babek is a ready-made character serving the authorial ideologies in the novel. Mûsa is introduced through a short biography which recounts some personal and social critical moments in his life first from the narrator, Celadet's, point of view and then by Mûsa himself (pp. 98-114). However, Mûsa's life, dilemmas and desires as a human being are not unveiled through his immediate experience of such moments. Viewing subjectivity as a process, "whereby a person selectively appropriates and assimilates the ideological discourses of others" (McCullum 1999, p. 102), means that certain extended monologues on, for example, "true" art, music, and justice, will be to no avail. Furthermore, "unmediated experience" is a main characteristic feature of the modern novel achieved by its emphasis over "subjectivity" rather than "objectivity" (Matz 2004, p. 52). Nonetheless, Mûsa's, and other characters' in this novel, experience of life is not delivered to readers directly; rather it is mediated by the narrator and conveyed objectively.

⁴⁵ [L]e xakî mirdniewe cwanîye kujrawekan degêrrêtewe.

⁴⁶ Qeqnes kesêke le nêwan mirdîn û jîyan da yarî dekat, kesêke detwanêt birwat bo şari mosîqare sipiyekan û bigerrêtewe, roh'êke le nêwan ciwaniye kujrawekan û doniya da hatû ço dekat ... Celadet wezîfey toye birrêk le ciwaniye kujrawekan, le awaze kujrawekan, le kitêbe kujrawekan, le tablo kujrawekan bigêrrêtewe bo cîhan.

We learn at least some of Mûsa's past through Caledet's narration. He comes from a well-off family who was raised in Baghdad, went to London and graduated from the Royal College of Medicine and then returned to his country. Caledet describes him when he was young, as, "half-communist, half bourgeois, half religious who had at once a sort of socialist sentiment, a sort of bourgeois pride, and religious obsession" (p. 98).⁴⁷ Yet, "he does not live life as a communist or ascetic" (p. 98).⁴⁸ Rather, he spends his wealth on unknown paintings in the hope of opening an art museum of his own. His hope, however, is shattered when Prime Minister Qasim is overthrown during a coup d'état led by the Ba'ath party. Soon after, the new regime launches a massive tide of arrests and the persecution of poets, artists, and musicians on the charge of their affinity to communism. Consequently Mûsa's collection of paintings is burnt, his statues broken and he is arrested and exiled to a remote city in the desert south of Iraq. Ever since then he has devoted his entire life to saving thousands of paintings made by unknown artists who "could not find anywhere", says Mûsa, "to exhibit their paintings ... [to save] the works whose owners were killed ... those works whose creators did not have a place to preserve (p. 107).⁴⁹ For Mûsa collecting paintings is a political activity and a resistance against the ruthless Ba'ath regime.

Furthermore, Mûsa is described as a wise old man who gives Celadet advice on: Art, justice, and punishment. For example, in response to Celadet's question regarding how justice can be brought to oppressors, Mûsa says, "justice could not be done by killing the tyrants; rather it could be fulfilled by replacing tyranny with something different" (p. 187).⁵⁰ As the novel unfolds we learn that Celadet follows his words. Mûsa, more or less, plays the same role in relation to Celadet as Ish'âq did,

⁴⁷ Piyawêke nîwe komonîst, nîwe borjiwa, nîwe îmandar, wate şitêk le hestî sosiyalîstî, şitêk le şanazî u x'irûrî borjiwaiyane u şitêkîş le dillerawkêy dînî têdaye.

⁴⁸ [B]ellam wek komonîst yan zahîd najî.

⁴⁹ Neiyantwanîwe karekaniyan le hîç pêşangayekî em donyaye da nîşan biden, karî ew hunermendaneye ke kujrawin [...] karî ewaneye cêgayekiyan nebwe tabllokanî xoiyan tiya biparêzin.

⁵⁰ E'dalet ewe niye zallimekan bikojî, eweye şitêkî ciyawaz bixeyte cêgay zollim.

that is, he teaches and educates him. These two characters are the only ones whose attitude towards different issues is not only unchallenged by Celadet, as is the case with almost all the rest of the characters, but, on the contrary, he is mostly submissive to them. An “implied author”, in Booth’s words should be: “an implicit picture of an author who stands behind the scenes,” whether as “stage manager”, “puppeteer”, or “an indifferent God” (Booth, 1961, p. 151). It seems that the “implied author” in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* is closer to a “puppeteer”, since he implements his beliefs and values through Ish’aq and Mûsa to fully prepare Celadet to become the messenger of a happy eternal life, in the light of Mozart’s divine music. In addition to advising Celadet, Mûsa, acts as his disciple, protecting and healing him, assisting him in saving “true” art by way of collecting paintings and preserving them, and assuring him of his vocation to be a prophet, “I saw that aureole around your head ... like the aureole around prophets. You were born to be a great man” (p. 106).⁵¹

The types of characters discussed above are very close to three of the seven character types in fairy tales, namely, “the Hero”, “the Donor”, and “the Helper” (Propp, 1968, p 68). That is to say, Vladimir Propp’s definition of these types of characters could largely be applied to Ali’s characters in this novel. The “Hero” is someone who “departs on a search ... defeats the Villain, and weds/rules at end” (ibid.). Celadet searches for beauty, “true” art, and eternity and on his way triumphs over obstacles and villains. By the end of the novel he becomes a phoenix and this implies that he has achieved eternity and the ability to resurrect. Throughout his journey Celadet is prepared and provided with a “magical agen”, assisted and rescued by Ish’aq lêw zêrrîn, Doctor Mûsa, and Daliya who are the, “Donors” and “Helpers”. Yet another character type is present in the novel, that is, the “villain”, which is acted out by a female character, Şanaz Selîm. At the other end of the

⁵¹ [M]jinîş ew şebengem le dewrit bînî ... To r’oh’êkî bo ewe dirost bûyt şitî gewre bikeyt.

spectrum is Daliya. She is not a typical princess as outlined in Propp's study of folk tales; yet she is presented as an angel who sacrifices her life for others.

2.4. "Angel" or "villain": a narrow presentation of Womanhood

In this section I will examine how femininity is presented in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* and what its "political" implications might be. The term "political" is borrowed from Millett (1969, p.23) who uses it to refer to "power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another". Under the light of Millett's "sexual politics" and Butler's notion of gender as "performativity", I will demonstrate how a woman *becomes* a woman in the novelistic discourse of *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*. Butler denies any pre-linguistic existence of gender. For her, gender is something that we "do". It is a process which has neither origin nor end (1999, p. 43). Gender as "performativity", then, as Butler argues, "is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (*ibid.*). Following Butler's, "political genealogy of gender ontologies" (*ibid.*), I seek to "deconstruct" the natural and essential characters of gender by placing it in the context of the discourses in which it is constituted.

Daliya and Şanaz are the only female characters who play salient roles in the course of the novel. Daliya is a Kurdish girl who studies English literature at Baghdad University. She falls in love with her classmate Basim Cezayirî, an Iraqi Arab, as a result of which her brothers, who deemed Arabs as their brutal enemy, decide to kill her. However, miraculously, she escapes from death and goes back to Baghdad. For one year or so she lives there clandestinely. Yet, her life turns into a nightmare when Basim is arrested by the Iraqi Intelligence Service. Basim's disappearance makes life unbearable for her who, as she once said, "can't even breathe without him" (p. 89).⁵² Losing any hope of tracing Basim legally, she decides to approach the officials

⁵² bê ew kurre natwanêt heway ser zemîn hellmijêt.

personally to find him, at the price of prostituting herself. Thus, she moves to, “the city of yellow dusts” wherein she begins working as a prostitute in a brothel where senior Intelligence Officers and other officials come to drink alcohol and make love with women.

Serving the interests and needs of the most privileged character in the novel, that is, Celadet, Daliya is highly respected by the narrators. For example, Şerefyar pictures her as someone quite different from other prostitutes: “she was not a prostitute. She desired to become a translator [...] a novelist, to write the story of her life, to become a teacher and teach English to the children of her hometown in Kurdistan.” (p. 228).⁵³ It seems that Ali has created a “New Woman” in his novelistic world, a woman who leaves her traditional, domestic duties to become socially active. But, her family’s discontent with her marriage to Basim and his disappearance completely changes her life. Before long, the primary image of a “New Woman” characterized in Daliya, who is independent and takes risks to live her dreams, starts to disappear. She sacrifices her life and her dreams for the sake of her beloved and prostitutes herself to save him; and she is greatly praised and respected for doing so by both narrators and some other characters in the novel. The old stereotypes are, once again, reinforced and reproduced: the ideal woman is someone whose main concern is her family, and to achieve this, she has to sacrifice or postpone her needs, to satisfy those of others.

The narrators view Daliya’s prostitution differently from that of other women in the brothel where she works. Whilst they are portrayed as objectified, dehumanized, and presented as hapless women incapable of changing their destinies since they are trapped in a city in the heart of the desert, Daliya is presented as an angel (for example, pp. 143, 146, 269). Her prostitution is interpreted as a heroic act because she does not do it to satisfy her personal needs, be it the basic need to survive.

⁵³ Ew sozanî nebû, xolyay ewey hebû bibêt be wergêrr [...] bibêt be roman nûsêk û jyanî xoy bigêrrêtewe. Bibêtewe be mamostay inglîzî u birrwat le Kurdistan, le şari mindallî xoy wane billêtewe.

Rather, she has put herself in this position for the sake of the man she loves. To further differentiate Daliya from other prostitutes in the city of yellow dusts, Celadet, the narrator, claims: “for the first time I saw those little angels in the air that she had mentioned earlier; the word “to see” might not be very true; I would better say I felt them, I felt tens of tiny shadows flying around her, as if they wanted to carry her with them. Like a divine soul, a wanderer soaring in the whirlwind, she passed by without noticing me.” (p. 143).⁵⁴ He elevates Daliya’s situation from one of an ordinary woman to that of a saint or an angel whose laughter “made everything around her shine.” (p. 146).⁵⁵

In contrast to Daliya, Şanaz, another female character, is associated with the devil and death and is degraded by the narrators. Coming from a well-to-do family, Şanaz lived a comfortable and luxurious life. From Celadet’s perspective we learn that she fell in love with a youth when she was young. Before long their secret love is revealed and Şanaz’s father becomes aware of it. Facing total public disgrace, her father kills the boy in an orange store and since that time, says Celadet, “Şanaz Selîm has a savage desire for orange trees, for orange leaves, for the smell of the orange ... Yet she desires another smell ‘the smell of death’.” (p. 369).⁵⁶ The word “savage” that Celadet ascribes to Şanaz’s desire for oranges and her “love for the smell of death” is derived from his deep-seated hatred of her which he expressed unequivocally a few pages earlier when for the first time, Şanaz meets him and Samir. She completely ignored him and started to chat to Samir. Her behaviour makes Celadet utterly resentful: “I was so annoyed that couldn’t say anything” (p. 363).⁵⁷ Consequently, Şanaz is demonized by Celadet, the narrator. The narrators,

⁵⁴ [B]o yekem car şitêkî seyrim bînî, bo yekem car ew firîşte biçkolananem le hewa da bînî ke basiyan dekat, renga wişey bînîn zor rast nebêt, rast tir waye billêm hestim pê kird, deyan tarmayî biçûkim hest pê kird ke le dewrî defrên, wek ewey hellî bgrin û bîben, wek roh’êkî asmanî, giyanêkî wêll le gerdelûl da birwat, aweha be tenîştîm da têperrî u neybînîm.

⁵⁵ [K]e pêdekenî şitekanî dewr û berî dedrewşanewe.

⁵⁶ Lew şewewe Şanaz Selîm be corêkî dirrindane h’ez le dirextî pirteqall dekat, h’ez le gellay pirteqall dekat, h’ez le bonî pirteqall dekat ... bellam cige leweş h’ez le bonêkî dî dekat “bonî mirdin”.

⁵⁷ Min be corêk berbînîm gîrabû qisem bo nedekra.

one might say, seek revenge against whoever is not like them. Hence, the characters outside the “true” art and “beauty” saviour group face a double-standard by the narrators. For example, what is true, acceptable, and even admired in Daliya, is wrong, rejected and extremely degraded in Şanaz. While Daliya is presented as a heroine who fights for her beloved, Şanaz who strives to save her husband’s life is described by Celadet as follows:

Mrs Şanaz, you are a liar. You are nothing but a brazen and impudent lover of the dead [...] some women love virile and lively men, but you desire the dead man. From the very first time you came here, you noticed a smell of death emanating from him [Samir]. But now you want to prove to yourself that you love him and are fighting for your love [...] you are nothing but a black raven disguised as a charming and coquettish woman. You’re a portentous bird and everyone knows the fact that you would kill whoever you might touch (p.474).⁵⁸

The novel does not provide its characters with a space in which they are able to interact with others and their immediate environment. This is because their words are filtered through their authorial narrators. Therefore, the narrators, Celadet and Şerefiyar, hinder any direct contact between the characters in the novel since, whatever they do or say, is controlled by them.

Like other facets of identity in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*, the characters’ gender identity is not presented, in Butler’s words, as something that is a “process” or is, “becoming” (1999, p. 43). Rather, the characters have to comply with an already existing conventional femininity and masculinity that the novel reinforces. To borrow Sara Salih’s words, the subjects represented in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* have a very limited “number of ‘costumes’ from which to make a constrained choice of gender style” (2002, p. 63). Yet this limited number of costumes is sexist-oriented and reproduces the existing power structure in Iraqi Kurdistan. The question as to

⁵⁸ To diro dekeyt, Xatû Şanazî berrêz, to hîç nît cige le A’şiqêkî bêşerim û bê h’eyay mirdûwekan ... jin heye h’eziyan le piyawî be hêz û pîrr le jiyane, to lewaneyt ke h’ezî le piyawî mirdûwe, to le yekem rojewe ke hatîte êre dezanî Samir piyawêke bonî mirdinî lê dêt, dezanî, bellam êsta detewêt bo xotî biselmênî ke A’şiqî, ke le pênavî xoşewîstî da şerr dekeyt [...] to hîç nît cige le qelle reşêk ke le bergî jinîkî be naz û A’îşwe da xoy gorrîwe, le katêk da xanim to baldarêkî şûmî, hemû şar dezanî ke to le her kes nizîk bîtewe deykujî.

whether love can change this power structure and create a world in which women and men are assumed to be equal, is covered in the next section.

2.5. Love: reinforcing an unequal relationship between two sexes?

Since Simone de Beauvoir's ground breaking work in the 1970s, some feminists have been hostile towards the subject of love. As Elaine Baruch remarks, this was, "mostly due to women's renunciation of independence and men's mystification of women" (1991, p 27). Love was also viewed, not only as a mechanism "to secure women's domestic exploitation in the patriarchal family, but also legitimated the emotional and sexual exploitation of women" (Joanne Hollows 2000, p. 72). In this section I shall explore how characters are shown to be affected by their experience of love, and how the novel represents love's affect, on the male and female characters. For example, does it describe them as responding to love differently? Has it affected male and female characters differently? Has it brought about, to put it in Millett's words, the "emotional manipulation" of women by men? (1969, p. 37) Or, rather, is it that, romantic love "results from an equalization of relationships between men and women" (Shorter 1976, cited in Baruck 1991, p. 98).

Daliya, the female protagonist, is in love; her love for Basim has overshadowed her entire life to the extent that she fights tooth and nail to save his life. Under Saddam Hussein's dictatorship during the late nineties, the law does not enable her to bring a lawsuit against those who have illegally arrested and tortured Basim, without even disclosing where he is. It seems that she is able to implement her agency by refusing to abandon hope and by continuing to search for Basim, irrespective of all the difficulties and barriers she encounters. However, Daliya, gains her subjectivity at the price of sacrificing or even, losing control over her body, as she is abandoned by her family and stigmatized by society. The narrator, Şerefiyar, describes Daliya's feelings when she sleeps with an officer as follows, "she does not feel anything but coldness; she hasn't felt anything for a long time. For a long time, men have penetrated into her shadow and come out of it, as if a frigid cloud

penetrates into another frigid cloud.”(p. 213).⁵⁹ She has deliberately killed all feeling in herself, in order to survive the extremely unpleasant moments of sexual relationships with the Ba’athist agents.

While daydreaming, Daliya speaks to Basim’s ghost: “my life is nothing, only your life matters ... compared with your life, mine is the life of a sparrow or butterfly [she means that it is as trivial as the life of those creatures]. I am here to devote myself to you, I am ready to die but not until you have returned.” (p. 142). Self-abnegation is presented as part and parcel of Romantic love; yet in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* there are only women who make sacrifices for their men and not the other way around. The representation of self-abnegation as natural feminine behaviour has further marginalized woman and reinforced her place as the “second sex”. De Beauvoir’s description of a woman-in-love serves to further illustrate the representation of Daliya’s position in the novel. “There is no other way out for her but to lose herself, body and soul, in him who is represented to her as absolute, as the essential ... she will humble herself to nothingness before him. Love becomes for her a religion” (de Beauvoir 1972, p. 653).

Daliya’s religion is love, a “true” love that requires self-abnegation (p. 148). She puts her life at risk by sheltering Celadet after Doctor Mûsa saved his life and brought him to “the city of yellow dusts”. Also she helps him to secure a job as a musician in the brothel and accommodates him there. Yet her relationship with Celadet does not end at this point. Finding some files that indicate that Basim has died, she decides to devote herself to Celadet, completely,: “Listen Celadet”, says Daliya “nothing matters any longer, from now on I am devoting myself to you; I would do everything in my power to protect you.” (p. 223). It seems that she is unable to implement her agency to fulfil her own dreams, to achieve her desires and goals,

⁵⁹ [L]e sardî bew lawe hest be hîç nakat, bellam le mêje ew hest be hîç nakat, le mêje le tarmayîêk deçêt ke piyawan be naw sêberekey da têdeperrin û dêne derê, wek têperrînî hewrêkî sard be naw hewrêkî dike da.

and that she is there to sacrifice her very being for others, and only in this way can she make her life meaningful and gain her subjectivity.

At their first meeting, Celadet fell in love with Daliya. However, Daliya loves him in a different way. The narrator, Şerefyar, describes their relationship as follows: “Though she was aware of her love for Celadet and at times was getting confused between her feelings towards him as a mother and a beloved, she loved him as her little boy.” (p. 228).⁶⁰ Readers might ask themselves how she could love him as her son and be so obsessed with him although she had not been in touch with him for a considerable time. This mother-son relationship which started from the first day they met is on the highest level, so much so, that in the early days of their acquaintance Daliya says to Celadet: “Oh my dear you made me so worried. I was only concerned for you ... Oh doctor I told you that he deserves it if one sacrifices one’s life for him.” (p. 91).⁶¹

At first sight it seems that Daliya, together with doctor Mûsa, does her best to protect Celadet because he is the only survivor of a horrendous massacre. Daliya says to him “you are the eyewitness, the only surviving eyewitness; they [Iraqi soldiers] will kill you wherever they find you.” (p. 96).⁶² However by the end of the novel Celadet has not attempted to do anything for the Anfal victims. For example, he does not do what Daliya urges, “we will remain as the only representatives of a wiped out nation ... after they [Iraqi soldiers] have killed everyone in the north [Iraqi Kurdsitan], then comes our turn. Therefore we need to escape to another country and preserve what we have witnessed.” (p. 206).⁶³ As there is no logical reason underlying Daliya’s sacrifice for Celadet, readers might deduce that it is so because

⁶⁰ [E]ger çî le yekem rojewe dezanêt ke xoşî dewêt, eger çî le naw roh’î da hendê car heste kiçane u heste daykane kanî têkell debûn.

⁶¹ Be qurban çend x’emit damê, min her x’emî tom bû, tenha x’emî tom bû ... ah diktora, xodaye min pê m negûfî kurrêkî êcgar nasike, şayenî eweye mirov xoy bikat be qurbanî.

⁶² To şahidî, to teniya şahidî zindûyt, le her cêgayek bitbînîn detkojin

⁶³ [M]in û to lem zewîye da wek nwênerî neslêkî le naw çû demênînewe [...] bellam ke hemû şitêkiyan le bakûr kuşt, ewsa min û toş dekujin, le ber ewe debêt ew nigayane le serman da hellgirîn û bîr lewe bikeynewe rojêk le rojan ra bikeyn bo willatêkî tir.

the author sees himself to be more than his characters and therefore, does not let them think and behave in accordance with the ideology and belief system they are purported to possess.

Yet, during the course of the novel a discourse on love is formed which determines the relationship between Celadet and Daliya and at the same time greatly affects their lives and identities. Although Celadet knows that Daliya has not accepted him as her beloved he likens his love to a “dagger in his heart” and he cannot survive without it.⁶⁴ He adds,

I still believe if a person loses his great love he will be a loser for the rest of his life. Love is different from playing chess in which if you lose once, you can try to learn from your mistake and improve your skill for the next time. In love there is only one game, and no more, if you lose it you will remain a loser for the whole of your life. No one on earth can fall in love for the second time as passionately, as insanely and madly as one did in one's first love (p. 148).⁶⁵

Celadet, the narrator, expresses this retrospectively, when, together with Şerefiyar, he writes his story. Having a certain definition of love in mind, the author creates his characters in accordance with his understanding of “true” love, irrespective of their circumstances, limits, and intellectual capabilities. That is, Ali's characters are not allowed to think, speak, and act freely and independently in the way that his readers suspect that they could and should have done.

This is because the reader is not given the opportunity to read the minds of characters in order to observe the world from their perspective; and neither does he experience moments of enthusiasm, anxiety, and suffering. To put it in Ros Brunt's words, “[T]he script for love has already been written” for the characters in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* and they have to perform it. (1988, p. 19 cited in Jackson 1999,

⁶⁴ The representation of love as the source of suffering for the lovers shall be explored in later chapters.

⁶⁵ Êstaş dellêm ger mirov yekemîn xoşewîstî gewrey xoy dorrând, îdî ta mirdin bûnewerêkî dorawe. Xoşewîstî wek şeterenc niye, mirov ke destêkî dorand xoy ko bikatewe bo destêkî tir, meşq bikat, fêr bibêt, le e'şiq da yek dest heye, yek yarî heye u tewaw, ke dorranit biznae bo heta hetaye dorrândûte, hîç kes niye lem ser estêreye dû car be heman şêtfî, heman soz, heman piley sûtan û dêwanegîyewe A'şiq bêt.

p. 106). However, Ali the author does not create this kind of “script”; rather his presentation of true love is that it is “unattainable”, “allusive”, and “unrepeatable” and the true lover is “nsane” which pre-existed in Kurdish folklore and classical poetry.⁶⁶ Ali has reproduced the belief that love is all suffering.

Perceiving love as a mysterious phenomenon, as something unattainable and to be praised from a distance, in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* Ali creates the characters that think and act in accordance with this discourse of love. Celadet, therefore, prefers, a somewhat, platonic love, that is, an emotional love without a sexual relationship, to romantic love or a merely sexual relationship. On the other hand, Daliya remains loyal to Basim and sleeps with others in the hope of saving him; and she never again falls in love. As such, this perception of love as a once-for-lifetime phenomenon is reinforced in the course of the novel. For example, the narrator, Şerefyar, describes Celadet’s love as follows:

For Celadet love was similar to music; as is the case with music, in true love one does not know what to say ... like music, there is no end of true love; there is no explanation as to why it exists and what it wants. If love could figure out what it wants, it wouldn’t be love any longer ... the true lover does not love someone for his/her beauty, charm, dignity or any other ridiculous features of that kind. But he does love her because this is the only way to think forever. For Celadet, love was to leave any goal behind in his life without turning his back on life, to stop thinking without losing his mind, to stop thinking about the future without being dead. He did not demand anything from Daliya, rather his love for Daliya had no reason or expectation. When the ultimate goal of love is not to end in union with the lover it takes the form of a date, for lovers to postpone for ever, a date to be made in eternity. (p. 251)⁶⁷

⁶⁶ The notion of love in Kurdish folklore and classic literature will be discussed in the following chapters.

⁶⁷ Xoşewîstî lay Celadet wek mosîqa bû, wek çon le mosîqa da diwacar mirov nazanêt deyewêt billet çî, le xoşewîstî rasteqîneş da mirov nazanît deyewêt billet çî [...] diwacar xoşewîstî rasteqîne wek mosîqa amancêkî niye, tefsîrêkî niye bo lêreya u çî dewêt, ke twanî têbigat çî dewêt, lewe dekwêt xoşewîstî bêt, ke roxsarêkî negorr û tefsîrêkî kotayî wergirt îtir demrêt. Xoşewîstî eweye ke şadomanî be bûnî em mirove le ser zewî, şadomanîyêk ke hîç mebestêkî le pişt niye, A’şiqî rasteqîne yekêkê xoşawêt le ebr ewey ciwane, be wiqare, efsûnawîye, be rewîşte, be mekre yan her sifetêkî bê manay tir. Bellkû le ber ewey ewe tenya rêgaye bîr le hîç x’ayetêk nekatewe. Xoşewîstî lay Celadet lew katane da ewe bû waz le her mebestêk bihênêt bê ewey waz le jîyan bihênêt, waz le bîr kirdnewe bihênêt bê ewey şêt bûbêt, waz le paşe roj bihênêt bê ewey mirdibêt. Hîç dawyêkî le Daliya nebû, bellkû tewawî e’şqî xoy bo Daliya le ser ewe dirost bûbû ke eşqêke bêho u bê dawakarî. Ke xoşewîstî amancî ewe nebû le be yek geyîştinda kotayî bêt, wek jiwanêkî lê dêt ke ta heta hetaye diwa dextrêt, jiwanêk ke cêy dehêllît le ebedîyet da bête dî.

The narrator delivers a long passage on love and ascribes it to young Celadet rather than allowing him to experience it for himself.

The author's definition of love explained by the narrator is imposed upon Celadet as a result of which he lives as a hermit, saint or prophet bereft of any sensual love or carnal desires. "While that girl was going to unzip his pants", writes Şerefyar about Celadet, "he was listening to imaginary music, a magnificent piano music, Beethoven's 23rd piano sonata [...] he was remembering the temptation of prophets. The girl kept undressing him. He took her hands and said: are you dead or alive? Who are you, are you an angel or a devil ... tell me?" (p. 267).⁶⁸ This scene contributes to the construction of an image of a prophet-like character who suppresses his carnal desires, preserves his chastity and chooses an ascetic lifestyle. Yet this rejection of love does not make him a recluse nor does it prevent him from resuming his ambitions or, more correctly, his vocation. On the other hand, for Daliya love is the ultimate goal of her life. She willingly ignores her dreams and personal desires and devotes her whole life to Basim and Celadet.

Some of the characters in the novel, for example, Daliya, Celadet, Samir, and Şanaz, fall in love at first sight and feel an overwhelming desire for the person they have just met which transforms their lives. This sudden transformation, as we shall see, underlies the construction of their subjectivity.

2.6. The transformation of subjectivity in a moment of epiphany

One after another the characters undergo a revelatory moment in which the "truth" is uncovered before their eyes and thence their identity, consciousness and their whole life undergoes a total change. This transformation, however, is not

⁶⁸ Lew sateda kîjeke destî debird bo zincîrî pantollekey gwêy le dengî mosîqayekî xeyallî debû le hewa da, pyanoyekî mezin, sonatî bîst û sêy bîthovin, F, minor [...] weswesey pêx'emberekanî dehatewe yad. Ew kîje deyewîst ziyatir rûtî bikatewe, destî kiçekey degirt û deygot: to mirdûyt yan zîndû? To çît, to firîşteyt yan ehrêmen ... pê m billê?

presented as being due to their experience of incidents and events over time and the characters' new ideas and worldviews have not been shaped over the course of the novel and through the plot and novelistic time and space. That is, the "truth" at which they arrive is not the result of, in Bakhtin's words, a "self-conscious clarification of the events to themselves" (1984, p 55). Rather, this "truth" is nothing but ready-made views on the world, life, truth, and art, put into the mouth of characters. The characters in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*, to borrow Bakhtin's words again, "serve as a vehicle for the author's own ideological position" and have become "a simple object of the author's consciousness" (ibid. p7).

To further illustrate, some examples and excerpts from the novel serve to make the point. When for the first time, Celadet takes up the flute, he is able to play it perfectly (p.13); and later without any effort he learns Western classical music, and, together with Serheng Qasim, he becomes an expert in it and can play magical music as, according to the author, Mozart and Beethoven did. In another case, Samir's life completely changes when facing a musician who plays a mysterious flute, "since that night", says Samir, "my language and heart changed ... at that night I got to know that music helps to discover the true nature of human beings." (pp. 171-2).⁶⁹ Likewise, Celîl Baran and his friends in the band called "Belemî Befir" without any study or being exposed to other forms of music have, in a moment, realized that what they play could not be called art and music after that they opt for a higher kind of music: "It is a strange moment", Celîl holds, "Suddenly a bright light lit up your mind and soul; all of a sudden everything changes in your eye ... in that moment I felt that whatever I've done in my life was a failure and my whole life wasted." (pp. 342-3).⁷⁰ Once again, Celîl and his friends in the band, in the space of

⁶⁹ Lew şewewe zimanî min gorrdira, dillim be corîkî tir pêçî kirdewe ... min ew şewe têgeyîştîm mosîqa me'denî rasteqîney mirovekan dedozêtewe.

⁷⁰ Celîlî Baran deygut satêkî seyre, le nakaw şitêk le nawit da dadegîrsêt, wek çirayekî sipî sipî wehaye, roşnayîekî be hêze, le nakaw hemû şitekan le pêş çawit degorrên [...] lew sate da hestim kird min le jiyanim da her çîyekim kirdiwe be zaye çûwe u le xorra bay şewgar birdwêtî.

a moment find out that the music they play is crude. This happens on an evening when Celadet plays the flute for them:

On a weird evening our lives entirely changed. Until that evening we were but a couple of children who were playing a game with our musical instruments [...] I had never heard such music in my life, capable of changing your view of the world altogether. Whatever I had learnt before that evening was nothing but white foam that was taken away by Celadet's wave of music. (p. 573)⁷¹

The characters experienced such abrupt and unexpected upheavals, solely because the author desired it so and attempted to prove that his ideological belief is the only truth and as such, has to be accepted; and furthermore, disobedience would be extremely intolerable.

In *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* the character is treated completely differently to that praised by Bakhtin in Dostoevsky's novels, namely that the character should be treated as "ideologically authoritative and independent" and the perception of the novelist, "as the author of a fully weighted ideological conception of his own." (Bakhtin 1984, p. 5). Ali has objectified his characters; they are nothing but vehicles to transfer his own ideas, beliefs and concerns. Bakhtin's disapproval of Leo Tolstoy's characterization could, by and large, be applied to *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*: "[t]he hero's discourse is confined in the fixed framework of the author's discourse about him." (Bakhtin 1984, p. 56). As Qawami (2007) and H'esen (2007) showed in their examination of Ali's novels, his use of multiple narration and other "compositional devices" such as the "*Ich-Erzählung* form (first person narration)" or his, "constructing the novel in scenes", have not been adequate enough to result in, "eliminating authorial discourse" and creating a truly polyphonic novel (in the Bakhtinian sense).⁷²

⁷¹ [Ê]wareyêkî seyr bû, lew êwareyewe jiyânî hemûman gorra, ta ew êwareye ême komellêk mindall bûyn teniya gememan be amêre mosîqiyekanman dekirde [...] ta ew sate her çî mosîqayekim lê dabû, her çîyek fêr bûbûm, her çîyek bîstibûm hîç nebûn cige le kefêkî sipî ke şepolî ew awazaney celadet le gell xoy da birdî u negerranewe.

⁷² A 'genuine' polyphonic novel, according to Bakhtin, allows for "[a] plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousness." (1984, p. 6)

Therefore, the reader faces some lifeless and, as it were, alien creatures, that have either turned into angels or devils, whose dilemmas and concerns are one and the same, that of their creator. Throughout the novel one single voice dominates and silences the other voices. Unlike Dostoevsky, as Bakhtin remarks, who creates “free people capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him” (1984, p. 6), in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* Ali has created, to borrow Bakhtin’s terms, “voiceless slaves”, either incapable of questioning him or, even when disagreeing with him, facing total humiliation, as discussed above. One might say that none of the characters in this novel live on earth. The true art saviours have ascended into heaven and anyone outside the group has descended into the nether world.

2.7. The diminishing of the official nationalist discourse

Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan covers a five-year period in the history of Iraqi Kurdistan between 1988 and 1993. This was an unprecedented era both in terms of national calamities and historic opportunities for the Iraqi Kurds. As mentioned earlier, in this novel Ali is deeply concerned with the Anfal campaign. Yet, contrary to what it might have seemed at first sight, the novel is not an attempt to present the Kurds, at least the Iraqi Kurds, as a unified nation or one that uses literary rhetoric to unite them against the ruthless Iraqi regime. It does not romanticize the Kurdish rebellions, nor does it nostalgically lament the good days of the past in Kurdistan—contrary to the other novels in this research which embody some of the above elements. *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*, severely criticizes the main Kurdish political parties in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The novel does not make any distinction between the two main Kurdish parties, the PDK and the PUK, who, after decades of intense clashes with central governments, liberated Iraqi Kurdistan in 1991 from the oppressive Iraqi regimes. Riding a symbolic horse, Celadet travels around Iraqi Kurdistan and recounts what he has observed on his journey:

Riding on that horse, once again I observed Kurdistan, the homeland thronged with simple ordinary people; an outstandingly pure land raped both by its occupiers and saviours. This homeland is like a girl kidnapped by a giant and ugly devil who has ruined its beauty. On the other hand, although he wanted to free her, a knight's lust for raping that girl is no less than that of the devils. (p. 406).⁷³

To Celadet, the Kurdish uprising of 1991, which was a turning point in the history of Iraqi Kurdistan, and which led to a de facto autonomous Kurdistan, was a failure. Because, as the passage above clearly shows, Iraqi Kurdistan, according to the narrator, Celadet, had not been freed; rather, this time it was occupied by the oppressive Kurdish political parties, i.e. the PDK and the PUK. Throughout the novel these parties are criticized for "corruption", "authoritarianism", and their "love of money" (see, for example, pp. 406, 469-71). Hendrên's remarks on the abduction of the 1991 uprising by the above parties would further illustrate the negative representation of the new Kurdish authority in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*. "Now the members and representatives of those parties [PDK and PUK]" he writes, "have monopolized the outcomes of the history of 1991 uprising in line with their personal interests. Above that, in order to protect their personal interests, they have deceived the dream of that movement and its goals which has cost the Kurds of Southern Kurdistan (Kurds of Iraq), thousands of victims" (2008b, p. 58).⁷⁴

In the same vein, in this novel these political parties are represented as having been entirely corrupted. To take an example, Celadet and Mistefa Şewnim are discussing what to do with Samir Babilî who has some important information regarding the Anfal campaigns and, probably, the place where there are secret weapons [of Saddam]" (p.470).⁷⁵ Celadet says to Mistefa: "I have no doubt that if I

⁷³ Min le ser ew espewe carêkî tir Kurdistanim debînîewe, ew nîştîmanem debînîyewe ke pîrr bû le mirovî asayî ciwan, zemînêkî bêwêne le pakî da ke ewaney dagîryan kirdiwe etkiyan kirdiwe, ewaneş ke wîstûyane rizgarî biken her etikyan kirdiwe. Nîştîmanêk le kiçêk deçêt dêwêkî zil û naşîrîn rifandibêt u ciwanî jakandibêt, siwarçakêkîş hatibêt rizgarî bikat, bellam şehwetî ew siwarçake bo laqe kirdin û etik kirdinî ew kiçe kemtir niye le şehwetî dêwekan.

⁷⁴ Êsta endam û nwêneranî ew hizbane le pê naw mebestî xoynada destiyan be ser akamekanî mêjûy bizav û raperînî beharî 1991da girtûwe. Diwacarîş le pê naw parastinî berjewendîyekanî xoyanda xewnî ew bizave u rêbazekeyan firîw dawê Ke kurdî başûr hezanran qurbanî u enfal kirdinî le ser dawê.

⁷⁵ renga şwênî çeke nihênîyekan bizanêt.

surrender Samirî Babilî to these Kurdish politicians, either they release him or murder him with no trial, or will sell him to the Ba'ath party" (p. 470).⁷⁶ In order to avoid that, he asks Babilî to provide him with a place where the Anfal survivors who had been tortured, injured, and mutilated by Samir could personally prosecute him. Mistefa in reply says:

We live in a frightening country ... they [the members of the dominant political parties in Iraqi Kurdistan] all know that I'm rich, they all know that I have plenty of properties; some of them have coveted the lands I own ... If anything happens, they take the opportunity to snatch away my properties; this new government is something else, its officials have a different desire, these clean and well-dressed politicians of ours are interested in land, are crazy for properties and wealth, they are crazy to have the whole kit and caboodle of this country. (p. 471)⁷⁷

Thus the newly established Kurdish government is presented as brutal, corrupt, and monopolistic, shattering the long-held dream of thousands of Iraqi Kurds of an independent Kurdistan in which all their basic rights and freedoms are secure.

Frustrated with the Kurdish authorities, Ali opts to narrate his own version of Kurdish identity and "Kurdayetî" [Kurdish nationalism]. To do so, he expropriates the nationalistic discourses from the dominant Kurdish political parties, which they in turn inherited from the previous Kurdish movements, and grants them to another group. Ali dethrones the previous national heroes of Iraqi Kurdistan; instead, he crowns a new hero, Celadet, who is determined to save beauty and establish justice. Interestingly, in the fictional world of *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* Ali reproduces this common belief to be found among Kurds from all parts of Kurdistan that a saviour hero is needed to free Kurdistan and save them.⁷⁸ This belief, however, had been

⁷⁶ dezanîm ger Samirî Babilî bideme dest em siyasetmedare Kurdane azadî deken, yan bê hiç dadgayîêk deykojin yan deyfroşnewe be be's û parekeşî denêne tenekey baxelliyan.

⁷⁷ Ême le willatêkî tirsnaçdayn ... hemûyan dezanîn min pardedarim, min mollkêkî zorim heye, hemûyan dezanîn, beşêk lewan çawyan le ser ew 'erdaney mine ... ger şitêk rû bidat be firsetî dezanîn bimxene jêr fişarewe ta ew mulkanem le jêr dest der bihênin, to nayannasît, em h'kûmete tazeye şitêkî tire, mesûlekanî core zewqêkî tiryân heye, em siyasetmedare pak û temîzaney min û to hezyan le zewîye, şetî xanûbere u samanin, şetî ewen dar û berdî em willate hî ewan bêt.

⁷⁸ In Iraqi Kurdistan, Mullah Mustafa Barzani was a charismatic saviour hero in his people's eyes. After the Kurdish movement failed under his leadership in 1975, Jalal Talabani and Masoud Barzani, the

reflected in classical Kurdish poetry long before Ali wrote his novel. Ehmedê Xanî (1651-1707) and Hacî Qadirî Koyî (1817-1897) desperately longed for a Kurdish king or Emir to free Kurdistan and its people.⁷⁹ Tragically, Kurdistan is still waiting for a hero to take revenge against its enemies, or to use Ali's imagery, a brave Knight to save this helpless girl, Kurdistan,⁸⁰ who has been imprisoned and raped by monsters and devils. Ali creates a fictional world in which a hero is commissioned to free the imprisoned Kurdistan which have been harassed and raped by both his enemies and previous "saviours".

To ensure the saviour hero, Celadet's success, his creator Ali grants him supernatural and extraordinary power. Hence, one might say that Ali's use of magical and fantastic elements in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* is a means to make the impossible, possible: to halt the never-ending calamities and tragedies of the Kurds in Iraq by creating an extraordinary hero with supernatural power.

The cultural belief of depending solely on one person to save the whole nation, then, recurs, this time in a fictional world. Ironically, Ali seeks to resolve the Kurds' plight and free Kurdistan by creating a hero to bring justice and happiness not only to the Kurds, but to all humanity by way of founding a utopia, i.e., "the city of white musicians". Yet, this hero-centred world of the novel might even make freedom and

PUK and the PDK leaders respectively, took on this role. In Iranian Kurdistan, Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou as the secretary general of the Democratic Party of the Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) was the heroic figure for the Kurds of Iran. For the Kurds of Turkey, the charismatic hero is Abdullah Öcalan, imprisoned since 1999 in the Imrali Island in Turkey.

⁷⁹ Xanî's famous poem written in the seventeenth century, and often quoted by some scholars as portraying the emergence of Kurdish nationalism, attributes one of the main reasons for the subordination of the Kurds to the Ottoman Empire as the absence of a Kurdish king:
Ger dê hebuya me padişahêk

.....

'Xalib nedibû li ser me ev Rom (Xanî 2008, p. 44).

[If we had a king

Ottomans could not dominate us].

Likewise, Koyî laments the demise of a golden era when the Kurdish Emirs were in power:

Kwa Walî Senendec, Begzadeyî Rewandiz

Kwa H'akimani Baban, mîrî Cizîr û Botan? (Koyî 2007, p. 79)

[Where is now the Vali of Sanandaj, the prince of Rawanduz?

Where are the rulers of Baban, the emir of Jazira Botan?

⁸⁰ Tellingly, Kurdistan and the name of some Kurdish cities, such as Hewlêr, Mahabad, and Bokeran, in different parts of Kurdistan are female names.

happiness for the Kurds of Iraq further unattainable. Galileo's statement in Bertolt Brecht's play *A Life of Galileo* "Unhappy the land that is in need of heroes" (2013, p. 69) could be true of the Kurdistan that is represented in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*: an "unhappy land" for centuries dreaming of its heroes to turn it into a happy land. However, the alternative society promised by the heroes in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* is a hierarchical one in which an all-knowing, god-chosen person stands above others. A "dominating and despotic father", regarded by Hendrên (2008) as the main obstacle which stands in the way of the development of the Kurdish society of Iraqi Kurdistan, is reproduced in the fictional world of *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*. Then, this new movement in Ali's novel, borrowing Hendrên's words on the movements in the political history of Iraqi Kurdistan, has not been able to "fulfill the Kurds' dreams and has ended up in failure by reproducing the same conservative spirit [in society]" (2008, p. 51).⁸¹

In *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* the future of the Kurds of Iraq is in the hands of a saviour hero, Celadet. Throughout the novel Ali has legitimized him as the only one capable of resolving the Kurdish issue in Iraqi Kurdistan in his novelistic world. He portrays the Iraqi Kurds as a nation that is persecuted for its different ethnicity by the Arabs ruling the country. Over the course of the novel an image of "us", as victims, is constructed against "them", the brutal Arab occupiers. At some points in the novel the protagonist and narrator, Celadet, makes statements about the Arabs and their language that verges on racism. They are not blamed or even denigrated for their deeds, but vice versa: according to him, their ethnicity determines their barbarism and cruelty. Tired of his clandestine life in the "city of yellow dusts", Celadet says to Celîlî Baran: "I hate dust, I hate this language; as you know, Arabic is the language of executioners, I'm sure you know that no one would be able to speak in this language that murderers also speak with" (p. 291).⁸² Elsewhere, recounting his

⁸¹ xewnekanî kurd azad bika, bellkû heman heresy pêş xoy, rohî nerîtgerî berhemhênayewe.

⁸² Rîqim le tep û toze, rîqim lem zimaneye, xot dezanî Erebî zimanî celadekane, ha xot dezanît ke kes natwanêt şew û roj bem zimane qise bikat ke piyawkojekan qisey pê deken.

arrest, together with Serheng Qasim and Ish'aq, Celadet addresses the reader and says:

In order not to ruin the pleasure of narrating and understanding the events, I will translate all the Arabic words of Arab figures [in the novel] into Kurdish ... not because I presume Kurdish to be a better language than Arabic, but because in my memory Arabic is the language of executioners, in my memory it is a scary language spoken by those with our blood on their hands. (p. 55)⁸³

However, taking into consideration the massacres, destruction and suffering inflicted upon the Kurds by the Iraqi regime, exclusively under the control of Sunni Arabs until 2003, Celadet's hatred for their language and their lands might be understandable, though not justifiable.

The conflict was mainly between the Iraqi Kurds and the Iraqi state rather than between the Kurds and Arabs (Zeidel 2011, p. 19). For the bulk of the short history of Iraq, there has not been a serious conflict between the Kurdish and Arabic people (ibid.). Except for the mixed areas, composed of Kurds and Arabs, the two nations have mostly remained strangers from each other. This strangeness and unfamiliarity is reflected in the Arabic novels of Iraqi novelists. Kurdistan and the Kurds were rarely represented in the Arabic novel of Iraq as there was "an accepted attitude in Iraqi culture and society" that "the Kurds are stranger, too distant even if they are close." (ibid. p. 24). However, in the few Arabic novels in which the Kurds are represented, they are pictured in a negative way (ibid.).

In this novel, the Kurdish national identity is constructed around territory, language, and otherness. The Kurdish territory in Iraq and the Kurdish language are the two main elements foregrounded in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* as the historical roots of Kurdish national identity. Kurdish territory and Kurdish language also play a significant role in forming Kurdish national identity as they are unequivocally

⁸³ min bo ewey lezzetî gêranewe w têgeyîştin le êwe têk nedem, hemû 'Erebiyekanî ewantan bo dekemewe kurdî, diyare debêt lêm tê bigen ... na le ber ewey ke kurdî be zimanêkî baştir dezanim, belkû le ber ewey 'Erebî le yadewerî minda zimanî celadekane, le yadewerî minda wek zimanêkî tirsnak wehaye ke ewane qisey pê deken ke destyan be xwênî ême sûr biwe.

distinguished from Arab territory and Arabic language in Iraq. To put it this way, in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* Iraqi Arabs are the “other” against which the Kurdish national identity has congealed. In this novel, Ali opposes Kurdistan as the land of Kurds to the rest of Iraq as the land of Arabs. Yet, the words “Kurdistan” and the “Kurds” throughout the novel are used only to refer to Iraqi Kurdistan and the Kurds of Iraq. Nowhere in the novel is there a reference to other parts of Kurdistan, nor to the idea of a “greater Kurdistan” in which all parts of Kurdistan are united.⁸⁴ Nor is there any attempt to define the borders of Iraqi Kurdistan, say, by mentioning and describing the cities and villages of Kurdistan. There are only a few references to Kurdistan in the novel which merely denotes Iraqi Kurdistan (for example on pages 5, 38, and 304). For Ali, Kurdistan (in Iraq) is an integrated entity which already exists and he does not see any reason to prove its existence to the Iraqi regime and to the world.⁸⁵

Drawing on Benedict Anderson (1991), the notion of Kurdistan as an “imagined community” constructed in the novelistic discourse of *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* differs from Maria O’She’s (2004) perception of this community. “[D]espite its divisions,” she writes “Kurdistan and the concept of Greater Kurdistan survive the reality as a powerful amalgam of myths, facts, and ambitions” (2004, p. 2). “Greater Kurdistan” is not Ali’s concern in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* whatsoever. Instead, he opts to construct a bigger “imagined community”: a community that, unlike the dream of thousands of Kurds to establish greater Kurdistan embodies universal values,

⁸⁴ Ozlem Galip (2012) in her study of Kurdish novels written by the Kurds from Turkey has found quite different results. She says that in these novels, “Kurdistan refers not only to Kurdish regions within the territory of Turkey; but includes other Kurdish regions in Syria, Iraq and Iran in parallel with the idea of ‘Greater Kurdistan’” (ibid. p.125).

⁸⁵ Interestingly, Galip’s study of the Kurdish novels of the Kurds from Turkey (2012) shows a different representation of Kurdistan in these novels. In them, a “detailed mapping of the boundaries of Kurdistan or dividing it from other non-Kurdish places constitutes the central construction of Kurdistan as the homeland of Kurds.” (p. 125). The differences between Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkish Kurdistan in terms of their status in the political structure of the nation-states they reside in, might account for the different representation of Kurdistan in the novelistic discourses from these regions – Iraqi Kurdistan enjoying a semi-autonomous status while Turkish Kurdistan yet struggling to secure their basic political, cultural, and economic rights in Turkey.

aesthetics, truth, and happiness. To put it another way, in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* Ali constructs a universal utopia, a cosmopolitan “city of white musicians” in which poets, musicians, artists, and the underprivileged from all over the world could be its citizens. Having said that, as I discussed earlier, only some artists and musicians are granted the citizenship of this Utopia.

Under the influence of magical realist novels of Latin America and post-modernist novels, Ali is distanced from the classical and social realism that dominated Kurdish novels from Iraq since its emergence in this part of Kurdistan until 1990s. *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* is a self-reflexive novel with a plot abounding with magical and fantastic elements. Yet, Ali has not employed these formal techniques to challenge the existing order and create a different world in his novel, as is the case with magical realist and self-reflexive novels. His *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*, one might say, is a magical realist metafiction in terms of form which reproduces and reinforces the already existing power structure in the Kurdish society of Iraq. The characters in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* share some characteristic features of the folkloric characters in terms of power relations: both having a saviour hero at the centre with some characters at his service to complete his mission. In the same vein, female characters in the novel are subordinate to the male characters. That is, the traditional perception of Womanhood, defined from a male perspective, is reinforced in the novelistic discourse of *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*.

The hierarchical structure of the novel has led to a monologic representation of events and characters. As such, the characters are not treated by the narrators as equal subjects, as holders of their own ideology standing on the same plane with their creator; rather they are “objectified” and “finalized”. The characters in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* are either humiliated and derogated or assimilated into the dominant ideology of the novel represented by the protagonist, Celadet. Equally, the Kurdish national identity is presented from only one perspective, that is, a narrow and essentialist perception of national identity, leading to the marginalization of parts of society, for example, women. In *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* the older national

heroes are superseded by the new heroes, i.e. Celadet and his followers, who opt to establish justice in Iraqi Kurdistan and end the calamities and sufferings of the Iraqi Kurds who underwent massacres and brutal suppression, especially, under Saddam's rule. However, according to the novel, the suffering did not come to an end after the 1991 liberation of Iraqi Kurdistan, which this time, was inflicted upon them by the Kurdish government.

Yet Iraqi Kurds have become more frustrated with the new Kurdish authority as a result of four years of a full-scale civil war between the PDK and the PUK. This frustration and pessimism generated by the promise of a grim future for Iraqi Kurdistan prevails in Sherzad Hassan's *Temî Ser Xerend* [The Misty Canyon] (2003) which opens when the war had just come to an end. In the following chapter I shall examine the effects of this civil war in the novelistic world of *Temî Ser Xerend*, along with the social, cultural, and political discourses and ideologies which have played a role in the construction and representation of the characters' subjectivity.

CHAPTER THREE

The decline of a heroic culture: subjectivity in the labyrinth of Kurdish folklore in Hassan's *Temî Ser Xerend*

The previous chapter demonstrated the discursive formation of the characters' sense of their identity through prevailing discourses and ideologies as represented in the novelistic world of Ali's *Şharî Mosiqare Sipyekan*. It also examined the formal features of the novel with relation to subjectivity. I argued that the novel, despite employing magical and fantastic elements is grounded on a realistic mode of narration in which another form of hierarchal order based in essentialism is reproduced. Similarly, subjectivity is represented in an essentialist way. The protagonist and some of the other characters, as holders of the superior ideology, perceive themselves to be coherent and unique and their quest for "justice", "beauty" and "truth" to be embedded in "true art". In spite of their disillusionment with the Kurdish government, they have not lost hope; rather, since they are equipped with magical powers, they seek to change their society by establishing and spreading a Western high culture that is embodied in classical music and painting. This chapter examines another novel from Iraqi Kurdistan which covers, more or less, the same historical period.

Sherzad Hassan (1952-) was born in Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan. He graduated in English language and literature from Baghdad University in 1974. Like Ali, he was greatly affected by the aftermath of the 1991 uprising which they both believed had led to a devastating civil war and the return of authoritarianism. In an interview with KNN Channel in 2012 Hassan stated: "In my opinion the uprising of twenty years ago was nothing but the occupation of land and domination over people in the name of a

Kurdish patriarchy [authority].”⁸⁶ Yet these two writers approach this historical era differently. Whilst Ali seeks to create another world in his novels by way of magical elements, Hassan exposes the catastrophic post - 1991 political, economic, and social circumstances without suggesting or creating any alternative. In effect, he portrays the internal life of his characters to be affected and restricted by the socio-political circumstances and cultural norms and conventions.

By the 1980s, the Kurdish novel in Iraqi Kurdistan had already started to shift away from merely being a medium to convey the political concerns and ideologies of the author. Since then, Kurdish novelists have paid more attention to the formal features of the novel and the internal life of the characters. This shift, from exterior to interior representation flourished in Hassan’s short stories and novels since he depicts the internal life of individual characters and the very private aspects of their life in the broader socio-political context. In Hassan’s works the protagonist is at odds with his or her environment and revolts against a symbolic authoritarian father represented in the form of, a teacher, a head of school, a father in a family, or a politician. The defiant hero challenges the infinite power of these “fathers” by refusing to conform to the social norms and values regarding, for example, love and sexual relationships and the traditional familial and social roles.

Foregrounding the internal life of individual characters and breaking the taboos in Kurdish society by exploring patriarchal culture and sexual relationships, Hassan drew readers’ and critics’ attention to his works. He is an influential writer whose works have been widely examined by critics. Hassan’s novelette, *H’esar û Segekani’ Bawkim* [Hesar and My Father’s Dogs] (1996) has, more than his other works provoked hot debate among critics for its radical approach both in terms of form and content. Formally, it shares most of the characteristic features of the mainstream modernist novel, among others, fragmented narrative, stream of consciousness,

⁸⁶ Be qenae’tî min raperînî bîst û yek sallî lemew ber cige le dagîr kirdinî xak û xellik le rêy bawkêkî kurdîyewe hîçêkî tir nebwe.

alienated anti-hero, and subjective presentation of reality. He has drawn on these narrative techniques to explore the inner life of the protagonist, his dilemmas, and anxieties for his decision to murder his ruthless father. The novel's patricide theme, unprecedented in Kurdish novel, then, triggered a series of critiques which shed light on the father-son relationship in the novel from, especially, Freudian psychology.⁸⁷

The deliberate portrayal of the internal life of individual characters and presenting them in constant conflict with their environment are also the main theme in Hassan's later works. This chapter examines subjectivity in Hassan's second novel, *Temî Ser Xered* [The Misty Canyon], published in 2003, by exploring the novel's formal features along with the socio-political context and prominent discourses presented. In the first section, I shall examine the formal characteristic features and premises underlying *Temî Ser Xered* and their implications for a sort of subjectivity that is presented in the novel. Strictly speaking, it is neither a realist nor a modernist text. Rather, Hassan has combined some features of both trends. As we shall see, the novel enjoys, among other features, a stable and reliable narrative, coherent structure, and straightforward language. Yet its protagonist, as in modernist narratives, is an anti-hero alienated from his society. The second section focuses on the social and psychological consequences in the aftermath of Iraqi Kurdistan's civil war. This war has massively damaged society both physically and psychologically. According to the novel, it has shattered the Kurds' dream in Iraq for an independency which brings with it, freedom and justice. As a result of this devastating war, people are represented as frustrated, indifferent, and bereft of sympathy. The third and last section of this chapter examines the prevailing discourses in the novel which vie with one another to shape the protagonist's subjectivity. Also, I shall discuss how Hassan

⁸⁷ For more information, see Herdî, R. Eh'med (1998). *Bawkî Kurd le Nêwan Kuştin û Zindû bûneweda* [The Kurdish Father Oscillating between Murder and Resurrection]. *Rehend*. Vol. 5, pp. 134-60; Camî, Nîhad (2008). *Xewnî Kuştinî Bawk û Intimakrdin bo Petrîyarkîyet* [The Dream of Patricide and Affiliation to Patriarchy]. *Raman*. Vol. 137 (10), pp. 49-58; Resûl, Bayiz Hellmet (2012). *Rehendî Derûnî le Çîrokekanî Şêzad H'essen da*. [Psychological aspects in Şêzad H'essen's stories]. Hewler: Mukiryanî Publication; Othman (2009)

has orchestrated these discourses in such a way that none of them overweighs the others, and hence, to a large extent, has produced a polyphonic novel, in the Bakhtinian sense.

3.1. Realist in form, modernist in content

As he does in earlier works,⁸⁸ in *Temî Ser Xered*, Hassan foregrounds the conflict between the individual and society as a whole. This novel is about a boy's sufferings and difficulties within the family and school in a patriarchal society. He is so fascinated by his grandmother's folk tales and love stories that he could not wait to grow up to become one of those heroes in the tales. But, he finds the school boring and shows no interest in the lessons as a result of which he is frequently punished severely by school authorities and his father. Ferhad feels lonely despite of his young age; In his childhood world, he only loves his "crazy" goat, his grandmother, and Şîrîn, his classmate. One early morning when Ferhad and Şîrîn have arrived at school before other students, he, who is deeply upset for the death of his goat, is caught by school's headmaster while his head is on Şîrîn's lap. He is beaten within an inch of his life and is sent with his grandmother to a nearby city for medical treatment and later leaves Kurdistan for a European country (the novel does not provide precise information on this part of Ferhad's life). After living abroad for years, Ferhad, who is now a young man, has returned to his village in the hope of finding his lost childhood. However, to his surprise, the village and its inhabitants have undergone enormous changes. Most of the houses, including his family home have been destroyed as a result of the civil war and all of his relatives and friends have left the city.

⁸⁸ In his earlier novels, *H'esar û Segekanî Bawkim* [Hesar and My Father's Dogs] (1996) and *Pêdeştî Karmamize Kujrawekan* [The Country of Killed Gazelles], Hassan also shows how subjectivity is affected by the social values and norms. He portrays the protagonists' inner life and dilemmas in the face of restrictive traditions and conventions in the Kurdish society of Iraq.

Temî Ser Xerend is narrated by the adult Ferhad who recounts his childhood retrospectively. The events and other characters in the novel are revealed through the protagonist, the younger Ferhad's eyes, but voiced by the narrator, the adult Ferhad. The novel is closer to realist works than modernist ones in terms of, among other things, plot, characterization methods, and focalization. It has a "cause-and-effect narrative" with few flashbacks and flash-forwards and enjoys a stable and reliable point of view. Above all, according to Pam Morris, it considers words to be a determining feature in distinguishing the modernist from the realist mode of writing, "as a means of accurate communication transmission," rather than their "creative capacity." (2003, p. 15). That is, Hassan does not treat the world as modernist novelists such as Joyce and Woolf do, by representing it, "as a condition and experience that are, at least in part, dependent upon and modified by language" (Bradford 2007, p. 5). For him, the world is something, to put it in Bradford's words, "composed predominantly of pre-linguistic states and objects to be articulated and represented by language—the premise of the classic realists" (2007, p. 5). Stefan Meyer's account of modernism in Arabic literature and its difference from its European counterpart is applicable to Kurdish literature and, hence, to Hassan's *Temî Ser Xerend*. He argues that modernism in Arabic literature, "began from a radicalized political viewpoint and a conservative approach to experimentation with language. Modernism in the West, on the other hand, presented a radical experimentation with language, but with a much more conservative political agenda" (2001, p. 272). Equally, *Temî Ser Xerend* bears a radical socio-political viewpoint, yet remains conservative in its treatment of language.

Iraqi Kurdistan is unfamiliar with the Western type of modernity, which brought about, as Christopher Butler remarks, "stresses" and "strains" among other things, due to "the loss of belief in religion ... the expansion of markets and the commodification brought about by capitalism ... and changing beliefs about relationships between the sexes" (2010, pp. 1-2). This new environment along with ground-breaking ideas on "self" and "identity" rendered necessary a new form and

language to represent subjectivity. None of the above features of modernity could be found in Kurdish society, which is well reflected in Hassan's *Temî Ser Xerend*. In effect, Hassan criticizes the powerful role of religion and tradition in Kurdish society in Iraq. Thus, given that Iraqi Kurdistan has not gone through the same historical stages as the West, it will not come as a surprise if a modernist-oriented novel like *Temî Ser Xerend* bears significant differences from its Western counterpart in terms of form and content. The tragedy-ridden modern history of this region, its current political chaos and uncertain future which is represented in the novel as it unfolds, as well as the emerging conflict between the individual and society as a whole, might have led Hassan to combine realist and modernist forms and premises to convey both his political and social concerns. For a Kurdish writer who has witnessed massacres, civil war and internal conflicts along with constraining social conventions and customs, realism ought to have been an appealing mode through which to reflect his concerns, because, as Pam Morris argues, "the project of realism is founded upon an implicit consensual belief that realities do exist 'out there' beyond linguistic networks and that we can use language to explore and communicate our always incomplete knowledge of that ever-changing historical materiality." (2004, p. 93). I shall now illustrate these formal features by looking closely at the novel.

The opening passage of the novel shows the realist perspective and voice, through which the events and characters are revealed and described; also Hassan's treatment of language as a means to transfer and communicate the reality "out there" is conspicuous in this passage.

During all those years of migration and travelling, wondering around mountains and vagabonding about cities of the world [...] I had but one dream: to find the opportunity to return to my childhood village [...] I had no doubt that the blue sky above my homeland was more beautiful than in other places in the world. Wherever I felt lonely and sad I was remembering those beautiful summer nights in which thousands of shining stars were pouring down into my breast and pillow [...] There was always

something which blurred my memories ... I was afraid to return and see that everything has changed.⁸⁹

This mode of narration becomes the set pattern the author adopts in the course of the novel. As the other characters do not take on the narrative we are presented with a fixed and smooth unfolding of events from only one perspective that is in stark contrast to Nahae's *Balindekanî Dem Ba*, and Qawami's *Siweyla* discussed in the following chapters, which are characterized by a highly fragmented narrative.

Temî Ser Xerend could be regarded as a social, and at the same time, a psychological novel. It is a social novel because it exposes the constraining social values and conventions along with the new political life of the region after its liberation in 1991. The novel's psychological aspect lies in its attempt to expose the consciousness and inner life of the protagonist against the backdrop of socio-political circumstances. Hassan's approach to presenting the problems of his society is, by and large, in line with mainstream realist narratives in the sense that it has sought to present to its reader with, "a slice of real life". The following long passage helps to illustrate this point:

I hated Mamosta 'Osman and maths. I was so delighted when I made him angry [...] I don't know why my mind always wandered during his lesson. I was thinking of my crazy goat. He knew when I was distracted ... when so, he asked me questions ... it was always the same question: either it was the damn multiple tables or division. In a very cold winter morning I was excited that the lesson would end soon and I can see my goat and the flock. He wrote down a long number on the board and asked me to divide it by 9, knowing that I could not do it.

"Stand up ... son of a bitch!", he said.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Her diway gerranewem le x'erîbî, le paş koç û serhellgirtinî çendeşa sall, well bûnim de nêw şax û kêwan, derbederîm de nêw gond û şaran [...] take xewnêkm ewe bû rojêk bê w bom birexsê bigerrêwewe mellbendî mindallî [...] min dillniya bûm ke asman tenha le willatî minda ewende şine, şînêk ke le hîç asmanêkî dike da nembînîwe, le her şwênêk da dillim teng biwaye ew şewe xoşaney hawînim be yadî xom dehênîwe ke hezareha estêre be dem cirîwewe derrjane ser sîne w serînekem [...] hemîşe le dûrewê le ber dîde w xeyallimda, temêk şitkeanî lê têkell dekirdim ... detirsam lewey bigerrêwewe w şitekan her hemûyan gorrabin (p. 8).

⁹⁰ It literally means "son of a donkey."

I did so. Coolly and bravely I looked at the long number. At this time I was more distracted by two doves in the tree behind the window. Excited by the presence of a female dove, the male was flapping its wings madly as he wanted to mate with her. Mamosta 'Osman was shaking with anger when he noticed that I had also distracted all the students and drawn their attention to the doves. He kicked me in the butt; it made such a noise which frightened the two birds. Soon they separated and flew into the sky ... I peed myself [...] then he asked:

“Dog father ... how many sheep and goats do you have at home?”

I said anxiously: sixty ... fifty ... forty ... thirty ... no ... hang on ... forty four including the crazy goat ... or forty five.

He went mad at me and asked again:

“Forty four or forty five?”

Scared and helpless, I said:

Forty and something ... forty something ...!

He spat into my face, I wanted to clean it ...

“Forty and your father’s grave ... don’t ... don’t wipe my spit ... animal ...”

He suddenly slapped me in the face and punched me in the back of my head so strongly that it blurred my vision [...] (pp. 55-58).⁹¹

⁹¹ Min dojminî Mamosta 'Osman û matimatîk bûm, çende xoş bû ke riqim helldestand (...) nazanim bo hemîşe le dersekey ew da min xeyallim her lay bizne şêt bû, deyzanî key xeyallim derrwa ... ew kate hellî dstandim ... hemîşe xiştey lêk dan û yan dabeşkirdne le'netîyeke bû ... beyanîyêkî zor sardî zistan bû, diwa wane u xoşî ewem bû zeng lê deda w her tawêkî dîkeye w degemewe lay bizne şêt û mêgel ra dedem. Jimaryekêkî zor dirêjî nûsî ... dabeşî kem be ser no da, deşîzanî ke nayzanim... Heste ... Kurrî ker ...!

Hestam û bê xeyall û milhorr û bê bak le jimare dirêjeke wird debûmewe, paşan dû kokoxtî ser dirextekey pişt pencereke pitir xeyallyan birdim. Nêreke şêtane ballî lêk deda w qestî bû heta zûwe be ser mêyeke da bitsê [...] ke zanî min sernicî hemû qutabîyekanîşim bo lay kokoxtîyakan rakêşa [...]le riqana her dû lalêwî keffîyan derda w yek şeqî le qûnim hellda w be texte reşekey wenûsandim, le gell zirmey şeqeke her dû kokoxtîyekeş gêj û zendeq çû lêk bûnewe w firrîn be asman da ... A'detî mîz ta ran û belek û naw pêlliwekanî terr kirdim (...) pirsî

Seg bab ... to şîwanî çend merr û biznanî?

Be dem heniskewe witim:

Şest ... penca ... çil ... sî ... ne ... biweste Mamosta ... be bizne şêteve çil û çîwar ... yan çil û pênc Şêtane pirsî:

Çil û çîwar ... yan çil û pênc?

Şiprize w damaw witim

Çil û hên ... çil hîn ...!

Tifêkî lê kirdim, wiştîm bîsirmewe ...

Çil û gorrî bawkit ... nekey Ew tife nesrîteve ... h'eywan ...

Hassan aimed at reflecting and portraying his society in a given historical era and appraising its various social problems such as patriarchy, poor education, the relationship between sexes and civil war. Through the protagonist's perspective in the above passage we learn of the inefficiency of the education system in Iraqi Kurdistan during the eighties. It is this mode of representing and describing these social issues which makes *Temî Ser Xerend* a realist novel. In this way, "the reality effect" is created through a detailed description of places and events. Furthermore, the language used in this passage and throughout the novel is a familiar, conversational one with the purpose of conveying a horrendous experience comprehensibly and unambiguously to the reader.

Having said that, I do not reiterate the modernist and postmodernist critics and novelists by stigmatizing realism as a literary mode which is inherently complicit with the dominant ideology in reinforcing the current order of things. As Morris argues, it is reductionism to state that realist works produce "philistine readerly narrative" instead of "new understanding of the world" by challenging the "existing conceptual and socio-political status quo." (Morris 2003, p. 37). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, *Temî Ser Xerend* is formally conservative, but politically radical. It is a critical and confrontational account of the subjects subjugated by the authoritarianism and constraining conventions prevailing in the Kurdish society of Iraq. That said, at least, the protagonist, Ferhad, exerts his agency in the face of the authorities and their discourses presented in the novel, though it is attended by anguish and loneliness.

Temî Ser Xerend, however, is distanced from Victorian realism by presenting almost the entire work in the protagonist, Ferhad's focal point. In this way, his subjective knowing of things and his inner life is conveyed. In effect, the novel is mainly concerned with Ferhad as a child, who is charmed by his grandmother's heroic tales and love stories which have planted in him the ambition to become a

national hero. However, there are serious barriers in the way of fulfilling his dreams, for example, social conventions, religious beliefs, and the educational system. From a very young age, Ferhad finds himself at odds with his environment, and the gap between him and the others widens as time passes.

[...] My pallor and weak body, my tearful eyes and dry lips [...] together with my refusal to drink water or take food, had won me a great respect ... they were all praying for my health; in my whole life this was the first time that I was dauntless and they were scared. I felt a sort of demonic pleasure in my suffering, thanks to sickness, fear, and death ... thanks to my screaming and shouting [...] I wanted to tell them bravely that this is the end of my life ... the end ... I have decided to die ... get out of here ... none of you are my mother and father and grandmother [...] it's over, I shall no longer meet you again, no longer you'll see me like an obedient son living amongst you [...] I swear by the crazy goat's soul that I'll never again be your son and brother ... never again become your friend and neighbour. Unless you let me become a shepherd again, I shall not eat breakfast; unless my dad becomes a human and a father who no longer beats me, I shall kill myself, as the crazy goat did [...] I wanted to take revenge on the whole village for the death of my goat and my separation from Şîrîn that morning. [...] my goat's soul had incarnated in me and I wanted to depart from all straight roads which from now on I might face [...] (pp. 90-92).⁹²

Ferhad has to pay the price for refusing to conform to social norms and traditional values. He had faced severe physical punishment and an increasing alienation from his environment. He feels frustrated, lonely, and unhappy in a society where his desires and dreams are not taken into consideration whatsoever by the others.

Temî Ser Xerend's presentation of a protagonist in conflict with society resembles the modern European fiction, such as Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Joyce's *A*

⁹² [...] reng zerd û pirze lê biraw, çawanî x'erqim le firmêsk, wişk hellatinî lêwim [...] toranim le aw û nan way kirdbû zor be tirs û şermewe rêz le rakişanim bigrin û ... her hemû dest be do'a deparranewe nemrim, le hemû jiyanim da eweyan take carêk bû ke min bê bak bim û ewan zendeq çû, core lezetêkî şeytanem lew derde debînî, supas bo nexoşî w tirs û merg ... supas bo firmêskekanim û her çwar pelî mirdûm ke nedecûllan ... supas bo zirîke w hawarim [...] demwîst dilêrane pêyan billêm: min tewaw ... tewaw ... birryarim dawê îdî bimrim ... billawey lê biken ... kestan dayk û bawk û nenkî min nîn [...] îdî tewaw min nayemewe nawtan, debê be h'esert bin wek kurrêkî birsî w gwêrrayell le ser xwantan dabinîşmewe [...] swênd be mergî bizne şêt neçmewe ew pole sarde [...] demwîst be hemûyan billêm: swênd bê be mergî bizne şêt nebmewe kurr û biratan ... nembewe hawrê w dirawsêtan ... yan demkenewe be şîwan yan le şîr û mastî beynyan dillm etorênim, yan bawke debê be însan û be bawk û çîdîke hellim nawasê yan wekû bizne şêt xom helldêrim û xom seringum dekem [...] demwîst toley mergî biznekem û lêk dabirranî ew beyanîyey min û Şîrîn le hemû awayî bikemewe [...] roh'î binekem hatibwe naw roh'î min û demwîst le hemû raste rêyekan la bide m ke lemewdiwa dekewne ser rêm û bê bak û kele şeq şerim le hîç şîwanêk nekem û çille giya h'eramekan bixom [...] (pp. 90-92).

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, and Albert Camus' *The Stranger* which focus on a central isolated protagonist who cannot relate with the society. In *Mrs Dalloway* ([1925] 1947), all characters, in greater or lesser degree, feel neglected and lonely in post-World War I London. In such alienating society, as the novel indicates, the individual characters have lost their capability to create genuine contacts with others. Despite socializing with people and bringing them together every now and then, Clarissa Dalloway, the novel's eponymous protagonist, deep inside remains lonely and isolated. Yet feelings of loneliness and isolation are in its extreme for Septimus Warren Smith who Suffers from post-traumatic effects of the war as well. As a result, he finds it more difficult to conform to the alienating requirements of society which consequently leads to his madness and, towards the end of the novel, his suicide. In the same way, Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* ([1914-15] 1992), Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis* ([1915] 2009), and Meursault in *The Stranger* ([1942] 1988) are isolated from a society which, in Matz's words, "had gone cold, materialistic, [and] haphazard" (2004, p. 47). Despite significant socio-political and economic differences between Iraqi Kurdish society and European countries, the mechanism of alienation (its reasons, though, might vary from one society to another) as presented in *Temî Ser Xerend* bears considerable similarities to European modernist fiction which were mostly produced in the second and third decades of the past century. As in those works, in *Temî Ser Xerend* the protagonist does not conform to the requirements of social norms and conventions and accordingly becomes separated and alienated from the society.

Being an anti-hero however, does not make him unlikable to the reader. As Matz says, "[T]here is real heroism in anti-heroism, in an unheroic world." (2004, p. 46). Furthermore, Hassan makes a hero of his protagonist, Ferhad, in the readers' eyes by showing almost the entire story from his perspective and, hence, rendering the readers' sympathy. Ferhad wants to become one of those heroes in his grandmother's tales. Given that he lives in a new era in which there is no place for

“heroic action”, his efforts to become a legendary hero like Ferhad or a prophet like Muses ends in failure. As is the case with typical modernist antiheroes, Ferhad is not distinguished for being highly intelligent, doing an extraordinary thing, or achieving greatness. Conversely, he is less accomplished and successful both at school and as a shepherd compared with other boys of his age. In an interior monologue Ferhad’s thinking is verbalized: “Oh God ... what was I expecting ... I wanted to be a lover like Ferhad and a holy and great shepherd like Muses the prophet, but they [teachers] are caning me like any lazy student.” (p. 47).⁹³ Having said that, he is a modern hero in Iraqi Kurdish society for his bravery in opposing authoritarianism and his persistence in following his dreams, regardless of his success or failure.

Another thing that has made *Temî Ser Xerend* a modernist novel is that the narrator and protagonist, Ferhad, is alienated from a community that is, to borrow Schwartz’ words describing modern British and Irish fiction, “corrupt and morally bankrupt.” (Schwartz 2005, p. 33). In the next section I shall examine the socio-political circumstances of Iraqi Kurdistan soon after the civil war which coincided with the return of the adult Ferhad.

3.2. Post-civil war Kurdistan: Frustrated subjects in a disintegrated community

The once highly respected moral values have disappeared in the Kurdish community in Iraq due to sweeping changes caused by the civil war. The adult Ferhad, who has returned to Kurdistan after years, is stunned when he faces a totally different home from the one he had left years ago and dreamed of during all those years abroad. “Through the window of the car,” Ferhad says, “I saw tens of dead horses on both sides of the road with lots of dogs feasting on them.” (p. 10).⁹⁴ He, then asks the driver and other passengers what has caused their death. One of

⁹³ Xoda hawar ... min be temay çî bûm ... demwîst wek Ferhad a’şiq bim û wek mûsa pêx’emberî şîwan mezin û pîroz bim, ke çî wek her qutabîyêkî tembell naw lepim agir deden. (p. 47).

⁹⁴ Le pencerey qemerekewe be her dû berî cadeka demrrwanî w deyeha espî mirdûm bînê ke lêre w lewê segel têêyan wirûkabûn (...) le hemû jîyanm da bew jimare zore espî mirdûm nebînîbû.

the passengers tells him, “no one has seen such weird things ... these are all God’s punishment, these are signs and our turn will come soon ... so many weird incidents indicates the approach of the End time ... I’ve heard that galloping horses suddenly fall down, apparently after losing their vision.” (p. 11).⁹⁵ The other passenger intervenes and says: “Since the old days no one has ever heard that the fish in the river have been infected by worms ... but yes, now all the fish in that river have died of worms.” (p. 11).⁹⁶

Hassan uses the metaphor of a mass epidemic in which horses suddenly fall and die and the fish in a river are infected by worms in order to convey the End time, the devastating civil war in Iraqi Kurdistan. It strikes the reader that these horrendous events are a sort of divine retribution inflicted upon a community that has committed the unforgivable sin, that is, fratricide.

There are also the literal references to and descriptions of massive destruction caused by the civil war which further reinforces the image of End time: the end of the euphoria of an independent and free Kurdistan in Iraq after 1991 liberation. Arriving at his village, Ferhad faces the ruins of civil war everywhere.

Everything had changed but the sun, sky, and the wind which made the trees’ leaves flow, no ... these birds, people, animals, trees and houses are different by far than those I saw in my dreams hundreds of times. A large number of houses and buildings had collapsed, tens of trees had toppled [...] a huge number of stray dogs had manged and could barely bark at passers-by, there were a mass of dead birds which flies and ants were feasting on [...] I was stumbling over the carcasses of sheep, goats, horses and mules (p.15).⁹⁷

⁹⁵ kaki xom le çî serdem û zemanêk da şitî wa bwe Her hemûy x’ezebî xudaye, ewe nîşaneyê w nore dête ser êmeş ... ewende şitî seyr û semere rû deden ke delîle axir zeman nizîk bûbêtewe ... e min bîstîtim be dem bay x’arewe her çawr pelî espekan deşkên û ... ser sim dan û dem be yek dadanyan yekêke, giwaye yekem car kwêraîyan dadê w hîç nabînin.

⁹⁶ qurban le awaîyekey ême da çemêkman heye w lewetey heyn û le baw û bapîranmanewe kes neybîstwe kirim le masî bidat, kirim ... bellê kirim emsall her hemû masîyekanî naw ew çemey kuşt.

⁹⁷ Tenha şitêk ke negorra bû xor û asman û ew baye bû ke le gell hellkirdinî liq û popî dirextekanî deşnanewe, na ... hergîz ew mel û mirov û ajell û dirext û xanûwane heman ew şitane nebûn ke min le xewnekanma sedeha car wkeû xoyan dembînînewe, datepînî xanû w ballexaneyêkî zor, şikanî deye ha dirext le naw qedewe [...] ew hemû sege berellayaney gerr bibûn û be zeh’metêkî zorewe bem û bew

This massive destruction has led to an unprecedented social breakdown and diminishing of long-held traditional moral values among the Kurds in Iraq.

Ferhad then finds himself in a new environment inhabited by people who have metamorphosed into indifferent and apathetic beings following the civil war:

Walking around our old house, I saw people here and there lacking sympathy, kindness and dignity; they seemed very scared, egoistic, and sad in their dirty clothes. It was the first time I realized that if people are destroyed and exhausted and if they live in ruined houses, they could not be kind, beautiful, and delicate (p. 16).⁹⁸

In *Temî Ser Xerend* Hassan presents a grim future for Iraqi Kurdistan. Unlike Bakhtyar Ali's *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan* which romanticises people, portraying them as angels whose moral values are not spoiled by disappointing and destructive Kurdish party politics, Hassan portrays a society which is disintegrated and "morally bankrupt". While in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan* both the protagonists and ordinary people are presented as superior to their environment, in *Temî Ser Xerend*, the protagonist and ordinary people are both highly vulnerable in the face of an overwhelming civil war. People have lost their virtues and agency, and, according to the narrator, if people are "exhausted", "destroyed", and have lost their homes, they are no longer capable of love and empathy.

The adult Ferhad feels lonely, frustrated, and helpless in his transformed homeland. He had returned in the hope of living among the same people of his village who were once kind, caring, and supportive. (p. 16). To his surprise, he feels even lonelier among his fellow citizens than elsewhere:

in airports, in planes, ships, and trains jammed with foreigners and strangers, in those bustling cities where no one notices you ... I haven't felt as lonely as I do at this

dewerrîn, ew hemû mele mirdûwaney ke mêş û megez û mêrûle têyan wirûka bûn [...] be dem rêwe, lêre w lewê, satmem le kele serî merr û bizin û esp û hêstir dekirî.

⁹⁸ Be çwar dewrî h'esareke da pîyasem dekirî û lêre w lewê ew merdumanem debînî ke hîç soz û bezeyî w xoşewîstî w şiko be çawyanewe diyar nebû, zor tirsok û xoperist û xembar le jêr keçe cilekanyan da dehatin û deçûn, yekem car bû bizanim ke eger miovwêran û mandû bê w le naw kelaweda bijî meh'alle bitwanê mihreban û cwan û nasik bê.

moment, I wished that someone would show up in the ally and embrace me with open arms, invited me to a balcony, to the shade of a tree or a fallen wall. (p. 31).⁹⁹

Ferhad's home had been destroyed and the people to whom he could relate had dramatically changed. All these changes rendered his life bereft of any meaning. He confronts the reality that all his grandmother's heroic stories were nothing but lies: "[W]hat a big lie was it that the little hero in the tale killed the demon, opened the river and slaked the whole village [...] the demon-killer hero was welcomed by everyone, who threw flowers at him" (p. 32).¹⁰⁰

As we shall see in the next section, Ferhad's ideal self-image was greatly shaped through folkloric tales and love stories, an image which had fractured by the reality of its unattainability. At the same time, his consciousness was the site of other discourses and ideologies, each seeking to dominate him.

3.3. Discursive formation of subjectivity through popular and official discourses

Ferhad is surrounded by various voices, ideologies and discourses which largely form his sense of "self" and the world around him. Bakhtin's terms for describing a Dostoevskian character could, by and large, be used to describe Ferhad:

Almost no evolution of thought takes place under the influence of new material, new points of view. All that matters is choice, the resolution of the question 'who am I' and 'with whom am I?' To find one's own voice and to orient it among other voices, to combine it with some and to oppose it to others, to separate one's voice from another voice with which it has inseparably merged-these are the tasks that the heroes solve in the course of the novel. And this determines the hero's discourse." (1984, p. 239).

⁹⁹ (d) e nêw firoke w paporr û şemendeferî pir le xellkî byanî w nenas, de nêw ew şare cencallaney ke kes awirrit lê nadatawe ... awahî w wek henûke tenyayî neykroştûm, bêkesî xemgînî nekirdûm, awatexwaz bûm lew serî kollan kesêk derbikewê w bawêşim bo bikatewe w leşî mandûm be pêwe rabigrê w fermûy bin heywanêk, jêr sêberî dirextêk, bin dîwarîkî rimawim lê bika.

¹⁰⁰ çî diroyêkî gewre bû ke le h'ekayeteke da pallewane çikolle dêwekey dekuşt û berî rûbarî dekirdeve w awayî têr aw dekirde [...] rêy pallewanî dêw kuj gullrêj dekra.

Ferhad is to choose between official discourse (that of education and religion, for example) on the one hand and popular discourse (folklore) on the other. His voice is “overpopulated” with a legendary hero’s accent, so much so that it makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for him to separate from it and to find his own voice. He was so amazed by his grandmother’s tales and love stories that he could not wait to grow up, to become an adult, and to be one of the heroes in the tales. He saw himself as Ferhad, Las, and Siyamend and his classmate and playmate Şîrîn, as the legendary Şîrîn, X’ezal, and Xec.¹⁰¹ However, Ferhad was too young, powerless, and vulnerable to be a legendary hero. He oscillated between pleasant dreams and daydreams of being a hero, and the utterly bitter reality of being a hapless, inept and stupid child and student who was incessantly blamed and punished by the school authorities and his family: “Wherever I was, at home or school, I was beaten. I hated everything and decided to die.” (p. 76).¹⁰² Once, Ferhad remembers his father saying to his mother: “I wish you had miscarried ... my donkey is of more use than your son ...!” (p. 70).¹⁰³ Even his father is reluctant to accept him as his son; he is ashamed to have such an inept son and speaks as though someone else is Ferhad’s biological father. As a result of other people’s reactions and behaviour toward Ferhad, the bitterness of the reality of his life outweighs the sweetness of his dreams: “I cried in my heart because I had lost

¹⁰¹ They are all “romantic figures” in well-known Kurdish love stories. The author has deliberately named the protagonist and his beloved after the legendary lovers, Şîrîn and Ferhad. Ferhad is a “romantic figure in Persian legend and literature.” (Encyclopaedia Iranica). There has been references to his name before Nezami Ganjawi wrote his famous *Khosrow o Shirin*. Yet it was Nezami’s masterpiece that spread the story of Ferhad’s love with Shirin. “His story, following its masterly depiction by [Nezami], provided the source for several narrative works in Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Pashto, and Kurdish” (ibid.). Most of the Kurds have grown up with the story of Ferhad and they still lament for the tragic ending of his love (ibid.) (Encyclopaedia Iranica (1999). *Farhad*. [Online] available from: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farhad%20%281%29> [accessed: 25/06/2015].

¹⁰² le her şwênêk bûmaye, çî le mall û çî le mekteb: min her darkarî dekiram, le hemû şîtêk bêzar bûm, îdî biryarim da ke bimirm.

¹⁰³ Xozya le barit deçû ... ewe kurre to hete yan tîrî kerekeme ...!

everything ...I was neither a good shepherd, nor a successful lover, nor a prophet ...” (p. 70).¹⁰⁴

Despite living in Europe where life was alluring, Ferhad continued to remain deaf to the cacophony of new voices; he was still obsessed with the voices that had given rise to his consciousness, and unconsciousness, in his childhood. He could not distinguish his own voice from the others in order to combine it with new ones and compare them:

[a]ll those big capitals in the world, all those beautiful cities and villages, those spectacular skyscrapers could not make me forget our house in the village. The hundreds of mountains, hills, valleys, Alps and Himalaya mountains The Danube, Thames, and Rhine rivers could not replace my dreams of that canyon, sky, and river [in his homeland]; tens of pretty girls and gorgeous women were not able to wither the sweet image of Şîrîn¹⁰⁵ in my mind.” (p. 13).¹⁰⁶

Being a stranger in another land, Ferhad is far away from his ideal self-image. Not becoming, for example, a legendary Ferhad, Mem, and Las, he sees his whole life as a big failure: “What a catastrophe my life was; all wasted [...] what a mirage my life was ... my travel ... my love ... what a nightmare and failure my life was.”(p. 38).

107

Temî Ser Xerend is monologic since it is narrated from only one character’s point of view and in the sense that it rarely uses, “double voiced discourses”, “parody”, “stylization”, and hidden polemic, which are utterly important to Bakhtin in creating polyphony. However, it is also dialogic and polyphonic in the sense that the narrator, more or less, lies on the same plane with the characters. To put it this way,

¹⁰⁴ Le dillewe degiryam ke min hemû şitêkim dorrand ... ne bûme şîwanêkî çak, ne a’şîqêkî serkewtû, ne pêx’ember ...

¹⁰⁵ Literally, Şîrîn means “sweet”. But else too see note 105.

¹⁰⁶ Çendîn paytextî qellebalix’î dunya, çendîn şar û gondî razawe w ciwan, çendîn ballaxaney zor xoş û hellwasraw be asmanewe ew h’esarey le bîr min nebirdewe. Sedeha şax û kêw û derbend, gird û telan û lêrewar, çiyakanî elb, hîmalaya, rûbarî danub, taymz, rayn ... ew xerende w asman û away le xeyallî min der nekird, deye ha kiçî qeşeng û şekre jinni xollqaw le şîlîk û şîr neyantwanî şêwey şîrînî şîrînînim le zeyn da kwêr bikenewe.

¹⁰⁷ Çi mergesate çi O’mrêkî be heder çû bû min jiyam ... çi tirawîlke bû jîni min ... seferî min ... î’şqî min ... çi giryan û dorran û derdeserîyek ...

if polyphony and monologism are two extremes of a scale, *Temî Ser Xerend*, would be placed relatively closer to the polyphonic end. As in Bakhtin's account of Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel, Hassan's *Temî Ser Xerend* introduces us to a world which abounds with overlapping conflict-ridden, and embattling individual and collective voices each affecting and being affected by the others. Two major discourses and ideologies that are presented by various characters are official and popular ideology, and the effects of these on Ferhad's self-perception will be examined.

Kurdish folklore, more or less embodies the same properties and functions as folkloric discourse elsewhere. That is, there are some universal and general characteristics and functions of folklore all over the world. For example, Bascom (1965) traced four general functions and categories. First, folklore mirrors a society, its culture and "incorporate[s] common situations from everyday life." (Bascom 1965, p. 292). However, Bascom adds that folklore is not merely a true and complete reflection of a given society and culture; the "unusual" and "impossible" are two significant elements of myths and folktales. "Yet unusual, and the impossible," he continues, "are defined in terms of each individual culture and habitat, as well as in terms of the biological limitation of *Homo sapiens*." (ibid. p. 292). Folklore's second function relates to the role it plays in "validating culture, in justifying its rituals and institutions to those who perform and observe them," especially when the established norms and patterns are questioned and doubted or dissatisfaction with them is expressed. In this case, Bascom argues, "there is usually a myth or legend to validate it; or a so-called "explanatory tale", a moral animal tale or a proverb, to fulfil the same function" (ibid.). Its third function is that pertaining to education, especially "in nonliterate societies," (ibid. p. 293), and finally it "fulfils the important

but often overlooked function of maintaining conformity to the accepted patterns of behaviour” (ibid. p. 294).¹⁰⁸

These functions are interrelated and interdependent, and at times, merge into one another. In effect, they could be considered as various elements and stages of a project whose ultimate purpose is to maintain the “stability of culture” and the current power relations. “Viewed thus,” writes Bascom, “folklore operates within a society to insure conformity to the accepted cultural norms, and continuity from generation to generation through its role in education and the extent to which it mirrors culture.” (ibid. p. 297). In folklore there are elements of transgression from the established and accepted norms. Yet it allows deviation from the norms as long as the whole system is not threatened. As such, Bascom says, “[t]o the extent to which folklore contrasts with the accepted norms and offers socially acceptable forms of release through amusement or humour and through creative imagination and fantasy, it tends to preserve the institutions from direct attack and change.” (ibid. p. 297).

At first blush it seems that the predominant discourses embedded in education, family and religion are opposed to joyful and entertaining folkloric discourse, the former providing a long list of commands which aim to reproduce the hierarchical social order and the latter to relieve the strictness and seriousness of the former. However, closer inspection proves otherwise: there is an overlap between the two set of discourses when it comes to the current order and power relation. Examples of both discourses in the novel will serve to make the point. ‘Oh, Ferhad keep away from me,’ Şîrîn says to Ferhad, “my mom says you shouldn’t play with the boys.” It didn’t take long before she forgot about her mom’s ridiculous advice. (pp. 20-21).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ The last function overlaps with the first two functions; yet, holds Bascom, “it deserves to be distinguished from them” (for more details, see Bascom 1965, pp. 294-295).

¹⁰⁹ “Wî ... Ferhad ... Birro bew lawe ... dayke dellê le kurran nizîk nebîtewe!” Bellam her zû amojgarî pûç û bê manay daykey le yad dekird.

The above excerpt embodies a religious and cultural discourse implemented by the family institution. It originates from Islamic and cultural emphasis and commandments forbidding free contact between men and women. However, in order to be implemented, this commandment first needs to be “expropriated” and assimilated into the listener’s conceptual background. Since she is a playful child, Şîrîn does not take her mother’s command seriously, and goes on playing with Ferhad.

The account of the theology class is another case in point. Mamosta Yûnis is described as turning the class into a real hell.¹¹⁰ He frightened the students by describing Hell as a place full of snakes and scorpions and burning fires waiting for sinful people. Each session Mamosta Yûnis forced them to participate in a play, Adam and Eve, which he directed. Shouting and frightening the students, he asked two of them, a boy and a girl to play the roles of Adam and Eve and another girl and boy played the roles of the forbidden tree and Satan. Ferhad describes the show as follows:

‘Why did you listen to Satan? [...] this sin has shamed us, for ever.’ He turned around and spat at us ... as if we were the sinful Adam and Eve, and Satan. At the end of the play, Mamosta Yûnis in a Godlike manner trembled and shouted at the students: ‘get out you damned people ... don’t dirty my paradise!’” (p. 52).¹¹¹

The teacher blamed his students for a crime they had not committed. Ferhad is much less obsessed with the Adam and Eve story as with love stories and folktales. In effect, Mamosta Yûnis had failed to indoctrinate him and many others, to feel guilty on behalf of their fictional ancestors, Adam and Eve. At times, Ferhad imitated and mocked Mamosta Yûnis in front of the class which made the other students

¹¹⁰ In Kurdistan, teachers both at school and university are called Mamosta, that is, someone who teaches. Mamosta could be used alone or followed by a teacher’s name that indicates respect.

¹¹¹ “be dem hawar û qîjewe deçîwe ser yekêk le kursîyekanî pesewa w deynerrand: “Melû’nîne meyxon ... lê h’eram kirdûn ... meyxon ...!” [...] “Eha seyr’ ken ... rollekanim ... çend be asanî beheştîman dorrand, eger gonahî dayke h’ewa w bawke adem nebwaye ta êstaş her hemûman lewe debûyn, çonke lewê lew melekûte mergman nedebînî [...]”. Mamosta bewe nedewsta, be dem x’ezebî xodayekewe hemû giyanî delerzî w deyqîjand be sermanda: “Bo derewe hey melû’nîne ... em beheştîm lê pîs meken!”

burst into laughter (see for example, p. 54) which clearly demonstrates the deficiency of religious and educational institutes to fully “interpellate” the young students into obedient subjects.

Contrary to the official discourse enacted by familial, educational, and religious institutions, folkloric discourse is highly appealing to Ferhad. Islamic teachings prescribe a strict and pre-determined way of living which abounds with permissible and prohibited obedience to what would lead to an ever-lasting happiness in the life hereafter. On the other hand, folkloric discourses promise happiness and a better life in this actual world. In them, dreams and desires will come true in the twinkling of an eye. It is also the cheerfulness and playfulness of folklore that makes it so appealing to Ferhad. Using Simon Dentith’s words, it is the “rumbustious popular life” of the folklore “against the official but murderous pieties” (1995, p. 69) of religion and established norms and values which makes the former more joyful than the latter.

During the course of the novel, Ferhad refers to some of those anecdotes, tales, epics and love stories his grandmother used to recount to him when he was a child. One of those tales was about a king’s daughter who felt pity for a poor boy, kissed him and thereafter he became a prince (p. 26). He was also greatly affected by love stories including, *Şîrîn and Ferhad*, *Xec and Siyamend*, *Mem and Zîn*.¹¹² Ferhad remembers his desire to grow up and to become the legendary Ferhad:

I longed to grow up quickly so that I could dig a hole in the Bîstûn mountain,¹¹³ to direct the water toward the village, to defeat the wicked old woman who killed Ferhad, to hug *Şîrîn* in front of the whole village; while the stream quenches the thirst of sheep and

¹¹² *Xec û Siyamend* [Xec and Siyamend] and *Mem û Zîn* [Mem and Zîn] are two famous Kurdish folkloric love stories. Their titles are taken from the names of the lovers in these stories. Later, the prominent Kurdish poet, Ehmedî Xanî wrote his renowned epic, *Mem û Zîn*, at the end of seventeenth century based on the same folkloric story.

¹¹³ Bêstûn is a mountain located in Kirmaşan (Kermanshah) province in Iran. According to an Iranian myth, Khusraw Parwiz II (reg. 591-628 AD) asks Ferhad, a stone sculptor, to carve a canal through the mountain and transfer its water to his palace in return of giving him his concubine, *Şîrîn* as a reward (Ilahi-Ghomshei 2010, p. 101) (Ilahi-Ghomshei, Husayn (2010). *The Principles of the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*. In: Lewisohn, Leonard (ed.). *Hafiz and Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*. London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd. pp. 77-106.

goats, men and women [...] to look into their eyes proudly and say: It was me who brought you abundance [...] in response, I ask Şîrîn's father for her hand in marriage ... and everyone ... including Şîrîn's father would reply: "She is yours ... congratulations!" (p. 54).

Extremely amazed and influenced by these stories, Ferhad impatiently yearns to grow up to become one of the heroes in his grandmother's tales; he finds a better future for himself in folklore. "Oh my Lord", Ferhad says to himself, "help me to grow up sooner ... to [be able to] travel to the far away cities in my grandmother's tales, those cities abound with gardens, rivers, kind women, nice fathers and compassionate mothers and sisters [...] to eat the fruits of gardens, to swim in the rivers" (p. 38).

In the above examples, the folkloric discourse provides Ferhad with a temporary release from the harshness of his real life, to borrow Bascom's words, "through amusement or humour and through creative imagination and fantasy" (1965, p. 297). This release serves as a safety valve to preserve the existing social orders and power relations from "direct attack and change." Although elements of the "unusual" and "impossible" are found in folkloric tales which might result in transgression of the established norms, they do not encourage a new order of the things. In these Kurdish folk tales, one can imagine becoming a king, for example, but not allowed to question the whole system. As such, in folkloric discourse not only the hierarchical social system is reinforced, but the injustice and inequality, as inevitable features of any hierarchical system, are naturalized.

The folkloric discourses have taken the existing order for granted; in them, any promise of change would occur within the boundaries of the current social order and power relations. Kurdish folklore reinforces the norms grounded in hierarchical values. Hence, folkloric discourse exacerbates the already existing abyss among people and, consequently, restricts, using Bakhtin's words describing carnival, a "free and familiar contact" among them by reinforcing the "impenetrable hierarchical barriers" (1984, p. 123). Folkloric texts conspicuously consecrate inequality. In them a kind of natural and primordial master-slave order is highly valued. In some

anecdotes and fairy tales the place of master and slave could be transposed, that is, a slave might become a master in the twinkling of an eye, yet the hierarchal nature of the system should not be challenged.

In *Temî Ser Xerend*, Hassan severely criticizes any form of authoritarianism and patriarchal order in his society in which one person, a ruthless father, thinks and decides for others. At the same time, the adult Ferhad is still under the influence of heroic discourse in Kurdish folklore which is grounded in hierarchy since it portrays and naturalizes a society awaiting a saviour hero to bring them happiness and justice. Probably, the origin of heroism in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan*, could also be traced back to Kurdish folktales and myths. As with *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan*, but indirectly and on a limited scale, *Temî Ser Xerend* on the one hand critiques despotism and authoritarianism and, on the other, reinforces the heroic culture, although the protagonist fails to become a folkloric hero. Ferhad is still undergoing an identity crisis for failing to become a hero and a lover.

I just realized what a big lie and worthless myth growing up is ... my life has passed me by and I am nothing but a failed shepherd and an untalented poet [...] what a failure is Ferhad who neither reunited with Şîrîn, nor brought water to the village. At the end of this long journey, at last, I have landed in a destroyed town. I am like that horse which gallops but suddenly stumbles and breaks its four legs. (p. 37).¹¹⁴

The adult Ferhad perceives himself to be a loser and his whole life as a failure for not becoming a hero with an extraordinary power who wins praise from everyone. Such is the fate of Ferhad who wanted to become a popular hero in an “unheroic” era: since he is walking on the remnants of a destroyed village and passing persons who barely notice his presence, he feels lonelier than ever. Yet, in contemporary Kurdistan in Iraq he is a hero, for not conforming to the dominant norms and conventions and for not compromising his ideals and dreams.

¹¹⁴ Henûke tê degem çî diroyêkî gewreye ... çî efsaneyêkî hîçe gerwe bûn ... rojanî temen gozeştin û min cige le şîwanêkî dorraw, şai'rêkî bê behrey, hîçim lê der neçû, çî Ferhadêkî dorraw ke ne şîrîn bû be dilxwazî, ne awî bo awayî hanî, diwacar lem sefere dirêje da hatûmetewe ser kelaweyêkî rûxaw ... şaroçkey darrimaw, çend lew espe deçim ke le tawî x'ar da ser sim bida û her çîwar pelî bişkên.

Combining the realist and modernist narrative techniques and epistemological premises, Hassan has produced a formally conventional work with politically radical implications. *Temî Ser Xerend* foregrounds the conflicts between modern Kurdish individual and its transformed society, a conflict which never resolves and leads to the protagonist's frustration and alienation. In *Temî Ser Xerend*, Kurdistan is briefly mentioned and only refers to Iraqi Kurdistan. It portrays the post-civil war Iraqi Kurdistan which, as presented in the novel, destroyed the cities and villages. Not only the cities and villages, but also people had changed as a result of the civil war. All these overwhelming changes, as the novel shows, has made the Iraqi Kurdish society fragmented, apathetic and any reuniting between the individual and society impossible.

On the Eastern side of Kurdistan Regional Government's border lies Iranian Kurdistan with the majority of its inhabitants speaking in the Sorani dialect. The fact that the majority of people in these two parts of Kurdistan are Sorani speakers and use Arabic script has rendered considerable contact between the writers from these regions. Having said that, despite linguistic, religious, and cultural parallels between the two parts of Kurdistan, there are remarkable differences in terms of historical and socio-political circumstances, which is largely connected to their hosting nation-states. These socio-political differences between Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan could be traced in the novelistic worlds depicted by the writers of both regions. As I have demonstrated, the twenty-first century novels from Iraqi Kurdistan in this study, among other things, mainly deal with corruption and authoritarianism of major political parties during the 1990s which, as represented in these novels, triggered a wave of frustration and disappointment among people in the society.

Equally, frustration and alienation prevails in two of the three novels from Iranian Kurdistan in the current research. The next chapter examines Nahae's *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* [The Birds Soaring on the Wind] which, unlike *Temî Ser Xerend*, presents both a "radical experimentation with language" and an entanglement in the political agenda. It relativizes reality, truth, and subjectivity by laying bare its fictionality.

CHAPTER FOUR

The world of uncertainties in Ata Nahaee's *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*: a (post)modernist narrative

In the previous chapters I examined subjectivity in two Kurdish novels from Iraqi Kurdistan published after 2000. I argued that these novels are distinct from their predecessors in terms of form and content. By the 1970s the Kurdish novel had already started to free itself from being exclusively a medium for propagating nationalistic ideas. Yet, due to political and economic barriers, it took some three decades before authors in Iraqi Kurdistan could find an opportunity to experiment further with both form and content. While in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan* Ali experimented with magical realism and created superheroes who sought to free Iraqi Kurdistan from, this time, a Kurdish authoritarianism, in *Temî Ser Xerend* Hassan formally combined realist and modernist elements to write the story of his protagonist Ferhad, at first, in a traditional society and later, when he is an adult, in one that is morally bankrupt. In *Temî Ser Xerend* Hassan portrayed the difficulties that his protagonist faces for failing to conform to the social values and norms of his community. He critically addressed traditionalism, patriarchy, and the reproduction of authoritarianism by Kurdish political parties after the 1991 uprising. Equally, the turn of the century heralded a turning point for the Kurdish novel in Iranian Kurdistan where the first novel was published in 1990, almost two decades after the publication of the first Kurdish novel in Iraq.

The number of Kurdish novelists in Iranian Kurdistan is far smaller than their counterparts in Iraqi Kurdistan.¹¹⁵ This difference however, does not come as a surprise as Iraqi Kurdistan enjoys a semi-autonomous status while Iranian Kurds are still deprived of basic cultural and political rights. Having said that, in the past two decades we have witnessed an increase in the number of Kurdish novels as well as their formal complexity. Ata Nahae is an avant-garde novelist whose ground-breaking works promised a new era in the history of Kurdish Sorani fiction both in Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan.

Nahae (1960-) was born in Baneh, Kurdistan province in Iran. He completed his primary and secondary school education at the same city and later entered a teacher training college at Varamin in Tehran province. After two years he graduated from the college, at the time of the Iranian 1979 revolution, and started to work as a teacher in the villages of Iranian Kurdistan. However, after three years he was dismissed under the new regime, which ended his career. Since then, he has been living in his hometown, Bane. Nahae started his literary career by publishing a collection of short stories entitled *Zirîke* [Scream] (1993/1372). He has published two collections of short stories and three novels.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, he has translated literary works from Persian and English into the Kurdish language.

Nahae's first novel, *Gullî Şorran* [Şorran Flower] (1998/1377), as Ahmadzadeh rightly notes, was a turning point in the Iranian Kurdish novel due to its use of modern narrative structure and techniques (2005, p. 32) and its avoidance of simplistic realistic representation of the socio-political conditions of the Kurdish society. His second novel, *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* [The Birds Soaring on the Wind] (2002) was a successful experimentation with (post)modernist narrative techniques

¹¹⁵ For example, Ahmadzadeh names thirty novels published in Iraq during the nineties as "only a few examples." (2003, p. 174). At the same time, only six Kurdish novels were published in Iran (see Ahmadzadeh 2005, p. 30).

¹¹⁶ *Tengane* [Straits] (1995/1374) and *Ew Ballinde Birîndare ke Minim* [I am that Wounded Bird] (2004/1383) are the other two collections of his short stories.

and compositional strategies that challenged the conventional perception of fiction and of reality, something that is unprecedented in the short history of the novel in Iranian Kurdistan. *Girewî Bextî Hellalle* [Gambling on Hellalle's Fortune], published five years later in 2007, was not linguistically and formally as radical as *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*. However, Bakhtiar Sadjadi (2012) considers this novel to be quite different, not only from Nahae's earlier works, but from all the Kurdish novels written before. For example, its "characters" "distinguished voices", "point of view and narrator", "dramatic narration", and "symbolic names of characters" have given the novel a postmodernist flavour. I do agree with Sadjadi in that in this novel, as in the previous ones, Nahae has used, among other techniques and compositional strategies, multiple narrators, a circular plot, fragmented structure and unfinished dialogues and statements. However, these formal techniques have not necessarily made it a postmodernist novel. Rather, it is closer to a realist mode of narration, though not in the least classic realist in the sense that it foregrounds the social and cultural conflicts some Kurdish characters would face in diaspora, namely, in Sweden, without pondering over the mechanism of representation and revealing its nuances in forming the characters' perception of their "selves" and reality, as is the case in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*.

Most of Nahae's fictional works, especially his novels, have received a great deal of attention from both Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish literary critics and he was interviewed by several of the Kurdish media.¹¹⁷ Nahae was also awarded two prizes in Iraqi Kurdistan for his literary activities: he received the first one, Aras

¹¹⁷ Of the Iranian Kurds who have examined Nahae's works, one can name Rahimyan (2000); Ye'qûbî (2008); Ahmadzadeh (2003; 2005); and Sadjadi (2012). His works, however, did not receive the same degree of attention from the Kurdish scholars in Iraq. They are greatly understudied compared with those of other renowned Kurdish novelists of Iraq, for example, Sherzad Hassan and Bachtyar Ali. Even the few reviews and criticisms of his works are general readings. For example, Reşîd's study of *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* (2007) is merely a summary of the plot, story and characters of the novel. That said, Nahae has been interviewed more often than other Iranian Kurdish writers by the magazines, newspapers and websites in Iraqi Kurdistan (mainly done by Iranian Kurds). For example, Raman (nos. 39; 40; 151); Gelawêjî Nwê (53) and Degnekan Website (<http://www.dengekan.info/dengekan/liteature/18163.html>).

Publication's yearly award, in 2005 and later, "Herdî's Golden Prize for Innovation" in the Gelawêj Festival in 2008. Thus, Nahae's innovative works, together with his widespread coverage in literary circles of Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan made him quite a familiar and famous name in both parts of Kurdistan. I chose *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* because it challenges the conventional norms both in the presentation of the novel and the way this affects the reader.

In the first section I will examine the formal techniques and narrative modes of the novel which are mainly associated with postmodernist texts. *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* is a novel about another novel through which the process of writing, for example, its setting, plot, and characterization, is revealed to the readers. Doing so, Nahae challenges the conventional perception of reality and identity as natural and fixed entities. He also uses compositional strategies to convey a sense of indeterminacy and relativism. The second section shows that Nahae's concern with the formal aspect of the novel has not led to an apolitical or ahistorical work. Rather, he is well aware of the organic relationship between form and content, and hence, by using radical and innovative techniques and linguistic strategies Nahae aims to challenge and radicalize the reader's perception of identity and reality. I also discuss the idea that the novel's antiheroic approach and "tragic" reaction to the demise of values in modern Kurdish society is similar to modernist novels in the West at the beginning of the twentieth century. The protagonist in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* is a prototypical modernist antihero, alienated from a society which no longer embraces his ideas of changing the world into a better place. In the last section, I shall discuss how women are presented in the novel. Most of the women play a traditional role: they are either caring, selfless mothers and sisters, or dependent and submissive beloveds. Having said that, the novel undertakes a critical attitude towards the way women are treated in Kurdish society in Iran and invites the readers to disapprove of traditional perceptions of femininity. The novel further challenges the traditional perception of ideal woman as "good" wives and mothers by presenting a female character, Leyla, who is neither honoured for being a "good" mother and sister, nor a selfless beloved;

rather she is represented and admired as a teacher and poet who enjoys an independent, as well as separate, entity and most importantly, wins the reader's sympathy.

4.1. A (post)modernist approach to narration, representation, and subjectivity

Ballindekanî Dem Ba tells two stories in parallel: The story of a Kurdish writer, Mihreban, who, in turn, tells the story of Ferhad; the former is told in colloquial language while the latter is narrated in a formal and poetic mode. It has a first and third person narrative which varies from omniscient to limited narration. Like previous novels in this study, Mihreban, the narrator, has returned from abroad in the hope of reuniting with his lost dreams. During the latter months of the Pahlavai regime he had participated in political activities and then against the new regime which resorted to a full-scale invasion of Kurdistan. Since he had been arrested and jailed for a short time, he no longer felt safe, so he left the country for Europe. He was in love with Efsane who was forced into marrying Nasirî, the only son of a well off family after Mihreban had left the country. Nasirî knew about his wife's past love relationship with Mihreban. Despite the fact that Mihreban lived in Europe, Nasirî was highly suspicious of Efsane and thought, wrongly, that she would abandon him to marry Mihreban. Nasirî's Paranoia made life extremely difficult for Efsane, but she bore it only for the sake of her daughter. Beaten by her husband, Efsane asked for a divorce, after being previously turned down by the court. Before the court, Nasirî accused her of planning to leave him to marry her first lover, Mihreban. She could not bear this unfair and destructive accusation, and in desperation, she set herself on fire.

Ferhad's story is very similar to that of Mihreban. He was a student in Tehran University and with some of his friends he was politically active in Mohammad Reza Shah's reign. Before long they were discovered by SAVAK and some of the friends were arrested. However, he successfully escaped to his hometown. There he rented a room and started a new life as a painter and soon fell in love with a girl named

Kallê. Meanwhile, Ferhad had not given up his activities against the regime. He was the member of a group of young people who clandestinely distributed books and manifestos in the city. SAVAK discovered the group and arrested him and some of the other members of the group. As she saw no future in her life without Ferhad, like Efsane, Kallê set herself on fire. Nahae's *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* has elements of both modernist and postmodernist narratives. The novel could be regarded as postmodernist for its narrative structure and self-conscious reflection on its fictionality and on the language as a medium through which the characters' sense of "self" and their surrounding world is formed. However, its fragmented narration, "tragic" and "pessimistic" tone along with its antiheroic approach is typical of modernist narratives. In this section I shall elaborate on postmodernist elements in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* and its implication for the representation of reality and subjectivity; and in the following section I will discuss the characteristic features which make it more or less, a modernist novel.

Ebdolxaleq Ye'qûbî in his article, "*Ballindekanî Dem Ba* w Deretaneke Gêrraneweyêkî Postmodêrnîstî" [Ballindekanî Dem Ba and the Elements of a Postmodernist Narrative], (2008) argues that Nahae's *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* is a postmodernist novel due to its unconventional presentation of time and narration. Ye'qûbî has examined the narrative techniques in this novel which distinguishes it from a traditional linear narration. He mentions five narrative characteristic features as follows: "doubtful narration"; "two layers narration"; "multifunctional narration"; "flawed narration" and "narration in narration" (ibid. pp. 135-41).¹¹⁸ By using these narrative techniques, Ye'qûbî argues, Nahae has produced a text abound with "uncertainty and indeterminacy" (ibid. p. 135). Nahae, as Ye'qûbî shows, was inspired by Houshang Golshiri's (1938-2000) *Shazdeh Ehtejab* [Prince Ehtejab] (1968), a famous Persian novel with fragmented narrative which uses some of the above narrative techniques to convey a sense of uncertainty and relativism.

¹¹⁸ 'gêrranewey têkell be guman'; 'Gêrranewey dû twêjî'; 'Gêrranewey fire karbirdî'; 'Gêrranewey helle hellgir'; 'Gêrranewe le naw gêrraneweda' (pp. 3-7).

Soon after starting his career as a writer, as Hassan Mir'abedini says, Golshiri joined the other Iranian writers who had experimented with the new ideas promoted by "The Nouveau Roman" movement in France (1998/1377, p. 672). Under the influence of this movement, Golshiri viewed fiction as a medium with which to gain a better understanding of his "self" and others, as he says in an interview: "My main concern in story-writing, given that humans are at the centre of fiction, is to get to know what it is to be "human". Despite being aware of the impossibility of knowing "human being", through using some techniques and by putting a distance [between the protagonist and reality by way of doubts and uncertainties] the writer still seeks to achieve it – which is doomed to failure." (Ayandigan's interview with Golshiri, cited in Mir'abedini 1998/1377, p. 673).

In the same vein, Nahaee's main concern in writing fiction is to explore his own identity which might lead to knowing the "other".¹¹⁹ In an interview, Nahaee's response to a question about his purpose in writing fiction was: "to me, writing is an attempt to find myself [...] What makes fiction outstanding for me is the fact that I can find my identity and the fragmented pieces of my being in it, and nothing else." (Ye'qûbî 2009, pp. 101-2).¹²⁰ As in his earlier novels and short stories, in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* Nahaee seeks to achieve a deeper perception of his "self" and the "other". This self-perception vis-à-vis the "other", could only be achieved through language, something reflected and reflected upon in all of his works. However, none of his earlier and later works are as stylistically and linguistically radicalized as is

¹¹⁹ Nahaee does not know any other foreign language enough to be able to study literature in the original language (see Nahaee's interview with Jiar Radio (2009/1387). [online] available from: http://www.radiozamaaneh.com/jiar/2008/09/post_23.html [Accessed: 15/5/2015]). As such, his familiarity with world literature has been made either through those Persian literary texts experimenting with the formal inventions, techniques and new ideas reflected in the works of their contemporary counterparts in other parts of the world, especially French writers, or by way of translation of world literature into the Persian language. Houshang Golshiri might be the most important Persian writer to have greatly affected Nahaee's style and thought. His translation of Golshiri's masterpiece, *Shazde Ehtejab*, into Kurdish further approves his significance for Nahaee.

¹²⁰ "be lay minewe nûsîn teqelayeke bo dozînewey xom [...] Çîrok be lay minewe ew layeney bercesteve ke hewyet û şonasî xomî tiya ebînmewe w parçe parçekanî derûnî xomî tiya edozmewe nek hîçî tir."

Ballindekanî Dem Ba. Throughout the novel, Nahae attempts to get a better perception of subjectivity by showing the subtle nuances of language which might form or modify not only the protagonist's sense of his "self" and the world, but that of the reader as well by revealing the fictionality of his text. As such, he has taken Golshiri's skepticism and uncertainty one step further by casting doubt on fiction as an authentic reflection and reevaluation of reality by laying bare its mechanism of narration and representation. In this section I shall discuss the novel's metafictional aspect, an entirely significant technique which Ye'qûbî has only mentioned in passing, and, the uncertainty underlying *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* with its possible implications for subjectivity.

Unlike Ali's *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan* which is not focused on the actual process of writing the novel and immediately undertakes a realist approach to the representation of truth and subjectivity, Nahae's *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* is deeply grounded in the premise underlying metafiction, that is, a text highlighting "its own status as a fictional construct by referring to itself" (Nicol 2009, p. 16). One of the main themes in the novel is about writing a novel. Throughout the novel, Nahae, addresses, among other things, the relationship between the author and characters, his/her degree of control over them, and he involves readers in the process of meaning making. Writing a novel that foregrounds the very act of writing and lays bare its fictitiousness, however, has been experimented by European and American writers long before Nahae. One can name, for example, Muriel Spark's *The Comforters* and Paul Auster's *City of Glass* as the metafictional novels to which *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* bears some similarities.

The Comforters tells the story of a young writer, Caroline, whose normal life is disrupted after hearing some voices and someone tapping on the keys of a typewriter from the upstairs-as if "a writer on another plane of existence was writing a story about" them, Caroline says (1963, p. 63). Later in the novel she discovers the truth about these voices which are, in effect, "different tones of one voice" (that of Spark herself): now she has no doubt that she and her friends are used as

characters in a novel (ibid., p. 95). Auster's *City of Glass* also illuminates, and at times parodies, the conventions and strategies utilized in novel writing by telling the story of a novelist who after the death of his wife and son has lost his enthusiasm and motivation to live and to write for a long time. Auster's strategy, as Nicol puts it, to "destabilize ontological boundaries" not only is different from Spark's *The Comforters* but is also far more radical. Whereas in the latter the author and protagonist belong to different planes, in the former, the protagonist, Quinn, meets Paul Auster, the real writer but not as the creator of *City of Glass* and hence him, and his real-life wife and son (Auster, 1987, pp. 93-103). This is especially confusing given that early in the novel Someone calls the wrong number and asks Quinn for "Paul Auster. Of the Auster Detective Agency" (ibid., p. 7). Quinn who writes under pseudonym William Wilson, "the name of a character in an Edgar Allan Poe story who is the narrator's uncanny double" (Nicol 2009, p. 179) is tempted to assume Paul Auster's identity. Auster skilfully plays with names to challenge the notion of identity as a unified and fixed entity and at the same time to blur the boundaries between "self" and "other". *City of Glass*, in Brian McHale's terms, shows "[w]hat happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated" (1987, p. 10).

Some elements from both novels are present in Nahae's *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*. As in *The Comforters*, in it the protagonist, Mihreban, is a writer who has started writing his new story and soon realizes that he is a character in someone else's novel. However, unlike the former, in the latter the (implied) author, Nahae, frequently appears in the novel and discusses different subjects with the protagonist of his novel, Mihreban. As Auster does in *City of Glass*, in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* Nahae opts to show the complexities and unstable nature of identity. As in the former, in the latter, different worlds are intersected and the boundaries between worlds are "violated" in order to destabilize "ontological boundaries". In what follows I shall discuss in detail the metafictional and other formal features in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* and their implication for subjectivity.

The (implied) author (primary narrator) in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* is represented as someone with limited control over his characters. He is presented as their creator, yet the moment the characters step onto the pages, they become independent of him. To take an example, in the scene where Mihreban is sick and shivering with cold in his bed, the primary narrator questions the relationship between the novelist and his/her characters:

I was scared and worried and didn't know what to do. I didn't know how to help him. I stood up and walked toward the window and opened the curtain. It was morning and the rain had stopped. The sky was clear [...] I wish someone would come. I wish I could ask someone to go to his place or phone somebody to help him. I wish the writer could call on a character in his story. Can't he? ¹²¹ (pp. 323-4)

There are two points that are worth mentioning here: firstly, Nahae challenges the traditional perception of the author as omnipotent, one who can do anything with the characters and secondly, he reminds readers that they are dealing with a fictional world that is not to be taken as either real or the only one possible.

Ballindekanî Dem Ba is a type of metafiction which, borrowing Nicol's words, "actively indulge[s] in ... 'frame-breaking', where the frames through which the fictional world is presented to the reader are actually dismantled or shattered" (Nicol 37). In it, this frame-breaking is mainly achieved through dialogues between the primary narrator, as the (implied) author, and the protagonist:

Mihreban said: "you should have told me that those fragmented memories in my mind belong to a man's past that even he, himself, had forgotten. You should have told me from the very first day." The first day? He meant that day when we met each other, that day we came to know each other. First we were unknown and unfamiliar to each other; two persons from two different worlds, two persons with two different languages. Two persons with two stories ... I said: "I want to write your story." He was startled and said: "my story?" I said: Mihreban's story. A man who after years of separation and exile has returned home and ..." He didn't let me finish my words. He said: "I have returned to

¹²¹ Min tîrsa bûm. Nîgeran bûm. Nemdezanî debê çî bikem. Nemdezanî debê çon yarmetî bidem. Hestam û serû xwarêkî jûrekem kird. Çûme ber pencereke w loyekî perdekem helldayewe. Çêştengaw bû. Barişteke nemabû. Asman taw û saw bû [...] xozge kesêk dehat. Xozge demtwanî birrom be şwên kesêkda, yan telefûn bo kesêk bikem. Xozge çîroknûs deytwanî telefûn bo kesêkî çîrokekey bika w bixwazê. Natwanê?

write someone else's story. The story of ..." I had said: "Ferhad?" He thought about it. He wished to write Ferhad's story for years. He said: do you know Ferhad?" Then I laughed.¹²² (p. 187)

In the above passage, while the reader is prepared to take Mihreban as a real person who wants to write a real story, s/he is suddenly reminded that Mihreban is merely a character in someone else's story. Through "frame-breaking" Nahae has revealed the strategies and devices which present the fictional world as real and natural. The aim is to make readers think of the ways that narrative and characterization conventions are employed in order to direct their perception of themselves and the world.

At the same time *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* deploys strategies and techniques which poses epistemological questions which, according to McHale, is characteristic of modernist novels. That is, borrowing McHale's notion of "dominant",¹²³ The dominant of *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* is ontological and at the same time epistemological and, thus, it could be identified with both modernist and postmodernist literature. In other words, it poses questions about the nature of reality (ontological) and how we get to know that reality (epistemological). To foreground the latter, following modernist novelists like William Faulkner and Woolf, it emphasizes perspective. Under the influence of these novels, and especially Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* ([1929] 1966), it has deployed, to borrow Matz's words on modernist novels, a "haphazard,

¹²² Gotibûy[Mihreban]: "To debû be minit bigotaye ew bîwerye piçirr piçirr û parçe parçane ke le zeynî minda kelleke bûn, beşêk le rabirdûy pyawêkin ke xoy feramoşî kirdûn. Debû le yekem rojewe be minit bigotaye." Yekem roj? Mebestî ew roje bû ke yektirman dîbû. Ew roje ke le yektir aşkira bûbûyn. Sereta wek dû kesî le yek namo w nenasyaw rûberrpy yektir bûynewe. Dû kes le dû dinyay cyawaz. Dû kes le dû zemanî cyawaz. Dû kes le dû çîrokî ... gotibûm: "min demewê çîrokî to binûsim." Daçillekîbû. Gotibûy: "çîrokî min?" Gotibûm: "çîrokî mirheban. Pyawêk ke diwa sallanêk x'orbet û dûrî gerraewtewe w ..." Neyhêştibû qisekem tewaw bikem. Gutibûy: "min gerrawmetewe çîrokî kesêkî tir binûsim. Çîrokî ..." Gotibûm: "Ferhad?" Bîrî kirdbûewe. Sallanêk bû hezî kirdbû çîrokî Ferhad binûsê. Gutibûy: "to Ferhad denasî?" Ewsa min pêkenîbûm.

¹²³ McHale borrows and modifies Roman Jakobson's term "dominant" as a "conceptual tool" to explain the fundamental difference between modernist and postmodernist poetics. Jakobson defines "dominant" as "the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components. It is the dominant which guarantees the integrity of the structure" (cited in McHale 1984, p. 6)

incomplete, mistaken, or limited point of view ... in order to get at experiential truth” (2004, p. 51).

Ballindekanî Dem Ba does not present a finalized version of characters that are in possession of “coherent” and “autonomous” subjectivities. Neither of the two narrators, the primary narrator and Mihreban in the second story, provides readers with clear-cut information about, for example, the character’s personality or their past life, or a given account of their behaviours and motivations. Rather, the narrators either offer multiple possibilities for the characters’ lives, thoughts, and behaviours or they cast doubt on what has just been mentioned about them. Below are some examples that illustrate Nahae’s relativized approach.

I [primary narrator] said: “Leyla is a plan that Munîre and your niece, Neşmîl, have hatched for you.” He raised his head. He saw me laughing through his cigarette smoke. Probably a mocking laugher and ... he was not upset.¹²⁴ (p. 206)

...

The old woman had two married daughters; but she didn’t have a son. Didn’t she? She might have had a son. She might have had three or four sons who died of smallpox in their childhood. Or probably one of them had survived smallpox and grown up, but later he might have drowned in a pond. Or together with his father, he might have fallen off a mountain. Or ... anyway, she was living alone. She has been living alone for several years as her daughters were busy with their lives and couldn’t take care of her as they should have.¹²⁵ (pp. 260-61)

...

He heard the phone ringing again. It startled him. Delighted, he went to pick it up. Delighted?¹²⁶ (p. 200)

...

¹²⁴ Gutim [primary narrator]: “Leyla xewnêke Munîrey xoşkit û Neşmîlî xoşkezat boyan dîwî.” Serî hellbirrî. Le pişt hewrî dûkellî cigerekeyewe min pêdekenîm. Renge pêkenînekî galltecarryane w ... qells nebû.

¹²⁵ Pîrêjin dû kiçî be şûy bû, bellam kurrî nebû. Neybwe? Renge bûbêfî. Renge sê çiwar kurrî bûbê w, le mindallîda be sûrêje mirdbêtin. Renge yekyan le sûrêjeş xelistibê, gewreş bûbê, bellam diwatir le gomêkda xinkabê. Yan le gell bawkî le şaxêk helldêrabin. Yan ... herçî bû êsta be تنها dejya. Çend sallêk bû be تنها dejya w kiçekanî be xem û meynetî jyanî xoyanda kewtibûn û, pêyan nedekra be qeder pêwîst lay lê bikenewe.

¹²⁶ Dîsan zirrey telefonekey bîst. Daçilekî. Be xoşîewe berew pîrî çû. Be xoşîyewe?

He [Mihreban] had seen Leyla at Munîre's house by chance. By chance? It is also possible that their meeting was not accidental.¹²⁷ (p. 201)

In the above examples the narration is fragmented, unfinished, and indeterminate. First and foremost, Nahae has avoided finalizing the characters and the fictional world presented in the novel. By casting doubt on the reliability of the narrators' and characters' statements he seeks to convey to the reader the message that we no longer live in the world of objectivities and certainties, but are in a new world of subjectivity and radical uncertainties; so much so that the boundaries between fiction and reality are indistinguishable.

This ambiguity leaves the reader wondering which world is real: the world of the novel's primary narrator, Mihreban, or that of Ferhad? Moreover, it is not clear whether they are three independent persons or three aspects of one person, which could be any one of them, as we can see in the following passage:

He [Mihreban] said: "be careful, otherwise the story gets out of control." I [primary narrator] said: "which story? Your story or Ferhad's?" He thought to himself. He didn't know whether he is in his own home or at Ferhad's place. He was not sure whether he was living his own life or Ferhad's forgotten moments. Probably none of them...

"Or both of them" [Mihreban says]. He was shocked by hearing his own words.¹²⁸ (p. 206)

When the primary narrator asks "your story or Ferhad's?" it is suggested that the author of Ferhad's story is himself a character in someone else's story. In the following sentence, however, Mihreban, becomes one with Ferhad, that is, author and character are one and the same person. In this way, Nahae has deconstructed the conventional author-text-reality relationship. In other words, Waugh's words on metafictional novels is applicable to *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*, namely, "[t]hey show not

¹²⁷ Ew (Mihreban) Leylay le mallî Munîre dîbûwewe. Be rêkewt? Renge rêkewtîş nebûbê.

¹²⁸ Gutî: "wişyar nebî çîrokeke le girêjne derdeçê."

Gutim: "kame çîrok? Çîrokî to yan çîrokî Ferhad?"

Têfirkî. Neydezanî le mall û jûrî xoyetî yan le mall û jûrî Ferhad. Satekanî xoy dejî yan sate feramoş bûwekanî Ferhad. Renge hîçyan...

"yan herdûkyan." [Mihreban says]. Lew qisey xoy daçillekî.

only that the 'author' is a concept produced through previous and existing literary and social texts but that what is generally taken to be reality is also constructed and mediated in a similar fashion." (Waugh 1984, p. 16). Elsewhere in the novel when the primary narrator says: "So he [Mihreban] was at Ferhad's house. Ferhad's house or mine?" (p. 208),¹²⁹ it might strike the reader that the primary narrator is either Mihreban or Ferhad or both, that is, they are all fragmented aspects of each other. One interpretation could be that Ferhad is the future Mihreban or the primary narrator, or both. Having said that, we cannot be certain of this as other interpretations are also possible, that is, they could be three independent entities. These compositional strategies along with epistemological and ontological doubts have opened up the possibility of multiple voices and worlds in the novel.

The uncertainty underlying *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* has enabled it to avoid making any final judgements of the characters. Nahae has not set a certain discourse as the embodiment of "Truth" to which all other discourses and ideologies should submit. In effect, *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*'s self-consciousness has relativized formal features and subjectivity and has eradicated the possibility of imposing, using Morris' words on Bakhtin's notion of "heteroglossia", "one unitary monologic discourse as the 'Truth'." (Morris 1994, p. 73). In this novel, unlike in realist novels, to borrow Waugh's words on the nature of metafiction, "the conflict of languages and voices" is not resolved "through their subordination to the dominant 'voice' of the omniscient, godlike author." Conversely, it "displays and rejoices in the impossibility of such a resolution and thus clearly reveals the basic identity of the novel as genre" (1984, p. 6). In other words, like other metafictional novels, *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* celebrates plurality and difference.

It also creates multiple voices by constant changes in focalization. McCallum defines focalization as "an indirect mode of narration occurring in the first and third person narrative whereby events are narrated from the perceptual point of view of a

¹²⁹ Ke wate le mallî Ferhad bû. Mallî Ferhad yan mallî min?

character situated within the text as if seen through the eyes of that character” (2002, p. 30). Facilitating the representation of various voices and providing characters with an independent subject position, the novel appears to substantially represent agency and subjectivity (ibid.), as shown in the following excerpt:

He [Baram] started to complain [...] why he [Mihreban] had not dropped by to see them? Not only he, but also his wife and children were complaining. He was talking on their behalf as well. His poor children were happy that their uncle, their father’s brother, had returned after so many years, but... “How talkative and flattering Baram is,” Mihreban whispered to himself. (p. 189)

In the above passage, shifts in narrative point of view occur through switches between direct and indirect narration. It starts with the indirect narrative point of view “he started to complain...”. It then shifts to free indirect speech character focalized narration “his poor children were happy that ...” and finally to character direct speech “how talkative and flattering...”. In this passage, the narrator distances and let the voices of both characters be heard.

Like other self-conscious postmodernist novelists, in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba Nahae* has chosen to write on the novel itself and its formal and narrative devices and hence exposing the fictional nature of the taken for granted reality and subjectivity. That said, experimenting in formal and narrative inventions was not Nahae’s ultimate goal in itself. While postmodernism has sometimes been criticized for being apolitical and ahistorical,¹³⁰ *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* still works, borrowing Meyer’s words to describe experimental Arabic novels, “from a standpoint that reflects the values and priorities of the engage.” (2001, p. 7).

4.2. A farewell to idealism: tragic reaction to reality

Like earlier Kurdish novels written by both Iranian and Iraqi Kurds, Nahae in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* expresses socio-political concerns. However, what

¹³⁰ Marxist critics such as Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and David Harvey mainly criticize postmodernism as “apolitical” and “ahistorical”.

distinguishes him from them is that Nahae has not reduced his work to being the mouthpiece of a given ideology or political slogan. In other words, he has not compromised literary aesthetics for political commitment or vice versa. By choosing a narrator, Mihrebabn, who having been abroad for a long time returns to Iranian Kurdistan, Nahae somehow creates what Bertolt Brecht called the, “alienation affect” which is used “to make familiar aspects of the present social reality seem strange ... in order to arouse them[audience] to take action against, rather than simply to accept, the state.” (Abrams and Harpham 2009, p. 6). The accepted current socio-political circumstances of Iranian Kurdistan and people’s disinterest in engaging in political activities in order to make changes in society sounds strange when viewed and presented from someone’s perspective who functions, more or less, as an outsider or alien. Being abroad for many years, Mihreban had not witnessed the social, political, and cultural changes in Iranian Kurdistan. He was surprised to find how much his friends, family, and others had changed. They had become distant from their revolutionary ideals and were only concerned with their personal lives:

They [Mihreban’s friends] apologized for not coming to see him. Being busy with their lives and jobs and ... they talked and laughed quietly. They were no longer the same young courageous men he had known. Those young men did not talk about their business and money. They did not talk of their jobs and their progress, of their houses, shops, cars and those of others... of their children’s future ... they would not say that you have made a big mistake to return home. You have returned to these people who are so ignorant? How comes that you have returned from Europe, the place for a happy life, to here? [...] he was sure that these men had forgotten the young men, had forgotten their desires, dreams, hopes and even the language of those young men; they had also forgotten him...¹³¹ (pp. 188-9)

¹³¹ Bo ewey neçûbûne lay daway lêbûrdinyan lê kirdbû. Girftarî... kêşey kar û jiyay û... aram û le ser xo diwa bûn û pêkewnîbûn. Hîçyan lew kurre genc û cerbezane neçûbû ke ew be cêy hêştibûn. Ew kurre gencane basî kar û kasbî w qerz û qolle w çek û sifteyan nedekird. Basî mall û dpkan û maşînî xoyan û xellkî tir... basî dahatûy mindallekanyan... neyandegut killawit ser çwe gerrawîtewe. Gerrawîtewe bon aw em xellke ke le hîç nagen? Piyaw çon le ewrûpa, le nawendî xoşî w guzeranî xoşewe degerrêtewe bo êre? Ew dillnya bû ew piyawane kurre gencekanyan geramoş kirdbû. Hez û xewn û awat û tenanet şewey qise kirdnî kurre gencekanîşyan feramûş kirdbû. Ewîşyan feramoş kirdbû...

This new society, separated from its ideals, might remind us of European modernity reflected in modernist writers' works at the turn of the century; an era in which the individual, as Matz remarks, "came to feel less a part of the social whole, as fiction writers saw it, because the whole had lost touch with its ideals and better values. Social life had gone cold, materialistic, haphazard, and so the decent person could only feel isolated from it." (2004, p. 47).

Therefore, it is interesting that the same fragmented and aimless society is reflected in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*, a Kurdish novel published a century later. As mentioned earlier, Nahae's novel lies somewhere between modernist and postmodernist narrative. I have discussed the postmodernist elements of the novel, that is, its self-reference. Yet, it is a modernist novel for having a "tragic" and "pessimistic" tone which stands in stark contrasts with postmodernism's approach to the difficulties of modern time that is:

[C]haracterized in many accounts by a welcoming, celebratory attitude towards the modern world. That this world is one of increasing fragmentation, of the dominance of commercial pressures and of human powerlessness in the more face of a blind technology is not a point of dispute with modernism. Even so, whereas the major modernists reacted with horror or despair to their perception of these facts, some have claimed that it is typical of postmodernism to react in a far more accepting manner to them. (Hawthorn 2010, p. 75)

In line with mainstream modernist artistic work, *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* reacts with "despair" to a fragmented society in which individuals have turned into powerless and passive beings in Iranian Kurdistan facing, either blind technology, socio-economic hardship or an insatiable desire for wealth.

As was the case with Ferhad in *Temî Ser Xerend*, Mihreban cannot connect with a society separated from its ideals and finds himself in tragic loneliness and alienation. His old comrades and friends are now married and have children to take care of and feed. They are no longer those young men who once dreamed of changing the world: "Since he [Mihreban] has returned or probably since he has left here, everyone has become wise and talks of wise people; Baram and his wife, his

sisters, Munîre and Rûnak and their husbands, his old friends and comrades, even Celalî” (pp. 189-90).¹³² His brother, Baram, mocks his dreams and ideals. He believes that he has ruined his life for nothing:

Baram, teasing, said: “the passage of time has changed them all. They have forgotten you and many others like you, they think only of money.” He continued: “among your friends, you and a few others like you were deceived. Encouraged by them, you quit your life, job, and your family and followed a childish dream. Then they turned their backs on you, your dream and your family...”¹³³ (p. 200)

Mihreban is repulsed by his brother, his old friends, and the whole society. To Baram and many others in this society, a “wise” man does not ruin his personal life to follow childish dreams of justice, freedom, and democracy.

Kurdish society in Iran that is represented in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* is more or less similar to that described in *Temî Ser Xerend*: in both novels society is portrayed as “morally bankrupt” suggesting that people have lost their desire and enthusiasm for making socio-political changes. However, in *Temî Ser Xerend* the whole society is represented as deeply frustrated since their dreams of a better life that should have been fulfilled after the 1991 uprising was shattered by the political parties’ authoritarianism. Conversely, in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* Kurdish society’s socio-economic problems are represented as having been caused by the Iranian government’s policies towards its Kurdish population. To put it another way, both novels are a critical portrayal of how political authoritarianism continues even after the toppling of, or gaining independence from, former dictatorships - the Pahlavi dynasty in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* and Saddam’s regime in *Temî Ser Xerend*, which leads to people’s frustration, passivity, and pessimism. Yet there is a significant difference in the two Kurdish societies which has been demonstrated in these

¹³² Lewetî ew gerrawetewe, yan renga lewetî ew lêre roştîwe hemû ‘aqill bûn û basî piyawî ‘aqill deken. Baram û xêzanî. Munîre w Rûnakî xoşkî w mêrdekanyan. Hawrê w biraderanî konî, tenanet Celalîş.

¹³³ Baram be tîz û tiwancewe deygot: “şeqî zemanê hemûyanî gorrîwe. Pare to w sedanî wek toy pê le bîr birdûnetewe”. Deygut: “le naw hemûyanda to killawit ser çû. To w chend kesêkî wek to. Be qisey ewan waztan le jîyan û kes û kartan hêna w şwên xewnêkî mindallane kewtin. Ewsa ewan piştîyan le xotan û kes û kartan kird...”

novels: Iraqi Kurdistan is represented as suffering from internal despotism and some of its traditional values while Iranian Kurdistan, as the novel describes, suffers from an external one, the non-Kurdish Iranian government.

Nahae's *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* almost entirely blames the authoritarian government in Iran for both socio-economic and cultural shortcomings.¹³⁴ It could be inferred from the novel that in order to make any changes in society, the political system has to be targeted first and foremost. Interestingly, whilst in *Temî Ser Xerend* it was the Kurdish traditional values and norms which led to little Ferhad's separation from his beloved, Şîrîn, in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* the political system hindered the lovers' reunion. For example, both Ferhad and Kallê's, and Mihreban and Efsane's love story end in tragic separation due to political circumstances, the former occurring in Mohammad Reza Shah's reign, and the latter in the years immediately after the 1979 revolution. For example, Ferhad's landlord who is referred to as the "old woman" throughout the novel, laments that Kallê lacks a supportive father or brother and says to Ferhad: "damn poverty ..."¹³⁵ But Ferhad's response is, "damn tyranny. You should damn the tyrant." (p. 261).¹³⁶ According to the novel, the "tyrant" is to be blamed for all the sufferings inflicted upon people, ruining their life and shattering their dreams. Mihreban's case is another example of how political authoritarianism can ruin one's life. He is forced to leave the country for non-radical political activities as a result of which he would be separated from his beloved Efsane and his family and friends. This separation was devastating for Efsane too. After Mihreban left the country, her family forced her to marry Nasirî, an unhappy marriage which culminated in her suicide. As we shall see, Mihreban's old friend, Kûriş's life was also greatly affected by the political circumstances in Kurdistan during the aftermath of the 1979 revolution.

¹³⁴ Given that Nahae still lives in Iranian Kurdistan, he has mainly criticized Pahlavi's authoritarian government for imprisoning, executing, and ruining people's life. Having said that, there are also some references to the destructive role of the current regime in the novel.

¹³⁵ "mallî hejarîm be qurr girt ..."

¹³⁶ "mallî zallim. Mallî 'hikûmetî zallim be qurr bigre"

Except for Mihreban all the characters in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* who once dreamt of changing their society, in the passage of time gradually lost their ambition. Mihreban tells his sister, Rûnak of his sufferings in exile, of sufferings of rupture and separation; of the sorrow of failing to fulfil his dreams. “The suffering of writing. Writing his own sorrows and desires and those of others. The sorrows and desires of those women and men who lost their dreams and fantasies. Had lost the games. The games of life and love and...” (p. 284).¹³⁷

Unable to transcend his old dreams and embrace new ones, he lives in the past by reliving his dreams and fantasies through writing of them: “[W]ho does not have a lost one?” [Mihreban asks]. He, then, gives an answer to his own question, “it seems that we have lived in a way to accept the loss of someone or something and, then, to look for it for the rest of our life, in our dreams and plans; in...” Mihreban said sadly.” (p. 198).¹³⁸ Using his own words, Mihreban has lost “the game of life and love”. He is alienated in a society which no longer holds the ideals it once had less than two decades ago when he was a young man. His love, Efsane, was forced to marry another person and consequently committed suicide. His life is no longer meaningful within the current social relations between people and socio-political circumstances. He becomes recluse and restless, as he believes: “One who has lost something or someone in the past could no longer live in peace.” (p. 284).¹³⁹

On the other hand, Celalî and Kûriş, for example, are among those who can no longer dream. Under the burden of family responsibilities, they have forgotten their dreams and ideals: “[D]espite having been married for many years, Celalî says: ‘since I can’t dream and fantasize, I feel I’m married and have three children.’” (p.

¹³⁷ lew azarane diwabû ke le ‘xorbet kêşabûnî. Azarî dûrî w dabirran. Azarî wedî nehatinî xewn û xeyallekanî. Azarî nûsîn. Nûsînî xem û meraqî xoy û xellkî tir. Xem û meraqî ew jin û piyawane ke xewn û xeyallekanyan dorrandibû. Gemekanyan dorrandibû. Gemey jiyân û xoşewîstî w...

¹³⁸ Be xem û daxewe gutî: “dellêy ême weha jiyawîn ke be taybet kesêk yan şitêk win bikeyn, bo ewey baqî temenman lêy bigerrêyn, le tablo w nexşekanmanda; le...”

¹³⁹ “Ewey şitêk yan kesêkî le rabirdûyda win kirdbê natwanê asûde bijî”.

271).¹⁴⁰ Apparently Celalî continued to dream even after his marriage. However, he finally stopped dreaming and became a “wise man”, that is, a compliant subject. Another friend of Mihreban, Kûriş, has also lost his capacity to dream. He was from an indigent family who despite all the difficulties succeeded in the university entrance exam in Iran. However his future was ruined when the new Islamic regime forbade him to register at the university due to his political activities: “We ruined our life for a beautiful and humane dream,” Kûriş says (p. 307).¹⁴¹ The novel suggests that both Celalî and Kûriş have lost their agency by quitting their dreams under the harsh political, social, and economic circumstances of Iranian Kurdistan after the 1979 revolution. On the other hand, Mihreban is still capable of dreaming which leads to his alienation in a society abound with individuals unable to dream. Unlike their male counterparts, most of the female characters in the novel never had dreamed of making significant socio-political changes in the society. They have small worlds and little dreams: all they have dreamed of, and devoted themselves to, are their families. I shall discuss this in the next section.

4.3. Female subjectivity, the past and present

This section deals with the representation of major female character in the novel and the difficulties they face in the patriarchal Kurdish-Iranian society. Throughout the novel, Munîre, Mihreban’s elder sister is depicted as a caring woman who is always concerned about other members of her family, especially Mihreban who does not live a normal life according to the social norms of his society. She is presented as a traditional, selfless sister whose main purpose in life is to make Mihreban happy after his return. During the course of the novel, she takes care of him, sympathises with him, and tries hard to convince him to marry Leyla, a young teacher and poet. Munîre regularly telephones Mihreban to make sure that he is alright (for example,

¹⁴⁰ Celalî demêk sall bû jinni hêna bû. Bellam deygut: “lewetî natwanim xeyall bikem û xewn bibînim, hest dekem jin û sê mindallim heye”.

¹⁴¹ Êmemaman le pênewî xewnêkî xoş û însanîda awaman be ser hatiwe.

on p. 189). One day, as usual, she calls him but he does not reply. Getting worried, Munîre goes over to Mihreban's place to see what has happened to him. Observing her sick brother in bed, she wails "I may get blind... I may die [...]"¹⁴² I knew that you were sick. I have been trying to contact you since this morning, but you didn't reply." (p. 325).¹⁴³ Or, she strongly sympathises with her brother when she knows about the difficulties he had gone through abroad having no-one to take care of him: "your sister may die for you; it seems that during all these years no one has cooked or made a cup of tea for you?" (p. 182).¹⁴⁴

However, the novel does not present a sympathetic portrayal of Munîre as the ideal woman who sacrifices her life for others. Rather, the narrator adopts either a neutral or satirical tone toward Munîre's selflessness. In the same scene in which she is overwhelmed by the sight of Mihreban sweating and shivering in bed, the narrator describes her as follows, "Feeding him [Mihreban] the remaining hot milk, Munîre cried like a mother whose child had fallen sick and she made herself deaf and blind." (p. 325).¹⁴⁵ The narrator adopts a sarcastic tone towards Munîre who is excessively supportive to her brother, as if he is a little child. The sarcastic point lies in the expression "made herself deaf and blind" which refers to a situation in which a person wishes to become deaf and blind in order to not hearing or seeing his or her beloved suffering.

The other main female character in the novel is Kallê. She is a young girl whose fate is in the hands of men: Kalle complains, "Reh'îm is the man of the house. The house is his. I can do nothing but avoid his friends and lock myself and the blind

¹⁴² In the Kurdish language, these are expressions of sympathy for one's beloveds when something threatens their health or life.

¹⁴³ "Kwêr bim... nemênim [...] demzanî nexoşî. Weha ke kesêk pêy gutbêtim, le xorkewtinî beyanîyewe sed car telefûnim bo kirdî w hellit negirt."

¹⁴⁴ "xoşkit bimrê, ke wate lem hemû salleda kes nebwe piyalleyek çayt bo dem ka w parûyek nanit bo saz ka?"

¹⁴⁵ Munîre wek daykêk mindallekey nexuş kewtibê degirya w, xoy kerr û kwêr dekird. Paşmawey şîre germekeşî derxward deda.

boys in another room.”¹⁴⁶ (p. 247). Yet, despite acknowledging her brother’s superiority and the risk of being beaten up by him, she keeps quarrelling with Reh’îm, asking him to quit gambling and get a job: “I made everything clear with Reh’îm last night. I said to him that he is not allowed to gamble in this house any more. I said as long as I live in this house...” (p. 247).¹⁴⁷ Kallê needs a man to save her, to take her away from the house where she is tortured by her brother: “I want to come with you. Take me with you Ferhad, Take me with you wherever you go.” (p. 297).¹⁴⁸ At first sight it might seem that Nahae has presented the female characters as dependent on men for their survival and happiness. Closer reading, however, reveals the narrators’ sympathetic presentation of the women whose lives are ruined in a patriarchal society. Kallê’s last words to Ferhad were, “I cannot bear this sorrow. It’s too much for me.” (p. 279).¹⁴⁹ Then she ended her life by setting herself on fire.

Unlike Kallê, Efsane enjoys more social freedom, partly due to an exceptional opportunity which the prevailing revolutionary mode in society had created. Shoulder to shoulder with men, as Hale Esfandiari writes, women “from all classes were active participants in the events leading to the overthrow of the monarchy in 1979. They joined the revolutionary movement for a variety of reasons—religious and secular, economic and political, conservative, moderate, and radical. ” (1997, p. 3). Efsane’s youth in the fictional world of *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* coincided with the turbulent times of the Iranian revolution. She participated in all of the demonstrations and rallies and, “like all other youths, sang revolutionary songs.” (p. 268).¹⁵⁰ However, this contradicts another description of Efsane earlier in the novel which depicts her as someone who did not participate in political or other activities: “[...] she was a lonely

¹⁴⁶ “Reh’îm piyawî mallekeye. Xawenî mallekeye. Min hiç desellatêkim niye cige lewey xom le biraderekanî negeynim û le jûrekey xom le gell kurre kwêrekanda ser be serî yekewe binêyn”.

¹⁴⁷ “Dwênê şew hemû qîseyekim le gell Reh’îm birrandewe. Gutim îtir ‘heqit niye lem malleda qumar bikey. Gutim ta min lem malleda bim...”

¹⁴⁸ -Miniş dêm. Le gell xot bimbe Ferhad. Bo her şwênêk deçî le gell xot bimbe.

¹⁴⁹ -Min em xemem pê hellnagîrê. Dereqet nayem.

¹⁵⁰ Wek hemû gencekan sirûdî dexwênd.

girl in a small world; a small world but a bright and intimate one.” (p. 174).¹⁵¹ Despite this contradictory presentation of Efsane’s character, she enjoyed a higher place in Kurdish society than Kallê. She was not locked in the house by her family and she gained the right to utilize her agency as a political and social agent by participating in demonstrations. However, as yet, her family and society do not see her as an independent individual in control of her life like her male counterparts. Like Kallê, she also depends on a man to build her life and future: “‘what about my life and future?’ Efsane said. ‘If you leave me alone, they [her family] will force me to marry Nasir’ she said sobbing.” (p. 286).¹⁵²

Efsane’s lack of agency, especially in the immediate aftermath of the Iranian revolution, could be explained in the broader context of women’s place in the new regime which was founded upon Islamic doctrines. As Haleh Esfandiari notes, women from all classes and with all ideologies embraced the revolution in the hope of “an expansion, not a contraction, of their rights and opportunities.” (1997, p. 3). But, they soon realized that the Islamic regime is not only reluctant to keep its promises of improving women’s rights, but it also reverted their status by eradicating, one after another, the gains they had made in the past five decades (Esfandiari pp. 3 and 52-4).¹⁵³ As an example of this it is worth mentioning the legislation on family life, before and after the revolution, which greatly affected Efsane. The Family Protection Law which was revised in 1975 gave a woman the right to, “participate significantly in her own marriage, divorce, and decisions about her children, particularly the custody of her children in case of her husband’s death.” (Afkhami 1994, p. 11).

¹⁵¹ “[...] Kiçêkî tenha w dinyayêkî biçûk. Dinyayekî biçûk, bellam rosin û semîmî”

¹⁵² Efsane gutî: “ey jîyan û dahatûy min?” Be dem henîskewe gutî. Gutî: “to birroy be zor demden be Nasir”.

¹⁵³ It is worth mentioning, as an example of this, women’s legal achievements in the domain of family. The Family Protection Law revised in 1975 gave women the right to “participate significantly in her own marriage, divorce, and decisions about her children, particularly the custody of her children in case of her husband’s death.” (Afkhami 1994, p. 11). However, the Islamic Republic saw these pro-women laws to be in contradiction with Sharia and hence reversed the process: “[O]nce the Islamic Republic was firmly established, the government began to rewrite the laws and rules relating to women’s recently acquired rights (ibid. p. 12).

However, the Islamic Republic saw these pro-women laws as contrary to Sharia law and hence it reversed the process: “[O]nce the Islamic Republic was firmly established, the government began to rewrite the laws and rules relating to women’s recently acquired rights (ibid. p. 12). The change in divorce and child custody laws after the revolution which completely ignored women’s interests and its consequences is well reflected in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*: Efsane finally killed herself because she could not get a divorce without the consent of the husband who had turned her life into a nightmare with his paranoiac suspicions (pp. 317-19).

Another female character who plays a significant role in the novel is Leyla, a young teacher and poet who fell in love with Mihreban, who was several years older than her. She is the only female character in the novel that has a job and could stand on her own feet economically. She is represented mainly by the narrator and the characters in the novel. Yet we learn some aspects of her personality directly through her poems mentioned in the novel. That is to say, since Leyla has given her poems to Mihreban to read and comment on, in effect we come to know Leyla’s thoughts and world view predominantly through Mihreban’s reading of them. (pp. 218-222). Mihreban notices that in her earlier writings Leyla was obsessed with the loss of her father and expresses her sorrow in ordinary language and a relatively childish way. Later on, she finds her own language and a unique perception of love. In her last poems she succeeds in evicting the ideal of a sacred man from her soul and mind and to put herself first. Mihreban claims that in doing so, Leyla has started to know herself better, firstly as a human being and a woman and secondly to begin to communicate with the beloved man presented in her poems (ibid.).

Therefore, compared with Kallê and Efsane, Leyla is presented as being more privileged. She is a teacher and poet who can enjoy her own personal life. Yet, more important and ground breaking in a more or less traditional society is her marriage proposal, although it was made indirectly to Mihreban: “can’t I be the character of your stories? Those new stories you intend to write from now on.” (p. 274). Despite all the privileges Leyla enjoys, there are still some basic and critical definitions and

norms regarding womanhood and woman's behaviour and appearance in the society that remain unchallenged: her shyness, for example, when she talks to Mihreban and her wearing of Chador. It is also worth mentioning that although Mihreban does not accept Leyla's love she does not end her life by setting herself on fire in the way Kallê and Efsane did. This might be due to the relative relaxation of social and familial restrictions on women in the 1990s compared with those faced by Kallê and Efsane, together with her financial independence which made her less dependent on a man for survival.¹⁵⁴

Nahae's first novel, *Gullî Şorran*, made him the pioneer of the Kurdish experimental novel in Iranian Kurdistan and his second, *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*, became a fully-fledged experimental novel in the history of the Sorani Kurdish novel. One of his main concerns in this novel was to unravel the process and mechanism of meaning-making and the formation of subjectivity. To do so, he chose a protagonist who is going to write a novel, that is, the novel is a novel about another novel. This strategy enabled him to challenge the conventional perception of the novel as a genre which reflects reality as it is, an attitude which dominated the Kurdish novel in Iran before Nahae. *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*'s emphasis on form and its self-conscious exposition of its artefact has made it a postmodernist novel. However it tends to be modernist in its "tragic" reaction to the demise of ideal values and widespread passivity in Kurdish society in Iran. In this novel, Nahae is still to a great extent, concerned with the social and political situation in Iranian Kurdistan and its grim prospects. The post-revolutionary Iranian Kurdistan as portrayed in the novel, is no longer the active society with revolutionary ideals it used to be in the months leading to the 1979 revolution and the early post-revolution years, until the time that the

¹⁵⁴ As Esfandiari has rightly pointed out, the status of women in the post-revolutionary era is a complicated and contradiction-ridden issue: "[W]omen are oppressed and confined in many ways. Yet, at the same time they are very much in the public sphere and part of a civil society that is reemerging and stands apart from and against the state." (1997, p.8). They also "engaged more actively than before in literature and the arts. A substantial number of women writers, painters, sculptors, filmmakers, and dramatists have emerged since 1979." (ibid. p. 6).

Islamic regime relentlessly suppressed the Kurdish movement. Most of the characters presented in the novel had lost the dream of changing the world over time and, consequently, their agency. That is, they have become passive, impassionate, and indifferent to the future of their society and of the world. That said, the novel shows the possibility of resistance by presenting the protagonists of both stories in the novel, Mihreban and Ferhad, as subjects who never gave up their dreams and hence their agency, even though they became alienated from the society that no longer views them as heroes. Yet, the female characters possess even less control over their lives and society than their male counterparts do; which does not come as a surprise. The novel conveys a critical attitude towards the norms and policies which reinforces the traditional perception of ideal woman as a selfless being who sacrifices her personal needs for the happiness of her family members.

The 1979 revolution was a determining event in the history of Iranian Kurdistan and its impact on Kurdish society along with other parts of Iran, is still felt after thirty five years. The Kurds together with other Iranian ethnic groups participated in the events which led to the revolution in the hope of achieving, among other things, democracy, social justice, and cultural rights. As soon as the Islamic Republic confirmed its establishment, it started to eliminate any political dissident. Thus, the Islamic regime reacted with excessive violence against the Kurdish population that followed a different political agenda from that of regime, that is, Kurdish nationalism. It was not long before the full-scale war broke out between the Kurdish Peshmarga and Iranian forces which lasted for about a decade. Neither the Iranian revolution, nor a decade of armed conflict was able to achieve the political, cultural, and economic rights the Iranian Kurds demanded. The social, political, economic, and psychological consequences of an unsuccessful revolution, and years of a devastating war in Kurdistan are still intensively felt by the people. This critical period of Iranian Kurdistan's history is widely reflected in the Kurdish novels of Iranian Kurds. As it is in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*, the Iranian revolution is a dominant theme in the other two novels from Iranian Kurdistan in this study. In the next section I will

examine Qawami's *Siweyla* (2004) which tells the story of a district in Sine (Sanandaj) and its once happy inhabitants who were strongly affected by the revolution and the oppressive policies of the Islamic regime that had been inflicted on the Iranian Kurds.

CHAPTER FIVE

Space, sex, and nationalism: the fall of Utopia in Sharam Qawami's *Siweyla*.

In *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* (2002), Nahae represented an alienated individual character unable to adjust himself to the new socio-political conditions in Iranian Kurdistan. The protagonist, who was cast into exile for a long time due to his political activities, notices that all his old friends have turned their back on those dreams and sublime values that they had fought for in the past. Resisting the social and cultural pressures that sought to turn him into a *normal* person, Mihreban finds himself alone and alienated from others. Two years after Nahae had published *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*, Sharam Qawami produced his first novel, *Siweyla* (2004). It was the second Iranian Kurdish novel to shift away from the classic realism that had dominated the Iranian Kurdish novel until the late 1990s.

Qawami was born in 1975 in Sine (Sanandaj) in Iranian Kurdistan. In 2000 he started his career as a writer by publishing a collection of short stories entitled *Mêjûyîtirîn Zamî Daykim* [My Mother's Most Historic Anguish]. Since then, he has produced works ranging from poetry, translation, and literary criticism to the novel. His other two novels are, *Bîrba* (2006) and *Palltaw Şorr* [The Man with Long Coat] (2007).

Like Nahae's *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*, Qawami's *Siweyla* is mainly concerned with the social, economic, political, and psychological aftermath of the Kurdish movement's failure in Iran. Among others, the main themes in both novels are alienation and frustration. However, unlike *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*, *Siweyla* is not only concerned with a single character, alienated from others and his environment, rather, Qawami presents most of the characters as being alienated and frustrated following the Iranian 1979 revolution and consequently the social, political, and environmental

changes in Iran, generally, and in Kurdistan, specifically. In terms of form, a fragmented narrative, stream of consciousness, multi focalizations, and sudden shifts in perspective and voice are the prototype modernist narrative techniques most employed by both Nahae and Qawami in their novels. Equally significant is that both writers are more obsessed with individuality and individual identity than collective identities. To put it another way, in their novels, the characters are not selfless beings assimilated into a greater collective identity; rather the collective identity that is, the mainly national identity, becomes one aspect of the various identities they aspire to, or have. This trend is in stark contrast to the earlier Kurdish novels produced in Iranian Kurdistan in which, as Ahmadzadeh argues, “the individual [was] dominated by the collective in accordance with traditional values.” (2005, p. 34).

Qawami received the attention of Iranian Kurdish critics for his radical novels in terms of form and content; but, apparently the quality of his works has not been enough to arouse interest in Iraqi Kurdish critics. To my knowledge, no Iraqi Kurd has examined any of Qawami’s works.¹⁵⁵ In his short article, “The Kurdish novel in Iranian Kurdistan” (2005), Ahmadzadeh in one paragraph, and very briefly, introduces Qawami’s *Siweyla*. He makes a general judgement on it without backing his claims by providing examples from the novel. However, he was right, as I will show in this chapter, to describe *Siweyla* as “[A]nother successful novel to display Kurdish progress in literary techniques.” (2005, p. 34). He also mentions some other features in the novel which distinguishes it from the previous works: the use of “stream of consciousness”, “flashback”, and “Dialogues and detailed descriptions of the inner world of the characters.” (ibid.). These techniques, along with some other formal features (for example, its fragmented structure, multiple focalization, its unreliable narrator, and the replacing of objectivity with focalization) can be found in the novel. However, a much deeper study needs to be carried out in order to explore

¹⁵⁵ Of Iranian Kurdish novelists, Ata Nahae has received more attention by far from Iraqi Kurdish critics and literary circles.

the formal features of the novel and its implications, something which I intend to do in this chapter.

There are two articles on Qawami's last novel, *Palltaw Şorr*, in the Persian language; however, to my knowledge, Ahmadzade's work is the only one on *Siweyla* and nothing has been written on *Bîrba*. In his article, "Palto Deraz, Tasviri Postmodern az Jame'eyi Barzakhi" [The Man in the Long Coat: A Postmodernist portrait of a Transitional Society], Peyman Yaryan views *Palltaw Şorr* as a novel with "distinguished narrative, worldview and language." (2010/1388, p. 113). Likewise, Mes'ûd Bînende regards it as an "innovative" work for its "plot, narration, and language." (2010/1388, p. 100). Bînende and Yaryan also revere Qawami for his deliberate commingling of tragedy and comedy (Bînende 2010, p. 109; Yaryan 2010, p. 114). Yaryan maintains that *Palltaw Şorr* is both a postmodernist and magical realist novel. Some elements of postmodernism are apparent in *Palltaw Şorr* but, there are no fantastic or extraordinary events on which to classify the novel as a magical realist text. On the other hand, Bînende does not explicitly label it as a postmodernist work; however, he points out the postmodernist elements of pastiche and parody in the novel. The fundamental flaw in these articles is that both Bînende and Yaryan do not support their arguments by offering examples from the novel. Consequently, their references to postmodernism, magical realism and the strategies and techniques associated with them remain quite vague and abstract.

I decided to omit *Palltaw Şorr* from this study because it is not a character-based novel: it does not contain even a single fully developed character. But, in *Siweyla*, Qawami focuses on characterization and dramatizes the characters' behaviours, actions and reactions in various contexts and in relation to others. I also preferred *Siweyla* to *Bîrba* since the former is more innovatory and complex in terms of formal features and narrative techniques than the latter.

In the first section I shall examine the narrative structure of the novel with the focus on its characterization. *Siweyla* has a non-linear plot abundant with flashbacks

and recurring themes. Qawami has intentionally set up a fragmented, disjointed, and arbitrary plot to show the “streams of consciousness” of the protagonist, Aram. Multiple narration is another key feature of the novel which has given it a fragmented structure, since the narration constantly and abruptly circulates among different characters. The second section explores the “inserted genres” with whose help “heteroglossia” and thus different viewpoints on the world have entered the novel. The perception of heroism in the novelistic world of *Siweyla* before and after the Iranian revolution shall be addressed in the third section. The discourses around chivalry and heroism dramatically changed after 1979 revolution. Before that, as depicted in the novel, a certain chivalry known as “pallewanî” had dominated society. Those who were admired and honoured for their chivalric behaviour were called Pallewan. They were physically powerful people who sided with weaker people when bullied by someone stronger; yet this action did not have any political implication against the regime. As the novel shows, after the Iranian revolution, a new perception of chivalry and heroism emerged in society: the real heroes were now those who strived to change the world, were politically active and fought against the Iranian regime. The last section examines gendered identity and sexuality. In *Siweyla*, Qawami presents a new generation of female characters who are liberal, educated, and have a good deal of social mobility. However this New Woman, in this novel also, soon loses her agency and turns into a passive being both in sexual and social arenas.

5.1. The polyphonic narration of subjectivity

Siweyla is the story of two generations: one whose youth coincided with the last two decades of the Pahlavi dynasty and then the following generation, whose parents were among the former generation during their childhood when the Islamic revolution occurred and who grew up in the post Islamic era. It narrates their concerns, dilemmas, hopes, desires, and dreams in two different socio-political periods. Both generations are affected by some massive social, political, and

environmental changes, of which the 1979 revolution in Iran is of utmost significance. Before long they become disillusioned with the revolution and, accordingly, frustrated and disappointed. Most of them find it extremely difficult to cope with such social, political, and spatial changes and resort to drugs and alcohol.

Equally, the novel is about love and sex. Most of the characters presented in *Siweyla* are affected by a mystified notion of love as disease. The protagonist, Aram, was a young writer who used to be very energetic; he spent most of his time reading and writing. This great enthusiasm, however, comes to an end when he falls in love with Siweyla, a female character, though they have never met and have only spoken to each other through telephone.

Whereas *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* was concerned with both ontological and epistemological questions, *Siweyla* mainly poses epistemological questions. In other words, the “dominant” of *Siweyla* is epistemological and, like *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*, emphasizes perspective and deploys strategies to foreground “typical modernist questions”, in McHale’s words, such as “[W]hat is there to be known?; who knows it?; how do they know it, and with what degree of certainty?; How is knowledge transmitted from one knower to another, and with what degree of reliability?; How does the object of knowledge change as it passes from knower to knower?” (1987, p. 9). *Siweyla*’s approach to addressing these questions bears many similarities with *Faulkner’s The Sound and the Fury* ([1929] 1966). As Faulkner does in his novel, in *Siweyla* Qawami deploys multiple focalizations and voices to present the same thing from different perspectives and confusingly shifts narrative voices between character-narrator and other characters to capture the maelstrom of thoughts and emotions in the protagonist, Aram. In the following section I will discuss these strategies adopted by Qawami in *Siweyla* to deal with the above epistemological questions.

Siweyla is a non-linear, disintegrated, and disjointed narrative mostly in the form of stream-of-consciousness. In it, a colour, smell, scenery, or a feeling, triggers

another memory, event, or thought in the past in the mind of the character-narrator, Aram. For example, when he discusses with H'acî 'Ebas how in the past it snowed heavily, "such nice days; we used to walk on snow from one roof to another" (p. 24),¹⁵⁶ In reply, H'acî 'Ebas said, "time has changed my son. There is no snow and joy anymore." (ibid.).¹⁵⁷ And Aram remembers a snowy day, "H'acî 'Ebas and my father were clearing a snow drift in the alley with a pickaxe. Ka Seyfe and A 'Ebe¹⁵⁸ were shovelling the snow into a wheelbarrow and we took it to Berdeşt to dump it there" (ibid.).¹⁵⁹

At other points in the course of the novel, the narrator switches from one topic to a completely different one without warning. Aram portrays a scene of his childhood when they were having a snow-ball fight with other boys and their parents. While following this event we witness a sharp shift in the next line, both in perspective and topic: H'acî 'Ebas follows Aram's narration about the snowball scene with, "we were informed that a huge central government army is on the way. With some other guerrillas we left for Kamyaran¹⁶⁰ in a Jeep." (p.25).¹⁶¹ However, it is not only the sharp shift from one topic to another that is a core formal characteristic feature of *Siweyla*. We also witness an abrupt shift from one character who is the focalizer, to another from whose perspective the same event or a different one is presented. This sharp shift between both past and present and from one topic to another indicates a maelstrom of confusion and disorientation in Aram's consciousness, especially on the occasions when he is high on drugs. He is surrounded by an apparently

¹⁵⁶ "Yadi be xêr sallan be ser befra banew ban erroyshtîn"

¹⁵⁷ "Sall û zeman gorrawe rolle. Kwa befir kwa dillxoşî."

¹⁵⁸ 'Ka' or 'Kak' is a Kurdish honour used before a male's name. Its equivalent in English is Sir. "A" is also the equivalent of 'Ka' or 'Kak' that is used in the Erdelani dialect spoken by most people in Sine.

¹⁵⁹ H'acî 'Ebas û bawkim her yeke u qollîngêkiyan be destewe bû u diware befirî kollaniyan errûxand. Ka Seyfe u A 'ebeş be xakenaz firhonekeyan bo pîrr dekirin, êmeş berew berdeşt rawman ena u lewê le ser şeqam billawman ekirdewe.

¹⁶⁰ Kamyaran is located at the south end of Kurdistan Province between two major Kurdish cities of Kermanshah and Sanandaj.

¹⁶¹ Hewallman pê geyşt hêzêkî gewrey dewilet be rêweye. Le gell çen çekdar swarî cipêk bûyn û berew Kamiyaran têman teqand.

disjointed succession of images, events, people, thoughts, and feelings, flowing repeatedly from his subconscious or unconscious into his consciousness.

Mostly narrated by Aram the protagonist, *Siweyla* is a first-person narrative. However, throughout the novel the narration circulates among other focalizing characters and as such a “multiple focalization” narrative is created. Almost all of the characters in the novel, major and minor, take on the role of narration. In *Siweyla*, Qawami has taken multiple focalization to its extreme in order to convey a sense of unreliability in the narration and subjectivity of the truth and reality. Moreover, this strategy has enabled all the characters in the novel to interpret their actions, behaviours, and thoughts and those of others from their own perspectives, as we shall see in the following example:

[S]ince he met my mom, I don't think that my father has gone to bed dreaming of another woman. During the Eylul war,¹⁶² my mom crossed the border with her dad. Raining cats and dogs, one night she stepped into my father's tea-house [...] night was falling and I wanted to head home. The other shops in Sîrûs Street were shut.” (p. 21)¹⁶³

Aram narrates from “since he met” up to “my father's tea-house” but then suddenly and without warning, Aram's father takes over the narration and the same event is narrated from his perspective and point of view.

In another passage, a scene from a wedding is presented from three individual character's perspectives: Aram describes how a wedding provides a good opportunity for young boys to enjoy themselves by watching beautiful women and touching them while dancing. (p. 41). Aram's narration is then disrupted by Yedî who presents his observations, “Aram was drunk. Çinûr and I were dancing hand in hand.

¹⁶² In September 1961 a war broke out between the Iraqi Kurds under Mustafa Barzani's (1903-1979) leadership and the Iraqi government which ended in 1975, after Iran stopped its support of Barzani. Consequently the Kurdish movement failed and thousands of Kurds fled to Iran. This war is known as 'Şerî Eylûl' [Eylul War] among the Kurds (see McDowall (2004, pp. 302-42); Yıldız (2007, 17-24).

¹⁶³ “pêm wa niye lew katewe daykmî nasîwe be xeyallî hiç jinêkewe xewtibêt. Daykim le katî şerrî eylûl le gell babî hellatibûn bo emdîw. Şewêkiyan le jêr lêzme barana serî kirdbwe nêw çaxanekey babmewe [...] Bangî şewaniyan dabû. Xerîk bûm berew mall bibmewe. Tewawî dûkanekanî sîrûs bestrabûn.”

At times my hand brushed her breast and I felt embarrassed.” (p. 42).¹⁶⁴ Once again the narration passes to another character, this time Çinûr, “we were dancing arm in arm. His arm was brushing my breast and my heart was leaping. When he stepped back from me I pulled him towards me again.” (p. 42).¹⁶⁵ One might compare these three characters to three cameras set at different angles, each recording what it could see. We see the circulation of focalization once more in the same passage. Aram again becomes the narrator, “we were playing hide-and-seek in the garden, in the midst of yellow flowers. She hid in such places that even a cat couldn’t go through.” (ibid.).¹⁶⁶ This method of narration provides a panoramic presentation of events, characters’ hidden thoughts and feelings and their suppressed desires and as such, provides a broader field of vision to the reader.

5.2. *Siweyla*, a novel of many worlds

Apart from the “character zone”, Qawami incorporates other methods and genres, using songs, jokes, popular discourses and beliefs to create, in Bakhtin’s words, a “novelistic hybrid” in which different languages are juxtaposed and counterpoised in “an artistically organized system,” and this consequently produces a heteroglot and polyphonic novel (1981, p. 361). Rooted in religious, cultural, and mythical stories and beliefs, these reflect collective desires, dilemmas, anxieties, and sufferings. In this section I will examine the construction and representation of subjectivity in and through these discourses as well as how one reacts to them, that is, expropriating, modifying and redefining them to fit into one’s dreams and desires or rejecting them, partially or altogether.

¹⁶⁴ “Aram mest û kelela le ser korsîyêk danîştibû. Le gell Çinûra penceman be nêw pencey yektira kirdbû. Carcarêk pencem ber memkey ekewit û terêq ebûmewe”

¹⁶⁵ “Ballman be nêw ballî yektirda kirdbû. Baskî ber memkim ekewit û dillim elerzî. Xoy dûr existewe u disanewe bo xomim ekêşayewe ...”

¹⁶⁶ “le naw baxa le nêw tûtîrk û golle zerdekanda çawşarkêman ekird. Le şwênî wa xoy eşardewe bêçwe pişîleşî piya nedeçû.”

To begin with, songs are repeatedly heard during the course of the novel. Yedî's voice is very close to that of Ali Asghar Kurdistani,¹⁶⁷ a well-known classical Kurdish singer. Mostly through Yedî we hear Kurdistani's songs. The song, "Oh friends of Tariqa,"¹⁶⁸ is frequently repeated in the course of the novel, similar to that of a refrain in music or poetry, when disappointed about union/reunion with his beloved. For example, in Siweyla, Aram remembers a song by Kurdistani in which he recognises his desires, strong emotions, and sufferings, "Oh, friends of Tariqa, solace the pain of my love/ or take my life away by tearing my liver apart with a dagger" ... (p. 12)¹⁶⁹ and, "Oh, my eyes¹⁷⁰ it is Eid,¹⁷¹ the season of freedom/ come my love I will be your sacrifice" ... (p. 130)¹⁷² and, "came hundreds of Hakims, unable to heal my wound" ... (p. 15)¹⁷³ and, "do not believe anyone who claims to be a lover/ unless you see a mark left by a snake bite on his face." (p. 61).¹⁷⁴

The perception that a person could be afflicted by love at first sight, entered classical Persian poetry from Arabic literature which in turn had borrowed it from Greek philosophy. As Michael Dols has pointed out, "by the ninth century 'ishq [love] referred clearly to excessive love for another person, whether male or female." (1992, p. 315). This excessive love, however, could result in serious health problems and mental disorders.

¹⁶⁷ Sey Ali Asghar was born in 1876 in Sellwet Awa, a village nearby Sine. He died in 1937 and was buried in his hometown. He was raised in a religious family and educated in religious schools. However, impressing people by his amazing and different voice, he was encouraged to sing and soon became a popular singer whose bearing upon the singers of the next generations is unquestionable; with many singers yet rerecording his songs.

¹⁶⁸ This song is based on a poem of Tahir Begî Caf who was an Iraqi Kurdish poet.

¹⁶⁹ "Ey refêqanî terêqet derdî 'eşqim çare ken/ yan be carêk bimkojin cergim be xencer pare ken."

¹⁷⁰ It refers to the beloved. In the Kurdish language people address those who they love as their eyes, indicating how precious and important they are for them.

¹⁷¹ This alludes to Eid-Ul-Adha "festival of sacrifice" that is "the second most important festival in the Muslim calendar". This festival celebrates "the prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son when God ordered him to" (BBC 2014). The poet here analogizes himself to the sheep that was finally sacrificed instead of the prophet Ibrahim's son.

¹⁷² "Rojî cêjne çawekanim mûsimî azadiye/bo bella gerdanî ballat qoçî qurbanim, were"

¹⁷³ "Sed h'ekîm hat û 'îlacî em birîney xo nekird."

¹⁷⁴ "her kesêk hat û wîfî min 'aşiqim birrwa meken/ta le ser gonay nîşaney zexmî maran ges nebê"

The fervid emotion of love was believed to originate from what in Greek philosophy is called “the passionate love”. A “passionate love” is characterized by, as Ruymbeke notes, an “acute stage [of] lovesickness, a disease that enduringly disturbs the delicate natural balance of body and soul and leads to madness or physical death [that is] traceable to Greek thought.” (2009, p. 356).

According to this theory, someone afflicted by love can never be cured and is doomed to never-ending suffering. The lovers find themselves helpless in the face of the overwhelming power of love. An illuminating classical example is the famous love story of *Layli and Majnun* by Nizami of Ganja (d. 598). Afflicted by love, Qays is transformed into a mad man who abandons his normal life. Due to his “self-destructive” and unusual behaviour people called him, Majnun, literary meaning, “possessed by a jinn or demon.” (Clinton 2000, p. 21). When his father pleads with him to put aside his madness and unusual behaviour, Majnun says that “it is not within [my] power to change.” (ibid. p. 20). As discussed above and in Clinton’s words, since he perceived love as an affliction the lover, “was helpless to rid himself of it, and that madmen were not legally responsible, were long established conventions by the time Nizami took up the poem.” (ibid. p. 21).

Most of the characters in this novel are afflicted by love. Aram’s father, Derwêş ‘Izet,¹⁷⁵ has not yet forgotten his first love, Pirşing, though years have passed and he has married another woman with whom he has two children. ‘Izet fell head over heels in love with Pirşing. He says: “I used to ridicule falling in love in the past. For me, a female was only to be touched on the face and breast and then fucked ... But this time it was different, I was trapped by her love. I rarely opened my shop. In the morning, before opening my eyes, I drank a big glass of arak” (p. 81).¹⁷⁶ In order to

¹⁷⁵ “Dervish” or “Darwish”, as William Chittick notes, is a Persian word, meaning “poor man”, someone who travels toward God on the Sufi path (2000, p. 85. *Sufism: A beginner’s Guide*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications).

¹⁷⁶ “pêştir pêkenînim be dilldarî u şitî wa ehat. Wemezanî mêyîne her bo eweye dest be ser û sîngya bînît û bîgêyt ... bellam em care wek ker çeçqîbûm û hîçim bo nedekra. Be degmen dûkanîm ekirdewe. Her ke le xew heldestam qapêkî gewrey ‘areqim helldegirt û berew teperrenew ebûmewe.”

gain her father's consent, he thoroughly changed his life: he gave up gambling, embraced Islam and became a Darwish. Their passionate love continued after they got married. However, Pirşing's infertility led to their separation. Yet, this self-willing separation could not banish Pirşing's love from his heart, "God bless him, until his very last breath", says H'acî 'Ebas to Aram, 'Izet's best friend, "he was thinking of her all the time, so much so that your mother lost her patience" (p. 157).¹⁷⁷ Ridden with frustration, she went to H'acî 'Ebas's house in the night and burst into tears: "I'm going insane. I've been his wife for five years, we have two children, and yet he loves her [Pirşing]. Sometimes he mistakes me for her and calls out her name." (p. 158). Aram's father, like some other characters in this novel, is doomed to suffer from separation.

Yedî, Çinûr, and Feranek are also highly affected by this certain view of love as discussed above. There is a triangular love relationship between them, Yedî and Çinûr's love is mutual, and Feranek has a strong one-sided love for Yedî. Due to some vague reason, Yedî and Çinûr cannot marry. Yedî married another girl, one that he did not love, and Çinûr remained loyal to him until she died a few months later. Since he continued to hold strong feelings for Çinûr, Yedî's marriage faced serious problems and finally broke down (p. 174). Like Aram, he could not bear the frustration and failure both in his personal life and on a political level: not being with Çinûr, and particularly, her death as well as the breakdown of Kurdish nationalism. Yedî and Çinûr had loved each other from childhood. A generalisation that was imposed on Yedî and Çinûr was, "If love is rooted in childhood," says Aram, "it will never be uprooted". As he was extremely influenced by Kurdistanî custom, Yedî fell in love with him. He wished to "be a lover like Seyid, to have a nice voice like his." (p.164).¹⁷⁸ He became a *true* lover as depicted in Seyid's songs, a lover who would never forget his beloved, and he resorts to friends of Tariqa to console himself from the unbearable pains of separation. Feranek, the third side of this triangle, suffered

¹⁷⁷ "Xwa 'efûy kat heta tiya çû her bîrî be layewe bû. Weha bû dayktî yas kirdbû."

¹⁷⁸ "Yedî hellweday Seyid bû. Emewê wek Seyid 'aşiq bim, wek Seyid deng xoş bim."

for years for being apart from Yedî. This is while, as Perwîn's question emphasizes, Feranek was not at all important to Yedî, "did he ever care about her? Did it matter to him what Feranek was going through?" (p. 199). Even her marriage to another person could not replace Yedî's love for him. As Perwîn says to Aram, her husband "is a psychologist. He would give her the world and would satisfy her heart's desires, yet she doesn't want to have a child by him. What's more, she talks about Yedî all the time and bothers her husband with that." (p. 200).

None of the characters that have fallen in love once in their life are fulfilled by actual union with the beloved. Rather, Love brings them unhappiness, reclusiveness, and annihilation. This never ending suffering, at least partly originates from the mystification of love, its presentation as a metaphysical phenomenon over which one has no control whatsoever. Love is deemed to be a spiritual phenomenon that happens only once and, once it has occupied one's heart and soul, cannot be eliminated or replaced.

Heteroglossia is also achieved by means of jokes, folk songs, and religious or metaphysical beliefs. Embedded in them are socio-cultural conditions, society's joys, mentality, desires, and collective identity. For example, 'Izet sings some comic popular songs of the Sine region:

The bridge over the river may collapse/ My Sweetheart rolls up her dress and crosses
the river

Your watch's glass might break/ I become a watchmaker and your visit satisfies my
longing desire

I told you many times, keep away from quince/ Lest it turns your face to its own colour

Jihad has come to provide water pipes/ But the spring drained, no joy has remained (p.
105).¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ Ya xwa pirdekey çem bibê xiraw/ Yar pûzey derxat ba le xorrey aw
Se'at ban deso şûşekey bişkê/ Bome se'at saz tasem lêt bişkê
Çenê witim pêt meço jêr dar bey/ Rengû zerd ekat wek rengekey xoy
Cehad hatge bo lûlekeşî/ Kanî kwêrew bû nemale xweşî

This song is composed of several verses, each consisting of two lines. The verses are independent from each other. The first two demonstrate the lover's intense desire for his beloved. This is mainly due to the cultural conservatism that has made it difficult for them to see each other freely to the extent that the singer wishes the bridge over the river to be broken so that he can see his beloved's legs when she crosses the river. Then he wishes that her watch would break so that he can become a watchmaker and spend some time with his sweetheart. The third verse does not contain a significant message. The last verse refers to the early years after the Islamic revolution during which Jihad Sazandegi constructed, among other things, the roads, and transferred electricity and water pipes to the remote towns and villages.¹⁸⁰ However, in this verse the singer is not happy with the new technology and facilities that have led to a change in the people's life style; and in this song specifically, the draining of the springs where the young men used to see or date their beloveds.

The folk tale is another genre used in the novel to create heteroglossia. Section ten of the novel starts with the story of Sheikh 'Ebas. 'Ebas was a thief. Searching for food and anything worth stealing, he moved from one village to another. Exhausted and empty-handed, he fell asleep. Later he woke up and found himself in a garden abundant with watermelons and melons. He took a bag of melons and made for home. There, 'Ebas put the bag in the living room and fell asleep again. After a while his mother woke him up and told him that God had disgraced him by turning the stolen melons into snakes, scorpions, and crabs. 'Ebas opened the door leading to the living room and saw that, "the room is full of snakes, scorpions, and crabs. They come out of the bag and spread about the room" (p. 147).¹⁸¹ Overwhelmed by this horrific scene, he closed the door behind him and ran away until he found himself in

¹⁸⁰ Jihad Sazandegi, composed of Jihad, an Islamic term meaning fighting for the sake of God; and Sazandegi meaning construction, was a ministry in Iran that later assimilated in the Ministry of Jihad Keshavarzi, Agricultural Ministry.

¹⁸¹ "Jûreke pir biwe le mar û dûpişk û qirjang. Le torbekewe dêne der û be dîwekeda exşên."

Pîrkake;¹⁸² then he took off his cloths and soaked his body in honey, and asked a shepherd to tie him to a tree. Then ‘Ebas told him: “come back after a week and if I am dead, bury me at the bottom of the tree; if not, take me home and put me in the room where the snakes and scorpions are” (p. 148).¹⁸³ All of that week he was bitten by mosquitoes and bees. At the appointed time the shepherd came back. He found ‘Ebas close to death and took him home. His mother opened the door leading to the living room. Then, “those creatures turned into smoke and rose up into a rainbow.” (p. 148). Then he took the path of Sufism and in a short time became a man of God able to do extraordinary things, like boiling water with the heat of his heart. (p. 149).

The songs, jokes, and folk tales are ideological in the sense that they see the world in a certain way that defines basic notions of, for example, love, humanity, freedom, and morality. The incorporation of these genres into this novel has created different voices, languages and hence ideologies juxtaposed and counterpoised against each other. They provide, among other things, the ideological surrounding against which characters gain their consciousness and subjectivity. To put it this way, “[C]onsciousness becomes consciousness only once it has been filled with ideological (semiotic) content, consequently, only in the process of social interaction” (Voloshinov 1986, p. 11). Equally, Qawami creates his characters’ consciousness in the process of social interaction with grand narratives, for example, of Islam, Marxism, nationalism, and folklore against the social, political, and cultural backdrop.

5.3. From tea-house heroes to mountain heroes

Siweyla is not only the story of those characters whose names and stories are mentioned in the course of the novel but also the story of many others who lived, dreamed, fought against the new regime, and were executed and massacred. To

¹⁸² Pîrkake is an area near to Sine

¹⁸³ “H’efteyêkî tir werewe, eger mirdibûm le pay em dar wene bîmnêje, egerîş mabûm bîmbewe bo mall û bîmxere nêw jûrî mar û dûpişkekan.”

borrow Bakhtin's words describing Dostoevsky, Qawami in *Siweyla* was successful in hearing "the dialogue of his epoch, or, more precisely, for hearing his epoch as a great dialogue, for detecting in it not only individual voices, but precisely and predominantly the *dialogical relationship* among voices, their dialogical *interaction*." (1984, p. 90) (The emphasis is original). In *Siweyla*, the dialogues are different before and after the revolution. Before revolution, people are mainly concerned with chivalric (Pahlawani) values, Sufism, folkloric and religious stories and beliefs, while the political, cultural, and economic rights, embedded in Kurdish nationalism, social justice, women's rights, spatial and environmental issues, are the dominant discourses after revolution. Yet, some elements are present in both eras, such as sexual relationship, romantic love, religious, and folkloric stories.

To begin with the Pahlavi era, in *Siweyla* a panoramic picture of Kurdish society is presented. People from different groups and social statuses are portrayed, each possessing a dialect of their own. The life of gamblers, knights (Pallewan), and Sufis, among others, is demonstrated. On the one hand, their world views, languages, dilemmas and concerns are presented and, and on the other, their dialogue, in Bakhtinian sense, with others is recorded. Pallewan 'Ezîz, a real person from Sine, is well known to most of the Kurds in Iran for his chivalry and power. Different stories and events attributed to him are still mentioned among people. Yet, the Pallewan 'Ezîz presented in this novel is a fictional character, that is, the author has combined phantasy and reality to create a character who is not exactly the same as the real Pallewan 'Ezîz.

Pallewan 'Ezîz is represented through his language and his actions. He is a knight who protects the poor and the oppressed. Passing by a tea-house in Tehran, he notices that a group named "The eleven brothers" is bullying people. He stops and sits down in the tea-house. The brothers do not like him being there:

- What are you doing here, fat ass?
- I was waiting for you

- If you don't leave here then I'll have to kick you out.
- Just by yourself or with the help of the other ten chickens [his ten brothers]? (p. 75)¹⁸⁴

Then a fight broke out and Pallewan alone beat them all; soon they fled from the place (p.76). The author has found the correct language for his characters, both Pallewan and the one from the group of eleven brothers; he has successfully portrayed and narrated knighthood discourse and culture. Pallewan 'Ezîz's words and actions are prototypes of a "Pallewan". After the revolution when his friends ask him to explain his case to the new government - that he was sacked in the Pahlavi regime from his job as a gendarme due to political activities - he refuses to do so. His resistance is especially heroic taking into account that "he was in a very bad condition. Being addicted and helpless, he became a recluse. We couldn't convince him to get a pension from the new government. Whenever we asked him to do so, he replied, 'God is Generous'. He was such a great man." (p. 113).¹⁸⁵ This shows another virtue of Pallewan 'Ezîz as someone whose self-esteem comes above anything else and does not compromise it at any price. Likewise, some other heroic actions in the course of the novel further demonstrate that he is a "Pallewan". (for example, see pp. 112-113).

Qawami deliberately presents various views of Pallewan Ezîz's fall. People believe that a woman has deceived him and is responsible for his fall and misery. One of these rumours attributes his misery to a woman named Firîşte; elsewhere in the novel another woman named Killaw is assumed to have made him addicted to opium. (pp. 113 and 119 respectively). Yet, another opinion is mentioned that negates the previous views; Ibrahim, a guerrilla who helped Pallewan to quit drug

¹⁸⁴-Wirçe bor bo lewê westawî?
Be temay êwe danîştûm.
Neroy xaw kêşit ekem.

Tenya xot ya le gell de qule mirîşkekey birata?

¹⁸⁵ "Ca lew kate le doxêkî zor xirapda ejîya. Mo'tad û keftekar le sûçî mallda kewtibû, ke çî her çîman kird nemantiwanî razî bikeyn mûçey dewllet werbigrê. Berdewam yek wellamî edaynewe 'Allah Kerime'. Be rastî zor piyaw bû."

addiction, asked him whether it was true that Killaw gave him heroin for the first time. Pallewan 'Ezîz refutes this. Instead, he attributes his fall to a metaphysical event: "one night Xeyrizne¹⁸⁶ came to me in a dream and told me that my spirit is contaminated with sin." (p. 119). He continues that since then, Xeyrizne stopped his spiritual support as a result of which he suffers from terrible backache (ibid.).

In this way, Qawami provides a polyphonic representation of Pallewan 'Ezîz, as his "self" is presented respectively from his own and others' perspectives. These different, and occasionally contradictory versions of his character and personality have created a dialogic representation of his subjectivity.

'Izet, Aram's father, is another major character in this novel. He is a very good example of how an individual can be "interpellated" into a given "subject" by a certain ideology. Throughout the novel he switches between two different personalities: gambler and Darwish. 'Izet is presented as the best gambler in Sine. He has turned his tea-house into a place for gambling and drinking alcohol. His life style and subjectivity transforms as a consequence of his embrace of Sufism or gambling. This is evocative of Althusser's notion of ideas as having their "existence ... inscribed in the actions of practices governed by rituals defined in the last instance by an ideological apparatus." (1984, p. 159). Atoning for being a gambler and becoming a Darwish, as an ideology, then, is not achieved, but occurs through a thorough change in his behavior and actions: "Pirşing made him change from being a gambler to Mad 'Izet.¹⁸⁷ He released all of his birds and filled his shop with snakes and scorpions. He replaced the photos of naked women on the walls with those of saints." (p. 77).¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Xeyrizne, in the Kurdish language, and Khidr Zende (Alive Khidr), in Persian, is a saint whose shrine is near Sine. He is highly respected by local people as they believe that he has been alive since Prophet Muses' time and has supernatural power.

¹⁸⁷ He is mad in a spiritual sense and probably because he turns his back on worldly issues.

¹⁸⁸ "Pirşing le qomar bazêkewe gorrayewe bo dêwane 'izet. Hemû qazlax û seyre u qenaryekanî berda u dûkanekey pir kird le mar û dûpişk. Resmî jine rûtekanî hênaye xwar û qapî şêx û ewlyakanî le cêgêy hellwasî."

That is to say, 'Izet changed from being a gambler to being a Darwish not as a result of thinking and meditating, but rather, to achieve his ultimate goal, that is, marrying his beloved Pirşing. Her father is content to give his daughter's hand to him only on condition that he quits gambling. Hence, when he divorced Pirşing, once again he returned to his old life style as a gambler that is gambling, having sex with various women, and getting drunk.

Through 'Izet we get to know the world of two different social groups: believers and non-believers. These two are presented as binary oppositions in terms of their views of the world: one is concerned with other-worldliness while the other is preoccupied with this worldliness. In Sufism, one is to follow specific instructions and rules while in the non-believing ideology one is permitted to follow his desires and fulfill his needs in this world; in contrast to the former that is very strict in terms of morality and to-dos and not-to-dos, the latter permits violation of these moral norms. Having said that, Qawami has placed these two voices against one other without, drawing on Bakhtin, each dominating the other and thus a "dialogue" is maintained between them. As demonstrated in *Siweyla*, before 1979 heroic actions occur either in public spheres like tea-houses in the form of siding the weak against oppressors, or in places in which Darawish were doing extraordinary things. After the 1979 revolution, the public spheres shifted from tea-houses to the streets and then to the mountains, and the heroic actions pertaining to chivalry and Sufism, that is, in one way or another attributed to a supernatural force, to mainly against the Islamic regime.

Along with unrest in the other parts of Iran during the final years of the Pahlavi regime, the Kurdish people actively participated in protests against the Shah, so much so that "Kurdistan became the geographic and political centre of the opposition to the Shah's regime." (Koochi-Kamali 1992, p. 180). However, it was not long before the revolutionary government broke all its promises regarding the rights of minorities that earlier encouraged the Kurds to collaborate with other Iranian oppositions (McDowall 2004; Koochi-Kamali 1992). The Kurds soon realized that the new regime

is strongly against any share of power with other minorities or granting autonomy to the Kurds or other ethnic minorities in Iran. No later than August 1979, Khomeini “declared a holy war against the Kurds, banned all the Kurdish political organizations, cancelled [Abdul Rahman] Ghassemlou’s membership of the Assembly of Experts and denounced Ghassemlou and Sheikh Izzaddin Hosseini as enemies of the Islamic republic.” (Koochi Kamali 1992, p. 180). As a result of these authoritarian policies, the Kurds had no option but to undertake armed-struggle as a way of claiming their cultural, economic, and political rights. Consequently the clashes escalated between the Kurdish fighters and the Revolutionary Guards, or Pasdaran, “a formation which asserted the Shia values of the new government,” that soon turned into a full-scale war. (McDowall 2004, p. 162)

The new social and political environment produced new discourses. In this political turmoil, the previous chivalric values lost their significance amongst the people. Now the real heroes for them were those who sacrificed their life for their nation. They were the new heroes who fought for a better tomorrow for their people who strived to change the world and hoped to bring about justice and freedom.

Qawami exposes his characters to meta-narratives, for example, of nationalism, religion, and myths. Of these, Kurdish nationalism in its armed-struggle form has been presented as the only emancipatory discourse. Yet, the perception of armed-struggle as a legitimate way to achieve freedom is challenged by Ni‘met and the narrator, Aram. They argue that the very act of resorting to violence, even when responding to ruthless oppression by the central government, reproduces further violence and does not bring about freedom and peace. Having said that, as was the case in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* and as we shall see in *Zindexew*, in *Siweyla* Kurdish nationalism is represented as a unifying force capable of bringing people together to claim their cultural, political, and economic rights. This is achieved by constructing a collective agency, that is, an agency that can only exist if individuals get together and form a collective subjectivity. To put it this way, each individual has a certain extent of agency which implements power in the face of socio-economic realities but which

by itself does not lead to a change in the existing order; however, when these trivial individual agencies are accumulated, a remarkable collective agency will be formed which has the power to challenge the current situation.

Aram and his friends were exposed to Kurdish nationalism when the Kurdish Peshmerga was fighting against central government in Iran. The Peshmerga was highly idealized and respected amongst people and this made them heroes to be praised by Aram, 'Ebe, Yedî, and the other boys in this group:

In the afternoon and at nights we listened to the radio in our homes.

- Last night the heroes of ... attacked a military camp. After a breath-taking and courageous battle they annihilated this camp including those trapped in it.

And we were intoxicated by listening to this news. The more the number of victims, the more delighted we became; as if simply some balloons had exploded and not a drop of blood had been shed, nor had one person's eye been closed upon this world forever. We were presuming that by killing these few poor soldiers and hirelings who had been made scapegoats we could avenge the lost lives, oppression, and inequality we had suffered. The noise of RPGs and bullets disturbed the children's sleep and we went onto the roofs and dreamed of tomorrow. (pp. 121-2).¹⁸⁹

Aram criticizes those actions, behaviours, and beliefs that he as a child and the majority of the people once assumed to be heroic and emancipatory. He remembers how war had metamorphosed people into thoughtless killer machines or killing admirers and how the enemy was dehumanized, presumed to be and presented as, non-human and, even worse, as devils completely different from themselves. They grew up in an era when, as Aram believes, a bright tomorrow was blinking at them through the barrels of their guns, a bright tomorrow that was but a mirage. However,

¹⁸⁹ "Niwero u şewan le kolesûçî mallanda gwêman be radyowe ena.

Dwênê şew kure qaremanekanî ... desrêjîyan kirde ser binkeyîkî dewlet û paş şerêkî dijwar û bwêrane, em binkeyeyan be hemû ew kesanewe têyda bûn, tefrûtûna kird.

Êmeş her ewe nebû ball bigrînewe. Her çî jimarey kuştekanî dewlet zortir baye, zyafir keyfman lê dehat, wekû ewey lem şwênaneda tîzan teqabêt û bes. Ne xwênê rijabêt, ne kesêk bo hemîşe çawî le rûy dinyay roşin daxrabêt. Waman ezanî be kujranî em çen serbaz û bekrêgîrawe bestezmananey ebûne berpêl toley xwêne rijawekan û sitem û naberaberyekan ekrêtewe. [...] girme w nirkey arpîçî w qirme qirmî fîşek, xewnî mindallanî ezrand, êmeş emankirde serbanan û xewnman be sibey rojekanewe ebînî."

it did not take long before people found out that the war would not bring them freedom and happiness and began to find someone, a group, or party to blame for declaring war against the central government.

There are different accounts of the outbreak of the war between the Iranian Kurds and the central government presented by unknown voices, each representing a major group in Kurdish society. One part of society was accused by another of having a desire for war, of being deceived and trapped in an unequal war with a much stronger enemy that was armed to the teeth. The accused part in response said that they defended themselves and attributed their failure to the betrayal of some Kurdish forces:

- We could not resist the lust for war and blood.
- Why do you say that? We could have stopped the flood of war like a dam. We built up battlements right in front of our houses. Our bullets didn't go over the garden wall. We wanted to kill the war, to stand against it and not to give up; but we gave up and that is the rule of war.
- It was such a great stage. We were free. We were no longer under the enemy's heel.
- It was like a dream; the dream of standing against bullet and tank. We were deceived. We were pushed towards war and were annihilated.
- Had we not been betrayed, we would have seen a different outcome. (pp. 18-19)¹⁹⁰

These statements probably allude to the conflict between two main parties in Kurdistan, that is, the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) and Komala. The PDKI sought to resolve the Kurdish issue peacefully, through negotiation with the central government; however, they could not gain consent from Komala who

¹⁹⁰- Ême h'îzîn be şehwetî şerr, ême qeh'beyn be toxmawî xwên.
- Bo wa ellêy? Ême emanwîst wek lempêrêk ber lafawî şerr bigrîn. Ême sengerekanman le ber demî malekanmanda bûn. Fîşekekanman sinûrî h'esarekanmanî nedebrî. Ême emanwîst şer bikojin û dij be şerr rawestîn û koll nedeyn, bellam kollman da, emeş yasay şere.
- Qonaghêkî êcgar xoş bû. Azad bûyin. Zorî dojminman le ser nebû.
- Corêk bû le xewn. Xewnî berengarî fîşek û tank. Firîwyan dayin. Berew şerr hanyan dayn û tefir û tûnawyan kirdîn.
- Eger hêze xeyanetkarekan nebûnaye, derencam corêkî tir ekewtewe.”

accused them of being compromisers. The KDPI was a moderate pragmatic party with leftist attitudes whose main concern was that the Kurdish issue be resolved peacefully and with minimum casualties (McDowall 2004; Yildiz 2007). Komala, on the other hand, was grounded in the radical Maoist left that viewed Kurdish nationalism, in McDowall's terms, as "parochial in ambition" and derided KDPI leaders as "bourgeois nationalists." (McDowall 2004, p. 265). They claimed that they were fighting for a sublime ultimate goal, that is, the elimination of the class system, and that they were fighting along with other leftist parties in the world to defeat imperialism. In Iran they wanted "power to be returned to all the communities of Iran, and the defeat of central government." (ibid. p. 262).

At times this ideological difference hindered Komala and the PDKI's unity and collaboration to undertake one policy against their common enemy, that is, the Islamic Republic. "Komala was less willing than the KDPI", McDowall holds, "to brook compromise with Tehran and more determined than the KDPI to continue fighting. This inevitably weakened the Kurdish negotiating position. In November 1979 when the KDPI agreed a ceasefire with the government as a prelude to negotiation, it found its endeavours undermined by Komala's repeated attacks on government forces." (ibid. p. 266).

Elsewhere in the novel these two opposite attitudes clash with one another, this time personified by Ni'met and Kak Xelîl. Kak Xelîl represents the Komala party which is established upon Marxist ideology. We get to know from his words that he is a knowledgeable person fighting for an ultimate humane goal, that is, "equality for humans" (p. 122). He is challenged by Ni'met who believes justice and equality could not be achieved by resorting to violence: "Kak Khalil for how long could you go on with this war? Could you think of any other achievement in war except suffering and destruction? When you kill people, you should expect the same. When you spill

another's blood, inevitably your blood would be spilt too." (ibid. p.122).¹⁹¹ Ni'met maintains that human equality is not such a great goal for which to sacrifice one's life. For him life is too short to fight for. Possibly, his attitude towards war is the result of the failure of the Kurdish movement to achieve its demands through armed struggle. As was the case with the Kurdish novels in the previous and following chapters both from Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan, Kurdish nationalism in *Siweyla* mobilized people, empowered them and increased their self-confidence to create a fairer society. However, the crushing of the Kurdish movement, along with other social, political, and environmental changes, led to the characters' frustration and passivity in this novel, *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* and *Temî Ser Xerend*. Ali in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan*, instead, granted some characters a magical power to do justice for people after the Kurdish authority established in 1991 turned into an interior tyranny.

The world in which Aram and his friends live is a fraught and dangerous one, not only due to the war and random persecutions, but also due to issues pertaining to Kurdish society itself. Young boys and even adult men are shown vulnerable in terms of sexual harassment; the narrator, Aram, describes that era, most probably the years following the revolution, that were so hazardous and unsafe that even "an adult man did not dare leave his own district. If he was seen in another district on his own, he would have been raped." (p. 46).¹⁹² Three sexual harassments to young boys and men are narrated in this novel, in which the victims managed to flee and escape being raped. H'acî 'Ebas approaches a group of men and boys sitting in front of his house. He warns them: "beware of going to other districts," he says. When they asked the reason, he explained that on the way back home he heard a low scream over the hill: "I ran towards the voice and I saw two men over a boy, one grabbing his butt and the other put his hand over his mouth and tried to fuck him." (p.

¹⁹¹ "Kak Xelîl ta key etanewê dirêje be şerr biden? Şerr çi derencamêkî ebê le mall wêranî zyatir? To ke xellkit koşt, lêt ekojrê. Xwên birjênî ebê dillnya bî xwênit erjê."

¹⁹² "pyawî kamil be tenya neydewêra le gerrekî xoy dûr kewêtewe. Dû kes be tenya gîryan bihênaye be zor eyankird be qûnyewe."

48).¹⁹³ Then he continues how he stabbed them and saved the young boy (ibid.). This story reminds Aram of a day when together with Yedî, ‘Ebe and Umîd he went to the gardens nearby to eat fruit. A huge man chased them and grabbed Aram, then released him and went for Umîd. “He took off his [Umîd] pants and threw him on the ground. Being beneath him, Umîd was scared to death. As he took his cock out, Yedî stoned him on the head.” (pp. 48-9).¹⁹⁴ The fight between the man who attempted to rape Umîd and other young boys went on until another man arrived and saved them. The third harassment occurred when the young boys were in a swimming pool. A young man played with them in the pool and this time again they were saved with the help of another, good-hearted man. (p. 86).

Growing older, they see themselves in a new era in which their society was more secure and stable, since the war had come to an end after the government crushed the Kurdish uprising. Yet, this safety and stability came with a price. The government had established stability in Sine and the other Kurdish cities by resorting to extreme violence by oppressing dissidents and intimidating others to remain submissive. Aram, ‘Ebe, Yedî and other boys in their group could not believe that their hopes and dreams had been shattered. They all took drugs to relive the past in which they dreamed of a “bright tomorrow”, a tomorrow that was different from today, where all humans would be equal as they were once, when teenagers, were repeating the adults’ slogan for a better tomorrow:

Down with capitalism oppression

Down with inequality

Long live equality for humans

Down with ... (p. 168)

¹⁹³ “berew dengeke hellatim. Dîm le pişt dîwarî merqed dû nefer korêkyan pall xistiwe. Yekyan baweşî kirdbwe qûnya w ewîtir destî xistibwe ser demi. Xerîk bûn be zor bîgên”

¹⁹⁴ “Şiwallî le pêy kend û pallî xist. Omîd le jêr desîda pîranî kirdbû. Her ke kêrî derhêna yedê hellat û berdêkî gewrey kutaye tewq serya.”

These slogans reveal well Komala's leftist ideology of striving to establish a classless society, something which never came true.

Apart from the political failure to launch autonomy in Kurdistan, the environmental changes were another issue that drained any meaning from Aram's and his friends' life. They felt alienated in the new political and environmental situation. Their habitat had undergone such a dramatic change that they no longer felt at home in it. In this respect *Siweyla* and *Temî Ser Xerend* lament the "good old days". In the former, the characters' habitat is changed as a result of the expansion of the cities while in the latter, the protagonist's village was razed to the ground due to civil war. However, the psychological effect of these environmental changes is more or less the same in both novels: the characters affected by them can no longer connect to the new environment and feel alienated. In *Siweyla*, for example, Aram complains about what happened to a valley named "Kanî Cemîl" so much loved by him and his friend: "[N]ow Cemîl Spring, a valley abundant with trees, like many other images of our childhood, is nothing but a mirage [...] We the children of Berdeşt will never forgive those who ruined our childhood images". (p. 38).¹⁹⁵ Their shared space of childhood has undergone dramatic changes in less than two decades. Their district, Berdeşt, had seen the trees cut down, the springs drained, and the forest replaced with a park (ibid.).

Above all, the Kurdish uprising had been relentlessly suppressed. Hence, it would not be a surprise if they all, more or less, ended up in one and the same fate: resorting to drugs to escape their great frustration and dolour. Cemîl committed suicide, Kak Xelîl, Ibrahim, Yedî and Çinûr were dead and Aram who was once respected by everyone as an activist and writer was now far from the imagined ideal self he desired to achieve. Unlike their male counterparts, the female characters were not directly affected by these overwhelming environmental and socio-political

¹⁹⁵ "Êsta Kanî Cemîl wek dollêkî pîrr dirext, wek zorêk le dîmenekanî mindallî, tenya xeyalêkî dûre u bes [...] Ême mindallanî Berdeşt qet xoş nabîn lew kesaney dîmenekanî mindallîyan lê têkdayn."

changes. But they were indirectly affected through their relationships with their male relatives whose lives were ruined under the new circumstances. This suggests that the novel reinforces their position in society as dependent subjects. Above all, in the novelistic world of *Siweyla* they are objectified and reduced to being sexual objects for the satisfaction of the desiring male characters.

5.4. Virile men, passive women

In this section, as in the previous chapters, I will examine the representation of gender and sexuality from a feminist perspective which seeks to deconstruct the normative perception of masculinity and femininity. *Siweyla* revolves around several themes of which sex is one of the most significant. Most of the characters are in one way or another concerned with sex or love or both. Although the narration circulates among other characters, Aram, a male character, remains the main narrator. Presenting the events, memories and experiences from almost entirely the male characters, either Aram or others, then the novel obtains the reader's sympathy and approval of them. *Siweyla* does not invite the reader to challenge the sexual power as the determining factor of masculinity, if not actually reinforcing it. The male characters freely talk about their penises and proudly express their sexual needs and desires. In one scene, for example, Aram, 'Ebe, Cemîl, and Yedî compare their penises to see whose is the largest. Then, they compete in another game, that is, splitting the tomatoes with their penises, "the tomatoes were too hard for our penis to penetrate; they were bending like plastic when we tried to penetrate them; but, 'Ebe penetrated the tomatoes with his penis like a skewer, splitting them and laughing loudly while throwing them to one side" (p. 56).¹⁹⁶ The young boys proudly participate in a competition to test their masculinity, the bigger and stronger the penis, the more powerful and masculine its holder is assumed to be. It might be worth mentioning that *Kêrzilî* "having a big penis" in the Kurdish language means,

¹⁹⁶ Tematekan zor sift bûn, her ke kêrman berî ekewit xêra wek lastîk eçemayewe, bellam 'Ebe wek şîş eykird be tematekana û eytilîşandin. Yek yek firî edane la u qa qa pê ekenî.

according to Hejar, “bullying, coercion” (cited in Hassanpour 2001, p. 240), that is “associated with the exercise of physical and political power” (ibid.). This coercion and consequently, the physical power are well conveyed in the narrator’s tone when describing ‘Ebe splitting the tomatoes with his penis, “but ‘Ebe penetrated the tomatoes with his penis like a skewer” (p. 56).

An image of the ‘ideal’ man takes shape in the course of the novel as virile, dominant, and physically and/or intellectually powerful. ‘Ebe, for example, is presented by the narrator as a hero who “as soon as he sexually matured, he found [Ferîde] and screwed her” (p. 52).¹⁹⁷ This *heroic* action earns him honour and respect from his friends, and also invites the reader to admire his virility. Also, ‘Izet since falling in love with Pirşing, became a recluse and drank alcohol day and night as he could not obtain her father’s consent to marry her. His friend, ‘Ebas, blamed him for ruining his own life and showing weakness for a woman: “You should be ashamed of yourself. Why on earth do you behave like this? There is not a single woman in Iran and Iraq who you haven’t screwed” (p. 81).¹⁹⁸ For him, a woman is just for fucking; she is not worth sacrificing one’s life for, especially by someone who has had sex with plenty of them, that is, a strong man who is not expected to show any sign of weakness.

Furthermore, masculinity signifies not only power and domination, but also aggression in the sexual intercourse that furthers manliness and powerfulness. This is well demonstrated in the following quotes, “a Jack doesn’t give a damn if a Jenny’s vagina tears apart” (p. 81);¹⁹⁹ or, in another example, Aram and his friends, then teenagers, played football in the alley and then their plastic ball fell into one of the houses in the neighbourhood whose young daughter, at their own age, tore it apart. Angry at what she did, they took revenge by insulting her, “now enjoy yourself, tear

¹⁹⁷ Her ke gonî pêşey kird xoy pêgeyand û boy pêwe na.

¹⁹⁸ “Hetîw danarrizî em karane çîye eykey? Jinî ‘Êraq û Êran nemawe netgabê.

¹⁹⁹ “Nêreker key der bayse maker quzî edrrê.”

our ball apart, but you will be torn apart soon.” (p. 85).²⁰⁰ This shows their attitude towards a female’s body and her sexuality. She is viewed as inferior and pitiful because she is being fucked, or, in this case, is to be fucked, and to be “torn apart” in the future. Thus, “male sexual power,” holds Hassanpour, “is in the transitivity of the verbs that signifies men’s ability to remove female’s hymen (to tear, to pierce, and to squirt).” (2001 p. 239).

If the bigger penis equals more power and masculinity, then, accordingly, those who do not have one at all, should be assumed to have less power than their counterparts with the phallus. At stake here is how femininity and masculinity are (re)presented in the sexual behaviour of the two sexes and the way they are able to freely and equally express their sexual desires or talk about their sexual experiences or not.

Throughout the novel the male characters talk about their sexual needs, desires and experiences, either directly or through the medium of the narrator. However, in this novel, a female character cannot be found to talk about her sexual needs and desires to others or even to herself in the form of, for example, interior monologue. They are not “desiring subjects” when it comes to sex, but merely “sexual objects” desired by men. In a scene from a wedding, for example, the narrator, Aram, expresses his desire for the female body: “I was stealing glances in the women’s big butts’ direction. Their butts were swaying from one side to another, stretching their maxi dresses.” (p. 37). Or, “a woman’s beautiful leg caught my eyes [...] she was sitting half-naked, wearing a mini skirt. She had exposed thighs. When she bent I snuck a look and could see her cleavage.” (pp. 40-41).²⁰¹ As a male character Aram demonstrates a desperate craving for the female body and uniting with it. Given that

²⁰⁰ “xoşî bike, top bidrrêne, biza dû rojî tir xot çon edrrênin

²⁰¹ “[N]îgam arastey simtî jinan ebû. Simtî zilî jinan le nêw maksîye tengekanyanda eleraiyewe. [...] Le naw seyr keranda pûz û ranêkim ber çaw kewt [...] nîwe rût danîştibû. Mînî jûpî poşîbû. Şilkey ranî lê xistibwe der her ke xoy eçemandewe şeqî memkekanî ekewte ber çaw [...] le jêr çawewe hemû memkîm helnoşî.”

he has never slept with a woman in his life, this strong desire for sex might seem quite natural. The first time he saw a naked woman was when working in construction in Tehran, “I peeped into the room through the door ... her white and big butt had pressed against her green and thin shorts... It was the first time that I stared at a woman’s butt and thigh from such a close angle.” (p. 103).²⁰² He unequivocally reveals his strong desire for sex. In this scene he is overwhelmed by the sight of a beautiful naked woman in front him. He describes this scene as if it is quite natural, listening to his inevitable instincts asking for satisfaction. He goes even further in this naturalization of his carnal needs that has to be satisfied at any price and without taking the woman’s needs into account: “Firoze, so beautiful and young, was lying only a meter away from me. A girl ready [for sex] was in my hands. I was staring at her butt and thigh and biting my lip... Anyway this is my last day here, I would tell her, if she didn’t like it, I would fuck her by force.” (p. 103).²⁰³ He says that Firoze is in his hands; she is alone at home and almost naked and that gives him the right to approach her for sex; and if he doesn’t gain her consent, then he is allowed to rape her.

Finding no outlet for his sexual needs, Aram believes that a wedding is a good opportunity to enjoy watching and touching women:

A wedding is a good opportunity for us to watch women’s breasts shaking and to say to one another, ‘look how beautiful they are dancing’. You let your sister, daughter, and wife ... expose themselves to other men’s sight and quench their thirst so that you can ogle other women’s bodies. (p. 41)²⁰⁴

²⁰² “Le qillîşî dergawe bo nêw jûrekem rwanî ... Simtî zil û sipî dabûye jêr shorte sewz û naskekeya u derperrîbû. Şortekey le nêw şeqî golpekaniya qût dirrabû. ... Hewell car bû aweha le nizîkewe çawim le simt û ranî jinêk ekewit.”

²⁰³ “Fioze ter û terçik le yek mitriyewe rakişabû. Kiçêkî amade kewtibwe ber destim. Le simt û ranî rama bûm û qepim be liçma ekird ... Ca xo min axir rojme lêrem, ba pêy billêm, hezîş nekat her be zor eygêm”.

²⁰⁴ “Zemawend derfetêkî başe bo ême ta pirr le dill bo lerînewey memkî jinan birwanîn û billêyn çawî ke çen cwan heldeperê. Le zemawend bo ewey bitwanî leşî jin hellnoşî ehêllî xoşkit, jinit, kiçit ... kewne ber çawî xellkî u be niga tînewekaniyan çêj bibexşin.”

According to Aram, a sort of invisible and unvoiced compromise occurs between men in this unique occasion, that is, they loosen their patriarchal grip around their wives, sisters, or other female relatives' neck and let them show parts of their body and dance with other men. Doing this, however, men do take into account merely their own sexual needs; they risk their honour only when their repressed desires come to the surface and seek satisfaction. Here, Woman is pictured as a creature to make man happy and give him pleasure with the beauty of her body and is turned into the male's object of desire. In this compromise she is not taken into consideration whatsoever and is devoid of any agency and control over her needs and desires. Female characters are pictured as if they do not have sexual desires in the same way their male counterparts do. Even when they show some desire for sex, they are treated as loose and morally corrupted. When 'Ebe, for example, asks Aram why he does not take Soma, with whom he has fallen in love, home to sleep with her, Aram replies, "Do you think she is like those whores you take home with you in front of other people's eyes?" (p. 109).²⁰⁵

Moreover, his strong desire for sex gives Aram the right to violate the others' private life by peeping at them while having sex:

A light was lit in the Gendarmerie alley. I grabbed the window and lifted myself up. Inside the room a naked man and woman were making love. The woman was lying on her back and the man was touching her butt and breasts [...] He grabbed her breasts and made a pillow of her butt. The woman's mouth had drooped open [...] He went over her body and rode with her butt, grabbed her hair, lifted her head and breast up and took her boobs into his mouth from the back. The woman was whining. He turned her over, slid into her legs and screwed her. (p. 139)²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ "wa ezanî lew kiçe kûniyaneye be ber çawî xellkewe eyanbeyte mallewe?"

²⁰⁶ "Le nêw kollanêkî Jandarmîrîda çiray malêk helkîra bû. Çingim kirde sawî sitadyeke u xom berz kirdewe. Lew dîwî hewdakanî baranda jin û piawêk be rûtî xerîkî eşiqbazî bûn. Piyaw jiney demewrû rimandibû u destî be simtî û memkekaniya ehêna [...] pencey kirde jêr sikya u memkekanî girte çing û simtî kirde serîn. Jine demi taq mabû [...] Çiwe ser jestey û siwar simtî bû, çingî be qijya kird, ser û sîney helbirrî u le piştewe memkekanî girte dem. Jine eynûzandewe. Hellîgerandewe xoy be nêw qaçekaniya kird û têy tepand."

There are two points here that is worth mentioning. First, this scene is presented from a male perspective and out of his fantasy at a particular place and time. The man is presented as active, virile and dominant, literally and symbolically. The woman, on the other hand, is completely passive and in the man's hands. Nowhere in this scene is Woman demonstrated as participating in the sexual activity. She only makes weak screams similar to that of a dog whining.

Furthermore, the verbal expression used here is also sexist. The words, for example, "têy tepand" and "eynûzandewe" have a visible and invisible meaning. On the surface they mean "screwed her" and "she was whining" respectively. However, beneath the surface meaning there is an invisible patriarchal history. "Têy tepand" is not a neutral word simply referring to a certain natural behaviour when mating; rather, it has a more cultural meaning than a biological one being accompanied by a patriarchal overtone as a result of which men are granted the upper hand and more power. This word which describes the action of penetration, in the Kurdish language belongs to men's vocabulary and is only used for them. In this novel, sexual intercourse, while seeming to be a completely natural human behaviour is ridden with ideology, through and through. Not only is it the biological behaviour that satisfies the male characters' sexual needs, is also something to gratify their desire for power and dominance in the sexual and social relations with women, that is underwritten in the language used to describe it.

To establish an inequality, the words describing women in the sexual activity emphasises their weakness, passivity, and looseness and, hence, reinforces their position in the sexual relation, that is, jêrkêre, literally meaning a person "under penis". It connotes, according to Şîrwan (1998), one who is "subject, inferior, subordinate, powerless, unimportant, [and] undignified" (cited in Hassanpour 2001, p. 240), which reveals that sexual intercourse is not a relation in which woman and man stand on the same plane. Rather, "it is constructed hierarchically as a form of the exercise of masculine power. In Kurdish, as in other languages, men and women are constructed oppositionally as fuckers and fucked. The former is the dominator

and the latter the dominated. This is the case even in the male homosexual relationships.” (ibid. p. 240). In this case, in the description, “she was whining” (with pleasure), the woman even loses her place as a human; She is dehumanized and given a place equal to that of a dog. This especially makes sense in the Islamic/Kurdish culture in which the dog is assumed to be dirty (*najes*); and it is an insult to call anyone a “dog” or to describe someone as behaving like a dog, for example, barking, howling, or whining.

There are other examples in the novel that serve to illustrate this point. There are plenty of misogynistic idioms and sayings. In the following quotes “Ebe whined like a woman, beneath him” (p. 48)²⁰⁷ and “this is our time/ Qetarçianîs²⁰⁸ are our women (wives)”²⁰⁹ (p. 112), Woman stands for weakness and subordination. It shows how “abusive” it is for a man to be called a woman or a bride (Hassanpour 2001, p. 239) as this endangers his manliness (*piyaweti*) from which his sexual and social power originates. *Piyaweti* as a signifier stands for the signified concepts of, among others, physical and sexual power. This arbitrary relation between *piyaweti* and power has been culturally and politically constructed throughout history to the extent that now one of its meanings, as Hesenzade (1995) says, is “one who has fucked” (cited in Hassanpour 2001, p. 239).

Yet there are a few occasions when the novel takes a critical tone towards patriarchal culture and misogynistic statements. Because she wears a short skirt at a wedding, Şîrîn, a female character, transgresses the patriarchal rules of her society; and it is not tolerated by those around her. However, the narrator conveys his disapproval of the insulting statements addressed to Şîrîn by sympathising with her against those who make them. He overhears them saying:

²⁰⁷ “Ebe wek jin le jêr desiya eynûzand”.

²⁰⁸ Qetarçian is the name of a district in Sine and Qetarçianî is one who lives there.

²⁰⁹ “Dewr, dewr xwemane/qetarçianî jinmane.”

-It would have been better if she had not worn anything. She doesn't feel ashamed that she has exposed her body.

-I should throw her on the floor and put her legs on my shoulders. (p. 107)²¹⁰

A female character has violated the norms of the patriarchal society regarding how a woman should dress properly in public, as a result of which the society, both men and women, overreact. Yet, men's reactions takes an extreme form, that is, making her re-surrender to the patriarchal system by dishonouring and humiliating her through offending and raping her body over which she intends to implement control and agency. In all of these examples, he gains his power and domination, at least partly, in the very act of sexual intercourse. In short, when a man has plenty of sex with a variety of women and shows some extent of aggression it demonstrates his superiority and manliness. Womanhood, on the other hand, signifies weakness, passivity, and subordination both sexually and socially.

The discourses regarding masculine and feminine sex in this novel are similar to those in "western cultures" as Luce Irigaray (1977) asserts,

[P]resent a certain isomorphism with the masculine sex; the privilege of unity, form of the self, of the visible, of the specularisable, of the erection... Now this morpho-logic does not correspond to female sex: there is not 'a' sex. The 'no sex' that has been assigned to woman can mean that she does not have 'a' sex and that her sex is not visible nor identifiable or representable in a definite form (quoted in Grosz 1989, p. 111).

This isomorphism with the male sex prevails throughout *Siwey/a* and enables the male characters to freely and proudly talk about their penises and measure their size and power. Also, they would gain honour and respect for having sex with women, while women would be labelled as loose and prostitute for having sex with men. Not even once in this novel has a woman talked about her vagina, as if she is completely unaware of this organ or ashamed to talk about it as the male characters frequently do, and thus a woman does not have "a" sex to be identified or represented. That

²¹⁰ "-her hîçî nekirdayête berî maqûlltir bû. 'eybî nakirê gell û qûnî lê xistiwete der. -Neyxewênête ser ew sekoye u lingî keyte h'ewawe."

being the case, no “room” has been left for women in sexual relations. Conversely, the whole space is allocated, in Grosz’s words, to “men’s fantasies of a femininity that conforms to their (oedipal) needs.” (1989, p. 119). The male characters’ fantasy of femininity and womanhood not only leaves women with no space of their own, but it also deprives them of their very control over their body.

For Irigaray, as Grosz notes, isomorphism, the “correspondence of form or shape between phallogocentric representational systems and phallic male sexuality”, is not a natural or objective one, but a “socio-linguistic construction.” (Grosz 1989, p. 111). That is, the human body, whether female or male, is “already coded, placed in a social network, and given meaning in and by culture, the male being constituted as virile or phallic, the female as passive and castrated. These are not the result of biology, but of the *social and psychological meaning of the body.*” (ibid.) (The emphasis is original). The female body, being considered as weaker, has been subordinated to its male counterpart. Furthermore, a woman’s life and fate is in his hand. This attitude is especially true of the characters from the older generation, among others, ‘Izet, ‘Ebas, and Ka Shemsa, most of whom are parents of the group of young boys. Women are seen to be property they possessed and they even had the right to sell them to others. ‘Arif, a professional gambler from Tehran, for example, after losing everything in a gamble, gambles his wife and loses her to ‘Izet. ‘Arif is held hostage until his wife comes to Sine from Tehran. We get to know later on in the novel from H’acî ‘Ebas, talking about that day to Aram, that his friend has raped ‘Arif’s wife (p. 76).

Siweyla is polyphonic in the sense that the characters take turns to narrate the same or different events or reflect on other characters and the novel is *heteroglot* as it has incorporated other genres and discourses, for example, folklore, jokes, nationalistic and religious discourses. It questions the very legitimacy of Kurdish nationalism in its resort to armed struggle to fulfil the basic and human rights of the Kurdish people. Yet, it provides other perspectives, viewing armed-struggle as inevitable. The novel shows that the Iranian Kurdish movement’s failure had

devastating impacts on social, spatial, and economic arenas in Iranian Kurdistan. In this respect, *Siweyla* shares with Nahaee's *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* the belief that most of the problems in Kurdish society are due to the lack of a Kurdish authority or autonomy in Iran and the discrimination and relentless suppression by the Iranian regime.

Furthermore, *Siweyla* is a ground-breaking novel in that it directly and explicitly addresses sexual issues, which is strictly taboo in Kurdish culture. Yet, the way sex and gender are dealt with in this novel mostly reproduces and reinforces the traditional conventions on masculinity and femininity which presents the man to be both socially and sexually active and desiring and the woman passive in both. *Siweyla* presents a monologic narration of sexuality by misrepresenting it from only one perspective, that of the male characters. No female character takes on narration/focalization to narrating or presenting sexual matters. Presenting sexuality merely from the male characters' gaze and perspective, *Siweyla* reproduces the already existing definitions of femininity and masculinity in society and does not create a new female subjectivity to enjoy, in Grosz's words, "activity, satisfaction, and a corporeal self-sufficiency." (1989, p. 116). Instead, female characters have, more or less, been objectified and are without agency.

The 1979 Iranian revolution and its aftermath produced conflicts between the new regime and the Kurds over their demand for the right to self-determination had been widely reflected in Kurdish novels written by Iranian Kurds. The last novel from Iranian Kurdistan in this study also covers this historical period. Amiri's *Zindexew* tells the story of a bourgeois boy during the political turmoil of the months leading to the Iranian revolution. Unlike the previous novels by Qawami and Nahaee, *Zindexew's* closure coincides with the overthrow of Mohammad Reza Shah and the beginning of an unknown era. This was a time when the country excitedly celebrated the possibility of a brighter future which is well reflected in Amiri's novel. Hence, while *Siweyla* and *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* had a bitter tone and presented a grim

prospect, *Zindexew* has an optimistic tone which conveys the revolutionary enthusiasm to the reader.

CHAPTER SIX

Revolution, nationalism, and gender: overthrowing the dictatorship, reproducing Patriarchy in Amiri's *Zindexew*

In chapters four and five, I discussed how in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* and *Siweyla*, Nahae and Qawami employed modernist forms and narrative techniques to convey the extensive changes that their home towns of Sine and Bane had undergone. Through flashbacks, both novels describe events from post-revolutionary Iran to the massive demonstrations and protests against the Shah. In *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*, Nahae set a fragmented, disjointed, and minimal plot to convey his protagonist's isolation and alienation from his society. Qawami also portrayed the frustration and alienation of the residents of a district in the city of Sine to be the consequence of political failure and environmental changes. *Siweyla's* plot is more or less, like that of *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*. Apart from a similar plot, both novels use stream of consciousness, flashbacks, multiple focalizations, and a broken and fragmented style to register the elusive, relative, subjective reality and fragmented and alienated subjectivity of the characters and protagonists.

The novel that I shall examine in this chapter is Fatah Amiri's *Zindexew* [Nightmare] (2003) from Iranian Kurdistan. Until Amiri wrote his first novel, entitled, *Hawarebere* [Boisterous] published in 1990 there had been no other novel published in Iranian Kurdish for three decades. This was the second Kurdish novel written by an Iranian Kurd and the first one to be published in Iran. Three years later, his second novel, *Mîrza* [Amanuensis] was also published in Iranian Kurdistan in 1993. As Ahmadzadeh says, these two novels are in fact "two volumes of a single novel" (2005, p. 30). Both novels have a simple structure, narration, and characterization. Ahmadzadeh describes them as "little more than simple narrations with simple characters whose perspectives are confined to the borders of the village." (ibid.).

These characters are mechanically polarized into the good and the evil and in the end, the former defeats the latter; the plot is linear and the narration objective and omniscient. Both novels are set in rural areas in Iranian Kurdistan prior to the 1979 revolution, and they both glorify rural life and lament the “good old days”. His last novel, *Zindexew* [Nightmare] (2003) has also, to a lesser extent, some of the elements found in his previous works. For example, there is a dualistic presentation of the universe and it validates and reinforces some traditional values and norms in society. Nonetheless, it has a more complicated structure, plot, and characterization than his earlier novels and it deals with more complex socio-political issues and relationships between the characters who live in bigger societies, that is, in the cities.

Like the other two novels from Iranian Kurdistan in this study, *Zindexew* covers the last years and months leading to the 1979 revolution, but it does not touch upon the post-revolutionary period and the socio-political consequence of the revolution in the same way as the other two novels. Unlike *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* and *Siweyla*, *Zindexew* employs realist narrative techniques to construct his characters and to mirror the reality of his society objectively.

Amiri was born in 1946 in a village between Mahabad and Bukan²¹¹ in Iranian Kurdistan. He was only seven months old when his father died. The more devastating event, however, was his mother’s death when he was seven years old. He mentions this event as the most tragic in his life. As an orphan at such a young age, he experienced an extremely hard life under the protection of his cousins: “since then, I have not had a single happy moment in my life”, he said on a Kurdish TV channel (*Ezmûni Jiyan* 2013). His traumatic experience of death is reflected in *Zindexew*’s protagonist, Azad, who loses his father when he is a teenager. Another traumatic event was that Amiri was jailed from 1976-1979 under the accusation of being a leftist separatist. He mentioned that his arrest was not the result of his being

²¹¹ Formerly known as Savoujbulagh (Sabllagh in Kurdish) Mahabd is a Kurdish city in West Azerbaijan province. Bukan is about one hour away from Mahabad. It is located in West Azerbaijan province too.

engaged in political activities. The only documents of his that SAVAK produced, he continues, were from his personal library in which a variety of books from Marxist to religious intellectualism could be found (ibid.). He is inspired by his own experience in prison, talking with the prisoners and torturers, which helped to create one of the characters in *Zindexew* – a Kurdish student who like Amiri himself, is imprisoned on the accusation of being both separatist and leftist without any legal documents against him.

In the first section I shall examine the premise underlying the representation, the narrative techniques and strategies used in the novel to achieve it and its implication for subjectivity. I also discuss the relationship between the main characters and their society and the representation of the Kurds' "other" in the novel. *Zindexew* shares the premise with the realist novels that the reality out there could be reflected objectively. To do this, Amiri presents a detailed description of the external features of places and characters in order to evoke a sense of certainty and familiarity for the reader. The main characters are shown to be in conflict with the political system but not with the cultural and social norms and values. While striving to replace the dictatorship of the Pahlavi regime with a democratic government, they embrace the cultural norms as they are. Yet, significantly, Amiri effaces the strict border between the Kurds and their "other". He shows the relativity of national identity and foregrounds the similarity between "us" and "them" by avoiding dehumanization of, even, a SAVAK officer who tortures a Kurdish prisoner. The second section deals with gendered identity, that is, one's perception of one's self from a masculine or feminine lens which is greatly formed in and through social values and Kurdish folklore. The novel polarizes femininity and masculinity, (re)defining for each a set of features to be met in order to become an ideal man or woman. In this binary opposition of man/woman, the former enjoys a higher social status over the latter in the novelistic world of *Zindexew*.

6.1. The world of certainties: from representing to reinforcing reality

In *Zindexew*, Amiri recounts three interwoven stories: the story of a boy from a well-off family in Mahabad, the story of a SAVAK officer, and the great men of Mukiryan. The first tells the story of a teenager, about sixteen or seventeen years old, who disobeys his family's plan for his future career and life. The father wants him to follow his profession as a merchant and marry early, but, he craves the opportunity to study. His resistance and diligence finally pays off and he enters the University. This part of the story is set mainly in Mahabad, Wirmê,²¹² and, at the end of the novel, in Tehran. It covers a period of approximately five years from 1974 to the unrests of 1979 leading to the Islamic revolution. The second story relates the life of a SAVAK officer and the awakening of his conscience, over time. He gets to a point where he can no longer continue torturing the prisoners. Consequently, he kills himself to put an end to his "disgraceful" life and unbearable sufferings (pp. 257-8). The stories of the great men of Mukiryan and other amusing tales and memoirs are told in parallel with the other two stories. Their story is narrated by Daye Xeyal for Azad and transports the reader on a journey to some historical moments in the world, for example, World War I and its impact on Iran, generally, and Mahabad, specifically. Those great men had huge influence on a given era in the history of Mukiryan whose stories of bravery and chivalry are yet told among people. Thus, three different, yet interrelated worlds are created in this novel: one in Mahabad whose protagonist is Azad, one in Wirmê with H'usên as its protagonist, and the other, set in the past, in Mahabad concerning its great men and heroes.

Like *Temî Ser Xerend*, *Zindexew* could be considered as a realist narrative in terms of its narration, characterization, plot, and its attempt to mirror reality

²¹² Wirmê is a big city in and capital of West Azerbaijan in the northwest of Iran, populated mainly by the Azeri Turks, Kurds and a minority of Assyrians and Armenians. In Azeri it is called Urmiya. However, officially it is called Orūmīyeh or Urūmiyeh, in Persian. During the Pahlavi era, from 1925 to 1979 it changed to Rezā'īyeh (See, for example, <http://www.orumieh.net/> and <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/433619/Orumiyeh>).

objectively. In *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* and *Siweyla*, we noticed a multi-narration and multi-focalization narrative abundant with flashbacks and sharp shifts in perspectives and voices. *Zindexew*, however, is entirely narrated through one single character's perspective and voice, that of Azad in the form of first person narration. What J. Hillis Miller suggests about the Victorian novel could, largely, be applied to *Zindexew*: "[the] Victorian novels were often relatively stabilized by the presence of an omniscient narrator ... a trustworthy point of view and also a safe vantage point (cited in Stevenson 1992, p. 25). Azad, however, is not omniscient; but his perspective is a God-like one, since what he tells us is presented as truth; in this sense it is quite similar to *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan* and *Temî Ser Xerend* but in stark contrast to *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* and *Siweyla* which present truth to be bound up with perspective and subjectivity. He also enjoys a safe vantage point from where he observes the world. His perception of the other characters, of himself, and socio-political issues are rarely challenged, and when they are, he usually takes the upper hand in the arguments and discussions.

As is the case with realist novels, *Zindexew* enjoys a well-organized and linear plot with a beginning, middle, and end. There are few flashbacks in the course of the novel and the events unfold one after another in a cause-and-effect order. In this novel Amiri has set the plot in a way that mirrors reality as it is, in order to convey a tangible, familiar, and certain world. To achieve it, he has produced a plot that is typical of classical realist novels, embodying enigma, surprise, suspense, and, detailed description of places and the physical features of the characters. By the end of *Zindexew*, the enigma of Azad's nightmare is revealed, the conflicts are resolved, and he is united with Meli, although their marriage is postponed due to the political turmoil of the months leading to 1979 Iranian revolution (p. 264).

Robbe-Grillet describes nineteenth century novels as "crammed with houses, furnishings, costumes, exhaustively and scrupulously described, not to mention faces bodies, etc." (1989, p. 146) In *Zindexew* Amiri wants to enable the reader to "see" by way of detailed description of the places and characters. Azad, for example,

describes Mahabad's old bazar in detail: "Mirza Şemtûn has a pocket watch in the pocket of his vest. The sound of Kak H'ebîb's teacups echoes in my ear, the smell of perfumes from Samedî's shop is everywhere, Welîzade's lantern, H'acî H'usên, Tedeyon, 'Imadî." (p. 80).²¹³ Most importantly, however, this exhaustive description of the characters and their surrounding world constitutes a "stable" and "certain" universe, one that the reader is already familiar with and could easily refer to, against which, in Robbe-Grillet words, "the authenticity of the words, the evens, the gestures which the novelist would cause to occur there" is "guaranteed by its resemblance to the 'real' world". In this way, the realist novelists, he continues, would convince the reader "of the objective existence – outside literature – of a world which the novelist seemed merely to reproduce, to copy, to transmit" (1989, p. 146).

As for characterization, Amiri has also predominantly employed realist narrative techniques. Unlike *Ballindekanî Dem Ba, Siweyla*, and *Temî Ser Xerend*, in which, along with modernist novels, the characters are indeed "anti-heroes" unable to conform to the society and, hence, becoming isolated, in *Zindexew* we see classic realist heroes or heroines who are well fitted into their society. Thus, the novel resembles a bildungsroman.²¹⁴ The subject of the bildungsroman novels is "the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences—and often through a spiritual crisis—into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world" (Abrams and Harphams 2009, p. 229). Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* ([1861] 1994) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* ([1847] 1992) are two good examples of bildungsroman novel in Nineteenth-century Britain which focus on the maturation of their protagonists. In the same vein, *Zindexew* follows the development of Azad in the passage from adolescence to adulthood through various ups and downs.

²¹³ "Mîrza Şemtûn se'atêkî baghellî de gîrfanî cilîqekey daye. Teqey îstikanî Kak H'ebîb de gwêmda deZRîngêTewe, etrî dûkanî Samedî willatî dagirtûwe, çiratorrî Welîzade, H'acî H'osên, Tedeyon, 'Imadî"

²¹⁴ "Bildungsroman" and "Erziehungsroman" are German terms referring to the "novel of formation" or "novel of education." (Abrams and Harphams 2009, p. 229)

The novel opens with two psychological crises with which Azad grapples: his father's death and his recurrent nightmare in which he is a SAVAK officer and torturer. Under the influence of these two events, he becomes depressed and consequently, lives as a recluse. However, after one year or so he decides to resume a normal life and face the problems like a man: "I must be strong, life is a fight, fight to overcome problems ... I must be patient ... from today on I have to be a man, a strong and courageous man." (pp. 44-45).²¹⁵ That is, he is going to accept the social values of his society regarding manliness and manhood and hence fit back into society and becomes at one with it. This is while, except for *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan*,²¹⁶ in the previous novels in this study the protagonist remained rebellion to the end and ended in alienation from the society.

Another major character, Meli, is strongly against marriage until the end of the novel, since she believes that love would be destroyed in marriage. But, she finally conforms and is extremely happy to marry Azad, since this is the only legal and acceptable way of living with him. (pp. 262-4). What Matz notices about "novels of the past", that is, the classical realist novels, could largely be applied to *Zindexew*: "[they] were very often concerned to show how such rebels eventually and positively can fit back into society—how, for example, a headstrong young woman would ultimately decide to soften, conform, and marry." (2004, p. 48). However, while in *Zindexew* the characters rebelling against the conventions and norms ultimately embrace the social norms and values, they are allowed to remain rebellion in the political arena. One such character is H'usên, a SAVAK officer, who revolts against the political system in which even he, as the torturer, finds himself a victim. Over and above that, Amiri blurs the border between the torturer and the tortured by having the former incarnated in the latter.

²¹⁵ "debê be hêz bim, jyan yanê xebat, xebat bo serkewtin ... debê be taqet bim ... lew ro ra debê piyawêk bim, piyawêkî merd û gerû tall."

²¹⁶ In *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan* the protagonist and other main characters following his ideology are rebellion throughout the novel but they are not alienated from the society.

6.2. Challenging the essentialist perception of ethnic/national identity

Unlike the general trend of the novel which strives to naturalize, among other things, the gendered or class identity of the subject, Amiri deconstructs the ethnic and national identity. To do so, he creates a simple, but successful strategy, that is, the incarnation of the oppressor (from the dominant nation) in the oppressed (from the dominated nation). In this way he has relativized the national or ethnic identity and shown that it is largely constructed and “imagined”. As such, he conveys his message, that no nation or ethnic group is inherently superior to others and does not have any natural right to suppress them.

In his nightmare, Azad is a SAVAK officer in the past; his name is H’usên, and he is Azeri. The fact that the novel opens with the narrator, Azad, recounting his recurrent nightmare indicates the significance of the dream and its long lasting impact on the protagonist’s life. Later on in the novel the reader’s speculation about something extraordinary in Azad’s nightmare is further backed by a palm reader’s interpretation of his dream: “you are suffering from nightmares ... you will enter university, there you’ll find out what your dreams mean” (p. 44).²¹⁷ Surprisingly, the palm reader’s prediction comes true: Azad enters university and a series of events occur which reveal the mystery of his nightmare.

In his dream, Azad becomes H’usên who tortures political prisoners to death to make them confess, no matter whether they are guilty or not. In this particular case, H’usên has to make a Kurdish student confess to his accusations of being anti-Shah and a separatist. Overwhelmed by his dream, Azad wakes up, shivering, and his body is soaked in sweat. His nightmares seem so real that they have turned his actual life into a nightmare, too. He asks himself why he, an innocent, oppressed

²¹⁷ “xewnî naxoş debînî pêyanewe gîrawî ... deçîye danişga, lewê xewn û manay xwneket lê rûn debêtewe”.

Kurd, should have such a terrible dream; how could he be an Azeri officer in SAVAK who tortures an innocent Kurdish student (p. 37)?

In Azad's dream, H'usên entered Military College in order to protect his country and serve his people. Having graduated as a top student, he received an offer from SAVAK to work for them. In effect, it was more a command than an offer, and to disobey would put his life at risk. Thus, he joined SAVAK against his will. The job was rewarding for him at the beginning as he was paid three times as much as an officer working at other military sections, and he enjoyed further power and influence (pp. 16-17). He forgets his ideals when he is in the college and gradually adapts to his new place in society as a SAVAK officer and torturer by suppressing any sort of mercy and sympathy he once felt.

However, after a while he is seized by a sudden pang of conscience. For the first time in the two years or so that he has worked in SAVAK, he feels guilty for breaking Amir's toes (p. 105). This is because H'usên had been enlightened by reading Amir's BA. Dissertation in Sociology, which had been used as evidence against him. Also, after a series of dialogues with him he found Amir innocent of those accusations attributed to him. He could no longer continue to torture Amir or anyone else. But, it was not possible for him to resign: "I can't get rid of SAVAK; I know all of their secrets, no doubt they'll kill me if I resign" (p. 257). Trapped in a dead end, he decided to kill himself to put an end to his suffering; he shot himself in the head and blew his brains out (p. 258). Surprisingly, Azad finds that he was born on exactly the same day that H'usên died. The striking similarity between Azad and H'usên's photo as well as his dreams all indicate that H'usên's soul had been incarnated in Azad's body.

Amiri has not dehumanized H'usên by presenting him as a monster: conversely, he portrays him as a human, as one of us, who might make mistakes, yet capable of, say, falling in love, having children, or sympathizing with his prisoner. In this respect, Amiri's presentation of the Kurds' "other" is similar to Qawami's in *Siweyla* in which

he presents a complex and relative sense of identity. It seems that the Kurdish writers writing in the early years of the twenty first century, mostly of the younger generation, have abandoned the simplistic representation of “us” against “them”. All three novels from Iranian Kurdistan in this study counter the general trend in some of the Kurdish novels written during 1990s, especially the ones written in diaspora by the writers affiliated with the political parties of Iranian Kurdistan (see Ahmadzadeh 2005, pp. 26-7). In these works a strict line is drawn between the Kurds and their enemy (Iranian regime), representing the former as the good and the latter as the devil (ibid.).

In *Zindexew* Amiri encourages readers to sympathise with the revolutionary characters; however he undertakes a conservative approach when dealing with cultural and patriarchal values in society in the sense that he invites the reader to accept, for example, the social values and norms pertaining to love, sexual relationship, and femininity and masculinity by reinforcing a given discourse and presenting it as “natural”. In the next section I shall examine such discourses.

6.3. Insane women, sane men: (re)construction and the representation of the ideal man and woman

Like the other novels previously examined, the protagonist in *Zindexew* is a male character at the centre of the fictional world. The bulk of the novel is presented from his perspective and through his voice. As such, a certain knowledge and understanding of society, history, other characters, femininity and masculinity is conveyed to the reader mainly from his perspective. For example, Amiri through Azad’s and other characters’ perspective tells us what it feels like to be a man or a woman; and in this section I shall explore the way in *Zindexew*, Amiri tackles such questions.

Azad and Meli, who are next-door neighbours, have been playmates and close friends since their childhood, to the extent that they cannot live without each other.

She spends a few hours with Azad and his family in their house almost every day. During the course of the novel, we see how gendered subjects are constructed by tracing Azad and Meli's childhood through to adulthood. From the very beginning Azad and Meli are treated differently by their families. Azad does not even make tea for himself; clearly this is regarded as a woman job, even by him who presents himself, (as he has the advantage of being a narrator and hence directing the narration), as an open-minded young man with liberal ideas. In the course of the novel, he and other male characters are always served by women. He orders Meli and Fewzye, his beloved and cousin respectively, for example, though politely, to make tea for him (p. 85). As such, the older social roles that are designated according to one's sex are ratified, reinforced, and reproduced for the younger generation as well, although, unlike older generation, they are having the opportunity to attend school and to be educated. Like their mothers, they will have to do all the domestic work in the future, no matter whether they are educated, revolutionary, liberal and progressive or not. Meli shows as much enthusiasm for reading and learning as Azad does, though she finds text books boring and does not do very well at school. The text reveals that under the influence of the books other than those they need to study at school she becomes liberal and progressive in her attitude and is socially and politically active to the end of the novel. Yet, she is expected to do the housework and cooking and to behave delicately and gently, like a *woman*. On the other hand, Azad receives quite a different upbringing as to how to behave and what to do. His territory is outside the home, therefore, he does not need to bother about the trivial work of cooking or cleaning.

Cixous maintains that the difference between the sexes may lead to "psychic consequences". However, she criticizes Freud for his patriarchal theorization of sexuality. Her critique of the Freudian account of these differences could be applied to the way gender is represented in *Zindexew*. "Starting with the relationship of the two sexes to the Oedipal complex," Cixous remarks, "the boy and the girl are oriented toward a division of social roles so that women 'inescapably' have a lesser

productivity, because they ‘sublimate’ less than men and because symbolic activity, hence the production of culture, is men’s doing” (1988, p.291). Throughout the novel, the sexual division of social roles is described in a way that shows that women’s share brings them “less productivity”; the social roles allocated to men, however, enable them to produce the culture. Likewise Millett blames Freud, his followers, and, above all, his popularizers for rationalizing “the invidious relationship between the sexes; to ratify traditional roles, and to validate temperamental differences.” (2000, p. 178). The above critiques could be applied to *Zindexew* because in the novel the traditional roles are ratified, temperamental differences validated and invidious relationship between male and female characters rationalized. This hierarchical division of social roles and unequal relationships, however, does not bring about any resistance or challenge on the part of female characters. The characters in this novel, in Althusser’s terms, are “interpellated” into gendered subjects by internalizing discourses around ideal femininity and masculinity.

In the course of the novel an image of ideal femininity and masculinity is forged. The characteristic features of an ideal man mainly relates to his deeds, actions, and thoughts, while an ideal woman first and foremost requires some degree of physical beauty and attractiveness. Throughout the novel the ideal man is demonstrated as brave, strong, wise, and authoritarian. This ideal masculinity is partly constructed and conveyed through Daye Xeyal recounting to Azad the story of some great men in the history of Mukiriyan. Aqa Mîrza Fatah Qazî²¹⁸ is the one who had a deep effect

²¹⁸ Qazi describes him as a “man of pen and man of sword ... Despite being a cleric and wearing a gown and turban, he was an extremely brave warrior.” Mirza Fatah never compromised with other oppressive tribe chiefs and the Mahabad governors appointed by central government. Hence, there were a great deal of tensions and conflicts between him and other tribes which at times led to bloody wars. (Qazi 2009, p. 63) Qazi holds that “due to his freedom-loving, Mirza Fatah was always at war with local governors” and was hosting people who were taking refuge under his protection from the local government’s harassments and suppressions (ibid. p. 66)

During World War I some members of the Kuzat (Quzat, meaning Judges) family took Turkey’s side against Russia mainly due to religious affiliations. Among them, Qazi Ali, Mirza Fatah Qazi’s nephew, and Mirza himself played a significant role in collecting donations for the Turkish army. Alexander Iyas, Russia’s consul in Soujbulak, in a report to his government describes him: “[T]his fervent supporter of the Turks is organizing public prayers for the victory of Turkish arms every Friday in the town’s main

on her. She describes him as a “good, wise, educated, brave and mighty”²¹⁹ man who “was stopping the Russian army”.²²⁰ Likewise, Azad’s father is described by Meli’s father as an exceptional man and the kind of man one used to see in the olden days: “he was not like the men in our time; he was awe-inspiring, everyone was in awe of him. Sabllagh has not seen a man like H’acî Mîrza since he passed away.”²²¹ Elsewhere, Azad’s father is complimented by his uncle as “great”, “wise”, “social”, “communicative”, and “generous” (p. 57). As such, bravery, wisdom, and authority are of the utmost significance for a man and without which one’s masculinity could be doubted.

The ideal femininity, however, stands in contrast to the ideal masculinity. The sort of behaviours and traits considered as appropriate for a “good” woman has nothing to do with bravery or authority. On the contrary, an ideal woman is portrayed as shy, obedient to her man, and sacrificing her life for her family. Being submissive and tacit, she is viewed, by both men and women, as a wise woman. Subverting these norms by a female character leads to severe reaction from the patriarchal system, as we shall see later in the case of Meli. Daye Xeyal, for example, compliments Daye Xanim for being submissive and obedient to her husband to the extent that she “was always obedient to her husband’s wishes.” (p.77).²²² There are other conditions yet to be met in order that a woman achieves her ideal femininity. Physical beauty, coyness and chastity, and being a good housewife are of great

mosque; in addition, he has energetically set about organizing collections for the Turks in their struggle against the cursed ‘infidels’.” He also warns his government of Mirza Fettah’s negative role in destabilizing the region by “stirring up intrigue among the Ashiret chieftains”, on one hand, and “inciting the Ashiret Kurds to insubordination” from the Governor of Soujbulak, Sardr Mukri, against whom he holds an old grudge (Tchalenko, 2006, p. 122).

Outnumbered by the Russian forces, the Ottomans are easily broken down. Mirza Fatah decides to stop the Russian army entering Mahabad at any price. Together with some of his men and sons he went to war with the Russian army which ended in his death (Qazi 2009, pp.67-68). The Russians deceived Mirza’s sons, his brother and nephews by promising to guarantee their freedom if they go back to Mahabad. However, upon their arrival, they are arrested by Russians and sent away to Russia. They all are released from captivity after Russia’s 1917 revolution and return to Mahabad. (ibid. p.70)

²¹⁹ “ciwançak, xwêndewar, aza û bekar”

²²⁰ “pêşî quşûnî H’orûsatî degirt”.

²²¹ “kure xo wek piyawî êsta nebû, besam bû, hemû kes şermî lê dekird paşî H’acî Mîrza reh’metî sabllagh piyawî way be xoyewe nedîbû.”

²²² “le h’ast H’acî roh’î nebû.” It literally means “she didn’t have a soul vis-à-vis H’acî”

significance that along with submissiveness makes a perfect ideal woman. Azad's mother, for instance, thinks of Fewziye as a good candidate for his son's future wife only because she is "beautiful and sweet." (p. 62),²²³ or Daye Xeyal recommends Azad to marry Meli as she sees her as the ideal wife for him because "she can be an ideal housewife, she is not loose and a lazybones ... as for beauty, she is a bit olive-skinned, but she is quite beautiful." (p. 74).²²⁴ Elsewhere in the novel, the compliments to female characters refer to their physical beauty and household skills. Azad is impressed by Meli's skills in housekeeping: "[I]n no time she sets the table like an experienced housewife. She is clean and agile." (p. 88).²²⁵ H'usên loves his fiancé', Zeri, as she is "slim and tall, clean and a fastidious housewife." (p. 12).²²⁶ Throughout the novel the female characters are presented to the reader with the focus on parts of their body. The narration, like a camera, slowly moves up from the woman's legs, to wrist, hands, breasts, lips, cheeks and hair. They are sexually objectified by the narrator, protagonist and other characters.

The female characters are evaluated according to different parts of their body. Azad describes Meli, for example, as follows: "I look at her head to toe from a suitor's view... Meli is slim and agile ... her teeth are shining and she has plump lips." (p. 29).²²⁷ This sexual description is not only limited to his beloved, Meli, but also, he fantasizes about other female characters in the novel. Eshref Xanim, an Azeri and married woman, loves Azad and tries to seduce him, but this ends in failure (p. 42). Yet, Azad's characterization of her is overwhelmingly sexist and sexual. He introduces her to the reader from a male's sexual gaze: "she stretched her slender neck out of the door, and was wearing a tight sleeveless blouse which

²²³ "ciwan û şîrîn"

²²⁴ "ewhe jinni mallane, sûk û çirûk niye, qûn lêkewtû niye ... le bo cwanîş hendêk reşesmere, belan le kes namênêtewe."

²²⁵ "Hêndî billêy yek û dû sifrey radexa, wek jinêkî malldarî be ezmûn. Pak û xawên û tond û tolle."

²²⁶ "xoş taş û bejin balla cwane, malldar û pak û xawêne."

²²⁷ Le berî pêy ta toqî serî, be çawêkî kirryarane derwanim ... Meli goştî ziyadî niye, tond û tolle ... didanî rêk û befrîn, lêwî hewayêk goştin.

made her waist look thinner.” (p. 57).²²⁸ Elsewhere in the novel, H’usên, praises Zeri for her physical beauty: “a tall, olive-skinned woman with round breasts ... her white teeth look whiter in contrast with her olive skin... She is slim, sylphlike and a clean housewife.” (p. 12).²²⁹ Nowhere in the novel is a male character reduced to his physical beauty. His identity is not represented as fragmented, as a woman’s is through descriptions of her legs, arms, lips, breasts and other parts of the body. Female characters in *Zindewxew* are represented as ideal women only if they enjoy a certain degree of physical attractiveness. That is, there are pieces of their body which makes a perfect woman of them, of course, from a male character’s gaze. The male character on the contrary, is presented differently. His body is portrayed as a unified whole inseparable from his mind, with the concentration on his wisdom, bravery and virtue.

The entire novel, as shown above, relies on a dualistic view of the world in which every phenomenon, concept, or value gains its meaning against its opposite. In this binary system, Woman functions as “other” for the male character against whom he can shape his subjectivity. Cixous lists a set of binary oppositions “Activity/passivity, Sun/Moon ... Father/Mother, Head/heart, Intelligible/sensitive, Logos/Pathos” and poses the question as to where the place of woman in this binary system might be (1988, p. 287). These couples are not neutral; rather one opposition overweighs the other. Each couple “can be analyzed”, notes Moi, “as a hierarchy where the ‘feminine’ side is always seen as the negative, powerless instance.” (2002, p. 102). These oppositions are, in one way or another, associated with femininity and masculinity. To put it another way, the opposition of “man/woman” has underlain the hierarchal binary system throughout the history (Cixous 1988, p. 287).

²²⁸ “gerdinî wek kêlî le derga weder xistiwe, bilûzêkî tengî çespawî, bê qollî deberdaye, nêw qedî barîktir denwêne”.

²²⁹ “Zerî jinêkî reş esmer, kelleget, nêw qed barîk, sing qubey kêl gerdine, she’et sûk û reza xoş, didane sipiyekanî le ser esmerey rengî sipîtir le çaw deden ... Zerî xoş taş û bejin û bala cwane, malldar û pak û xawêne”.

Most of these binary oppositions presented by Cixous could be found in *Zindexew*. Activity/passivity, as Cixous remarks, “traditionally” comes up when dealing with sexual difference (ibid. p. 288). All female characters in the novel are demonstrated as passive in contrast with their male counterparts who take on an active role in the political, intellectual, social, and economic realms. Amiri brings to the fore some social, cultural, and familial constraints which have led to the female characters’ suffering. Zohre and Eshref are two characters whose lives has been ruined by some socio-familial factors over which they have no control. Eshref Xanim, as we come to know from Azad’s perspective and comments on her, is not happy with her marital life. Azad reads a deep and hidden sadness and frustration in her eyes, her sighs, and the tears she drops. (pp. 64-65). However, she has accepted her life as it is and passively puts up with it without doing anything to improve her situation. Also, Zohre, Azad’s landlord’s daughter in Wirmê, is ashamed of her mother who is a prostitute and suffers from loneliness as she spends the night at her customers’ places. She finds herself completely helpless and doomed to failure in her life. Her only hope is to wait for a prince to take her away with him and make her happy. (pp. 192-3)

Another significant binary opposition separating men from women in *Zindexew* is “head/emotions”. The second term in the dichotomy is associated with women, presenting them as naturally inferior beings. In the novel, Amiri portrays Azad as a cool, wise, respectable, and logical character in the novel but, on the other hand, the female characters are presented as emotional, mysterious, and irrational. Meli, for example, is head over heels in love with Azad. Her excessive love for him takes her to the edge of madness. She is extremely suspicious and jealous of any woman, stranger or relative. Early in the novel when Azad returns from his uncle’s place to his home, Meli is waiting for him there (p. 26). “She turned pale and looks angry,”²³⁰ as she is suspicious of Fewziye, Azad’s cousin, trying to steal his heart. Calmly,

²³⁰ “Zerd hellgerawe, we tûreş decçe”

Azad teases her and makes her more furious with his response when she asks what he was doing in his uncle's house for the whole afternoon: "I was with Miss Fewziye; the cousins' fates are entwined in the heavens. She blushes with anger and goes into attack mode; she is about to grapple with me." (ibid.).²³¹ The novel abounds with such scenes in which Azad behaves wisely, calmly, and patiently, while Meli, controlled by her emotions, behaves irrationally and is easily irritated. She is described as "wise" by Azad, the narrator, yet she cannot help her extreme jealousy and impulsive nature, especially when it comes to her relationship with Azad. "I am worried that her jealousy," Azad says, it "affects her health. It seems that I have been under her surveillance for a while." (p. 118).²³² However, this insanity is not perceived as a big surprise by the narrator, and probably Amiri himself, as he does not regard this behaviour very unusual in a woman.

Allocating the inferior place in the patriarchal binary system to women, however, is not questioned by the female characters in *Zindexew*. Rather, we witness an internalized self-humiliation. "This notion of female inferiority", Pearce notes, "is held by both sexes in a set of shared, but mostly unspoken, "beliefs" that women ... are intellectually inferior, emotional rather than rational, primitive and childlike." (1996, p. 27). At points in the novel Meli is treated like a child who needs some degrees of control by Azad, his fiancé. Azad punishes her for the scandal she caused at the wedding by ignoring and not speaking to her. Suffering from Azad's ignorance of her, she appeals to Daye Xeyal to intervene. Consequently Azad agrees to talk to her: "[M]y feeling for you will not change, but only if you promise to be a bit wiser. Had it not been for Daye Xeyal's sake, I wouldn't have talked to you." (p.168).²³³ This is not a relationship based on an equal footing: it seems to be more a parent-child relationship in which the former resorts to punishment for the latter's sake. This

²³¹ "le xizmet Fewziye xanimda bûm, çarey amozayan le asman lêk birrawe. Şîn şîn hellgerawe, h'alletî hêriş hênanî heye, xerîke angajim bê).

²³² "Lewe detrisim ew h'esûdîye nexoşî ka. Wewey deçê lemêj bê le jêr çawedêrî dabim."

²³³ "Min her Azadi caranim bew şertey toş kemêk aqil bî. Daye Xeyal zorî tika bo kirdî, dena bem zûwane degelît aşt nedebûmewe."

parenting and protecting role is granted to Azad by his society and the families, as presented and approved of in the novel. Meli's mother and Daye Xeyal, are content when Azad slapped Meli on the back to exercise his power and control over her and to stop her attending demonstrations and doing activities against the Shah (p. 204-5) Likewise, Meli happily accepts Azad as her man and does not show any sign of objection to the inferior place imposed upon her. All she wants is to have Azad, to possess him; her world is confined to him. Her extreme love for him has led her to teetering on the brink of paranoia, psychological imbalance, and behavioural disorders.

As with the other novels examined in the previous chapters, the traditional perception of love presented in *Zindexew* is rooted in Persian and Kurdish classical poetry, itself under the influence of Greek thought. Of these Greek ideas on love, the "passionate love" and a "theory of affinity" are utterly significant which makes the warp and weft of classical Persian and Kurdish love poems.²³⁴ As I explained in the previous chapter, "passionate love" is characterized by "lovesickness" which in its extreme can lead to madness. Meli is afflicted with such a deadly love disease. Unlike the other novels in this study in which the love disease is presented as a gender-neutral phenomenon, *Zindexew* represents women to be the only sex susceptible to lovesickness and its mental consequences.

²³⁴ It is worth mentioning two quatrains from Sa'di and Sarkhosh respectively to illustrate the point. "Come, I am lovesick and desolate without you
Come and see how sick I am in this sorrow without you
At night I lament your absence, oh fairy-faced,
And when the morning comes, it is as if I am on fire without you." (Sa'di, cited in Curtis and Canby 2005, p. 50)

Sa'di complains of the hardness and suffering of separation. Sarkhosh, on the other hand, registers a moment in which love is bestowed upon the poet. Yet, this is the beginning of hard times for him: "Love came, and away went patience and fortitude,
As did endurance and tranquility, comfort and sleep.
This flame of love set my heart on fire
This flood of love drowned me." (Sarkhosh, cited in Curtis and Canby 2005, p.68)

As discussed above, in *Zindexew* a binary system of thought underlies representations of events, phenomena, and characters. Combining bravery, manliness, and wisdom borrowed from the great men of older generation with modern values, for example, of open-mindedness and egalitarianism, Amiri tries to forge a modern ideal man in the personality of Azad. As such, this ideal man could not be too emotional or infected with the love disease. Unlike the female characters, the hero, Azad, is overly cool and sensible in his relationships with the opposite sex. Apart from Meli, Fewziye, Eşref, and Zohre are also interested in Azad but throughout the novel, although they try hard to strike up a love relationship, he rejects them all.

Amiri depicts the female figures as dependent, vulnerable, and emotional in all aspects of life, generally, and in love and sexual relationships, specifically. Meli is extremely emotional and unreasonable in her relationship with Azad. Perpetuating suffering and never-ending jealousy are the consequences of her lovesickness which has taken her to the edge of madness: “[J]ealousy has ruined Meli’s life ... I’m worried that it makes her sick,” Azad says (p. 58).²³⁵ He is also concerned about her excessive love for him: “I can read a perfect love in her eyes... For the first time I have noticed that her love is different from mine, her love has crossed the line.” (p. 159).²³⁶ While Azad strives to live out his dreams of, for example, entering university, earning knowledge, and contributing to improve the situation of his people in Iran, all Meli’s dream is limited to Azad. Day and night she is thinking of him, dreaming of and spying on him: “I want to be with you then [when Azad has achieved his dreams],” Meli says to Azad, “be the topic of your poems, your stories. This relationship satisfies my restless soul.” (pp. 116-117).²³⁷ A relatively similar request was made by another female character, Leyla, in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*. However, there is a significant difference between them: Meli simply wants to be the topic of

²³⁵ “H’esûdî jîyanî le Meli tall kirdwe ... detirsim tûşî nexoşî bika”.

²³⁶ Xoşewîstîyêkî tewaw de çawekanîda hest dekem ... Bo hewell car têgeyîtim xoşewîstî meli wekî

²³⁷ “Demewê ewê demê ke renga dûrîş nebê le penat bim. Sûjey şî’rekanit bim. Rawkey çîrokekanit bim. E ew bûne wîst û daxazî roh’î nesrewtûy min dabîn deka.”

Azad's poems while Leyla aspires to being a character in Mihreban's stories. As a topic of someone else's poetry, Meli would be passive and without agency as she is just there to inspire that person. On the other hand, being a character in someone's story indicates some degrees of agency and activeness, since the characters in any story would be affected by, and at the same time, affect other characters and their environment.

The "affinity of the soul" is another Greek idea about love that was adopted by Islamic Philosophy (Ruymbeke, 2009, p. 357), and consequently the classical literature of the Islamic territories. This theory overshadows the novels' representation of love examined in this research. According to a myth, recounted by Aristophanes in order to illustrate the "affinity of the soul" underlying the nature of love, in the beginning human beings were in spherical forms with "four hands, four legs, two identical faces upon a circular neck, and a single head that could turn in opposite directions." Having confidence in their power, they initiated a war against the gods which ended in failure. Had it not been for Zeus's intervention, they would have completely been destroyed by the gods. However, this war did have everlasting consequences for the primordial creatures: in order to "preclude the possibility of future rebellions, he [Zeus] weakened the spherical beings by dividing each of them in two." Thence love was born as "each half yearned for the part from which it had been severed... Ever since these prehistoric events, every human being has been only half of himself, each forever seeking the opposite portion that would make him whole again." (Singer 1984, p. 51).

Under the influence of this theory, all of the Kurdish novelists in this research have presented love as a unique moment that only occurs once in one's life. In other words, they presume that each person has a lost half, like two pieces of a puzzle, which can only be matched by that lost half. Mihreban in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* never again fell in love because he had lost his half, Efsane, years ago when he left Iran. In *Siweyla*, a couple of characters' lives are significantly affected by this notion of love. Ferhad in *Temî Ser Xerend* has been looking for Şîrîn since he was a child, when he

was forcefully separated from her until the end of the novel when he had reached adulthood. Daliya in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan* has been searching for her lost beloved and willingly sacrifices all her life to reunite with him again. Amiri in *Zindexew*, likewise, has adopted this discourse of love and as such the heroine in his novel is affected by it. Meli is burning with love. Restlessly, she craves for reunion with her lost half, Azad: “I just want you for myself,” Meli says to Azad, “want you to be my eternal love. Only your presence can satisfy my restless soul.” (p. 118).²³⁸ On another occasion, when Azad asks her if she wants him to marry her, she replies: “ninety nine per cent of marriages are contracted for instinct or lust; love might only happen once in one’s life, and it doesn’t happen for everyone.” (p. 32).²³⁹

Meli embodies this notion of love as an ascetic and sublime phenomenon not to be contaminated by sensual desires. That is, Amiri formulates a sort of love more similar to platonic love than romantic love. Unlike romanticism in which sex is not separable from love, serving “as vehicle of merging,” in Plato’s view, “the coital union is an interpenetration of bodies, not the mingling of properties.” (Singer 1984, p.65). For Plato, represented by Aristophanes, “sex is a physical makeshift... Far from being sexual, love is the search for the state of wholeness in which sex did not exist.” (ibid. p. 52).²⁴⁰ In the same way Amiri in *Zindexew* valorises spiritual love by letting his novel’s heroine speak to Azad of her understanding of love without being challenged by a different view on love. For Meli, love and sex could not coexist. “Love is something else,” she remarks, “it will not even be ruined by death ... I can kill the part related to instinct in me; but I can’t throw away the part that has rooted deep in my heart, that is, love.” (p. 159).²⁴¹ Elsewhere in the novel she explains to Azad the reason why she loves him so much: “Among your age-mates you are the

²³⁸ “Tenya demewê hî min bî. ‘Eşqî hemîşeyî min bî. Roh’î serkêşî min bem bûne razî debê.”

²³⁹ “Jyanî hawbeşî le setî newed û noy, gherîzeye, hewese, ewîn her carêk rene pêş bê, ewîş bo hêndêk kes, zor carî waş heye her yekyan desûtê, ewîtir be bay xeyallîda naye.”

²⁴⁰ In Aristophanes’s myth love is “the yearning for one’s other half ... and this occurs before Zeus moves the reproductive organs around to make sexual intercourse possible.” (Singer 1984, p.52)

²⁴¹ “Xoşewîstî ştekî dîkeye, tenanet merg natwanê têkî da ... Min ew beşey gherîzeye detwanim dexomda bîkojim, bellam ewey regî le dillim hallawe yanî xoşewîstî, emeyanim pê firrê nadrê.

only one capable of suppressing your lust. I want to strengthen that power too, to overcome my lust, to control it ... I try to kill lust in me, even to stop you if you show any sign of weakness against it.” (p. 117).²⁴²

This spiritual love presented in *Zindexew*, however, as discussed above, is rooted in the Persian and Kurdish classical poetry and lyrical love songs of Kurdish folklore, itself under the influence of old Greek myths on love. In the novel, for example, Meli sings the Kurdish love song of *Xec and Siyamend*.²⁴³ To her, true love is a spiritual and “chaste love” in which one’s physical yearnings are suppressed. The separation of love and sex, originating from a perception of them as two oppositional entities, was also predominant in the pre-modern Arabic poetry. In it, as As’ad Khairallah notes, passionate love “has rarely concerned the body in an outspoken manner. It is generally sublimated into a chaste love, leading to the denial of sensual pleasures and ending in divine love.” (1995 p. 210).²⁴⁴ The love story of *Xec and Siyamend* also presents the same notion of “chaste love”. Xec elopes with Siyamend to the Sîpan Mountain.²⁴⁵ Despite being together on the mountain for a month, they do not have any physical contact: “I have been with you for one month and a night/yet our wudu (ablution) has not been broken,”²⁴⁶ says Siyamend to Xec (p. 162).²⁴⁷ Meli calls herself Xec’s disciple when Azad, jokingly, suggests that they

²⁴² “Tenya to de nêw hawtemenekanitda hêzî serkutkirdnî hewesit heye. Minîş demewê ew hêze dexomda beqewet kem. Beser gherîzedada swar bim, le jêr pêmi nêw ... min hewll dedem hewes dexomda bikojim, tenanet eger to tûşî hatî ratgirim.”

²⁴³ *Xec and Siyamend* (or *Siyabend*) is a folkloric Kurdish lyrical love story sang by the singers called *beyt bêj* (those who sing *beyt*). *Beyt* is the name for a long narrative form, says Allison, “in most Sorani areas and some Kurmanji areas” (1996). *Xec and Siyamend*, as the title indicates, is a long narrative, most of which is in verse, about two cousins who love each other. However, they decide to escape from home as Xec’s brothers are against their marriage. They take refuge in the Sipan Mountain. One day Siyamend heads out to hunt. During the hunt he is gored by an antelope and dies. Unable to bear this tragedy, Xec commits suicide by jumping off the mountain.

²⁴⁴ Likewise, in the pre-modern Arabic poetry, passionate love, as Khairallah says, “has rarely concerned the body in an outspoken manner. It is generally sublimated into a chaste love, leading to the denial of sensual pleasures and ending in divine love.” (1995 p. 210)

²⁴⁵ Also called, Sîpana Xelatê by the Kurds, it is a mountain in Turkish Kurdistan.

²⁴⁶ He means that they have not yet touched each other, as in Sunni Islam one’s wudu (ablution) is nullified by having a physical contact with a stranger from the opposite sex.

²⁴⁷ “dezanî mang û şewêke degell tom/destman her wa be desnwêje”.

run away together. Following Xec, she claims: “My wudu won’t break even if we live together in the mountains for one hundred years.” (p. 164).²⁴⁸

Yet Meli’s emphasis on suppressing her physical yearnings does not seem to arise from a genuine thought or a given philosophical perspective; rather, it originates from her society defining an ideal girl, and lover, to be chaste and virgin until she marries. Unlike her claim regarding love without marriage that was very radical in Mahabad thirty five years ago, in which the story takes place, in practice she is almost as conservative and traditional as other female character in the novel.

In *Zindexew* Amiri has created, more or less, a realist novel in terms of novelistic form and structure and the representation of the characters and their environment. As was the case with classical realist novels, and unlike the previous novels in this study from Iranian Kurdistan which, following the mainstream modernist novels, foregrounded the antagonism between the characters and their society, *Zindexew* presents us with a world in which the characters are in tune with their community. Although various languages and voices are present in the novel, they are not orchestrated by Amiri in a way that creates a polyphonic novel, since the conflicts between these languages and voices are resolved, in Waugh’s words, “through their subordination to the dominant ‘voice’ of the omniscient, godlike author,” (1984, p. 6) that is, Azad.

Amiri portrays an image of the ideal woman in the course of the novel. Meli and Zeri, Azad’s beloved and H’usên’s wife respectively, are the embodiment of physical beauty, chastity, self-sacrifice, and great skills in housekeeping. Amiri has attempted to characterize Meli, as representative of the young generation in the novel: modern, more educated than previous generations and one who mobilizes women against the Pahlavi regime during the political turmoil leading to 1979. Having said that, he grants her a limited freedom the violation of which would endanger her very gender

²⁴⁸ “Sed sallî tewaw lew kêwane pêkewe bîn, deznwêjim naşkê.”

identity, as discussed earlier. She has to act and behave properly as a woman in order to fit into the Patriarchal definition of female subjectivity, that is, in Afsane Najmabadi's words, a "modern-yet-modest" image (1991, p. 49) and, be accepted by others, both male and female characters. In other words, Amiri's redefining of ideal woman requires her to have a minimum of literacy, education, courage, and intelligence. Yet these characteristic features have a complementary role in the female characters' subjectivity—unlike their male counterparts who are required, by both male and female characters in the novel, to enjoy a good deal of those characteristics. The primary features a woman needs to have are still those of the previous generation, that is, self-sacrifice, submissiveness, patience, and housekeeping.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

In this study I engaged in an exploration of the presentation of subjectivity in a selection of Kurdish novels published in the twenty-first century. I also investigated the new forms and modes of narration which emerged in the Kurdish novels in the twenty-first century against an Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan historical backdrop. Whereas the previous studies of Kurdish fiction in English language have mainly emphasized national identity and have overlooked its literary and artistic elements, the current research conducted a close textual analysis of *form* and *content* of the selected novels in order to yield a deeper understanding of subjectivity. Studying these novels, as is the case with any literary text, without taking into consideration what formal features are utilized for a given content or ideological purpose, would have failed to fully grasp the nuances and complexities of subjectivity.

To that end, this study opted to answer such questions as: what is the relationship between the formal characteristics of the novels in this study and subjectivity? How do they bridge aesthetics and political commitment and what is its implication for national identity and subjectivity? What do these novels say about gender and sexual differences? And how do the representations of male and female sexuality constitute a gendered subjectivity in line with patriarchal values? This chapter will discuss the findings of the thesis in three sections: an evaluation of the theoretical approach of this thesis, a discussion of its general results, and an outline of the major findings of each chapter.

This study, draws on narratology and Bakhtin's theory of the novel, on the one hand, and feminism, on the other, in its analysis of subjectivity in Kurdish novels. In the light of narratology and Bakhtin's theory, it has revealed that the formal structure,

narrative techniques, and stylistic strategies directly affect subjectivity. Yet another theoretical approach was needed to reveal the discursive formation of subjectivity. Feminist theories of subjectivity were preferred to, for example, Lacanian Psychoanalysis or Foucauldian discourse analysis, because the former not only, formulates a theory of subjectivity, but also, in a greater scale than the latter, deals with the cultural transformation of human subjectivity into a gendered subjectivity and its consequences for both women and men.

A combination of Bakhtin's theory of the novel and feminist criticism has provided an effective analytic perspective for a better understanding of the mechanism of subjectivity formation and its representation in the novelistic world of the texts in this study. Both theories revolve around language: Bakhtin's socio-linguistic approach to literature lends itself to feminist criticism which, in its various forms, is concerned with the role of language in marginalization and suppression of women. His concepts of "dialogic", "Heteroglossia", and "polyphony", as this research has done, could be appropriated for a feminist analysis of subjectivity in literature and other cultural manifestations. These concepts can be used to disrupt the dominant patriarchal discourses as they emphasize the presence of multiple voices and languages in an ostensibly unified language which, according to Bakhtin, has to be reflected in any literary work in order to be truly polyphonic.

Drawing on feminist criticism and narratology and Bakhtinian theory, this study in a close textual reading investigates subjectivity in Kurdish novelistic discourses. In all examined novels in this study male characters are at the centre of the story and they, or other male narrators, take on the narrative while female characters are assigned a secondary role. As such, various issues from love to sex to Kurdish nationalism are presented from a male perspective and for an implied male reader. Except for *Temî Ser Xerend*, all novels discussed here opt to present a different image of woman, a New Woman who is educated, participates in socio-political activities, and has wishes of her own. However, with the exception of *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*, the rest of the novels substantially reproduce essentialist gendered

subjectivity. They reinscribe the binary opposition which defines woman as man's "other". In this hierarchical binary system women are allocated the inferior status: they are described, for example, as caring, self-negating, emotional, and sexually passive as opposed to supportive, independent, rational, and sexually active men. In other words, these novels propose a "modern-yet-modest" woman. Whereas they idealize traits like chastity and selflessness for women, *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* adopts a satirical tone towards the female characters' selflessness and, hence, destabilizes the patriarchal power structures by disrupting its binary opposition. Since no discourse in this multi-voiced novel is granted an ultimate authority, a unique opportunity is provided for marginalized feminine voices to be heard.

The various modes of writing and compositional strategies deployed by the Kurdish novelists here, and Kurdish novel in general, are all modelled on European or Latin American novelistic traditions. This might indicate the lack of an organic relation between socio-political and economic circumstances of Kurdish society and the formal techniques adopted by the Kurdish novels. But, on the contrary, the broader socio-political context is determinant of the appeal of certain novelistic forms for Kurdish writers at different historical periods. The close textual analysis of the novels here has supported this argument: with radical socio-political changes in the air, the Kurdish writers opted for new narrative techniques and modes of writing in order to present the changing reality. That is the majority of them, to one degree or another, found Victorian literary realism unable to convey the frustration of people or individuals in a disintegrated society both in Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan after 1990s.

Except for Amiri's *Zindexew* which is set in the mid to the late seventies, the other novels are mainly set in the nineties and the beginning of the twenty-first century. whereas the late seventies was a time of new hopes, high ideals, and belief in people's agency and power to overthrow dictatorship, the nineties and the twenty-first century in both Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan is a period when the hopes are lost and dreams are shattered. As such, there is an essential difference between *Zindexew* and the other four novels here in terms of their representation of

subjectivity. In *Zindexew*, Amiri presents a “traditional” view of subjects as unified, fully self-conscious, at peace with themselves and in tune with their environment. The novel’s reliable narrator, linear plot, and its realistic and optimistic tone, among other formal characteristics, all contribute to convey the feeling of certainty, familiarity, and harmony.

In stark contrast with *Zindexew*, the other four novels portray a Kurdish society that has lost its high values due to disillusionment with Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraqi Kurdistan and frustration ensuing the suppression of Kurdish movement in Iranian Kurdistan. The characters that these novels present are in disharmony with their new environment and, accordingly, either become alienated and reclusive, as is the case with *Temî Ser Xerend*, *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*, and *Siweyla* or heroically opt to change the world, as Ali in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* does. Having that said, these novels have adopted different approaches to subjectivity. In *Temî Ser Xerend* the protagonist, Ferhad, is a subject split between his ideal and real self. However, the novel’s narration and linguistic strategies does not convey the protagonist’s split subjectivity and it is only revealed through the story of the novel. Like *Zindexew*, *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* reproduces a perception of subjectivity as unified, free, and autonomous. The novel ostensibly sets out to dismantle its fictionality, narrative strategies, and subjectivity, but closer inspection reveals that it reinscribes essentialist versions of, among other things, language, art, truth, and subjectivity. On the other hand, *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* and *Siweyla* are crucially different from the other novels in the sense that they have successfully adopted linguistic strategies and narrative techniques to indicate the fragmented, multiple, and discursively constructed nature of subjectivity. Both novels have adopted a fragmented and unreliable narration with frequent shifts in perspective and voice in order to challenge conventional perceptions of history, Kurdish nationalism, reality, and subjectivity and instead convey fragmented subjects in search of meaning in an unfamiliar environment.

The year 1991, during which the Kurdish region in Iraq was established could be regarded as the turning point in literary orientation in Iraqi Kurdistan. Before long, the Kurdish government not only failed to provide a different political system, but also plunged into a devastating civil war. This failure affected the Iraqi Kurdish novelists' worldview and their perceptions of Kurdish nationalism and identity, which in turn, was reflected in their works. Both of the novelists from Iraqi Kurdistan, to one degree or another, found the prevailing social realist or Victorian realist mode of writing inadequate to portray the people's disillusionment and frustration with Kurdish nationalism and the identity crisis that ensued. While in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipyekan* Ali employs magical realism to present an alternative world, in *Temî Ser Xerend*, Hassan deploys a realism transcended by metaphor and symbolism to expose the corruption, backwardness, ignorance, authoritarianism, and constraining conventions prevailing in the Kurdish society of Iraq.

Ali's magical realist novel, however, has two major flaws. First, the magic and fantastic happenings in the novel are not presented in a "realist matter-of-fact", which makes them unbelievable for the reader. And second, instead of destabilizing the status quo, that is typical of magical realist literature, it reproduces and reinforces the already existing power structure in Iraq's Kurdish society. It seems that Ali in *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* has turned to magical realism to bridge the gap between political commitment and aesthetics. To that end, he apparently fuses reality and fantasy to present a surrealist tragedy of genocide, displacement, and authoritarianism which otherwise might have been impossible. However, not incorporating the magical happenings into the everyday reality of Kurdish society, the novel has failed to demonstrate the unspeakable sufferings of the Anfal genocide's survivors and their psychological trauma.

Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan, is much less concerned with aesthetically rewriting of the tragic history of Kurdish people in Iraqi Kurdistan than praising Western art over and over again throughout the novel and, ironically, presenting it as the only "true" art. Although the novel is narrated by an external narrator and a character-narrator, they

are essentially one and the same voice and perspective and, thus, the novel does not constitute polyphony. The characters are not treated as equal subjects who stand on the same plane with their creator; rather they are merely vehicles serving the author's ideological position. The conflicts raised from the confrontation of different voices and ideologies are resolved by their subordination to the dominant voice and ideology of a god-like author.

Accordingly, the novel presents a monologic account of the crisis of Kurdish nationalism and national identity ensuing the appalling corruption of the Kurdish political parties which took control of Iraqi Kurdistan after 1991 liberation. Ironically, while accusing the political parties of betrayal and authoritarianism, what *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan* offers as an alternative, is essentially authoritarian and hierarchical. It reinforces the common belief in Kurdish society that a saviour hero is needed to save Kurdistan and as such reproduces a social structure in which one person stands above others. This dominating voice, no doubt, belongs to a monologist male who also defines masculinity and femininity and determines the nature of their relationship and their social status. The novel presents a stereotypical image of woman as angel or demon. The angel woman in this novel is Daliya Siracedîn, a self-less being who sacrifices her wishes to fulfil those of others. On the other hand, Şanaz Selîm is dehumanized into a devil only because she insists upon having wishes and dreams of her own.

Unlike *Şarî Mosîqare Sipiyekan*, *Temî Ser Xerend* resembles literary realism stylistically and formally. Yet, at the same time, the presence of an anti-hero alienated from society echoes modernist novels. Such mixture of realist and modernist strategies and techniques is perhaps due to the specific socio-political circumstances of Iraqi Kurdistan. For Hassan, unlike modernist writers such as Woolf and Joyce, the world is not "a condition and experience" that is largely perceived and modified by language. This, however, is not always the case; early in the novel, Hassan creates unrealistic scenes and uses symbolism, for example, the galloping horses which suddenly fall and die, to convey the obliterating civil war in Iraqi

Kurdistan. Like realist writers, he uses language to “explore” and “communicate” the tragic reality of Kurdish society that, in Morris words, “do exist ‘out there’ beyond linguistic networks” (2004, p. 93). Thus, *Temî Ser Xerend* although bears a radical socio-political viewpoint, it remains conservative in its treatment of language.

The novel severely criticizes the patriarchal and conservative culture dominating Iraqi Kurdish society during 1980s and its totalitarian Kurdish political parties for starting a civil war which had brought the newly established Kurdish region to the brink of collapse in mid-nineties. The novel’s protagonist from the very young age refuses to conform to social norms and traditional values as a result of which receives the worst corporeal punishments meted out by his father and school authorities. Over time, an unbridgeable gap is formed between him and his environment which leads to his alienation. This heralds a literary shift in Iraqi Kurdistan. Up until 1991, Kurdish novelists depicted a tenacious hero sacrificing his life for his country, Kurdistan, and people. Soon after 1991 liberation, the Iraqi Kurds realized that all those sacrifices and heroic actions were betrayed by the ruling Kurdish political parties. The Kurdish movement in Iraqi Kurdistan, according to the novel, not only failed to bring democracy, justice, and prosperity, but, due to the main political parties’ authoritarian policies, made Kurdish society disintegrated and “morally bankrupt”. As reflected in *Temî Ser Xerend*, this new environment left no space for heroic actions and triggered a wave of frustration among people. Despite linguistic, religious, and cultural parallels between Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan, there are remarkable differences in terms of historical and socio-political circumstances, which is largely connected to their hosting nation-states. These socio-political differences between the two parts of Kurdistan could be traced in the form and content of novels produced by the writers of each region.

After the short-lived republic of Mahabad (1945-1946), the Iranian revolution of 1979 is the most significant event in the modern history of Iranian Kurdistan. Most of the Kurdish novels in Iranian Kurdistan (which except for Qazi’s *Pêşmerge* were all written and published after 1990), in one way or another deal with Iranian revolution

and its consequences for the Kurds in Iran. Of the novels written by Iranian Kurds examined here all cover this historical period. Two of them tell the story of the people whose life was affected by the revolution and the ensuing conflicts between the Kurdish forces and central government. Unlike the earlier novels, these texts, with varying degrees of breaking up, have taken on a more complicated structure and abandoned simple realistic narration of the Kurdish people's sufferings, heroism, and romanticizing of their homeland.

Nahae is one of the first Kurdish writers in Iranian Kurdistan who in his works, both short story and novel, shows awareness of the power of "systems of representation" in forming one's perception of reality and constructing one's sense of self. In *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*, he skilfully experiments with modernist and postmodernist literary modes and techniques to convey the changing reality of Kurdish society and to aesthetically express his political concerns. The novel deals with and, at the same time, engages the reader in both epistemological and ontological questions. To tackle the former, Nahae in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* has chosen a fragmented, incomplete, and unreliable narration, some of the defining features of modernist novel, to convey the subjective experience of reality and the fragmentation of Iran's Kurdish society. At the same time, by laying bare the very frame used to present the fictional world, he shows that the reality as we experience it is always framed. The self-conscious, self-referential, or metafictional aspect of the novel involves the reader in the process of meaning-making and raises questions about the existence and nature of reality by violating the border between real and fictional worlds. That said, in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*, Nahae experiments with formal features of literary modernism and postmodernism not merely for aesthetic reasons, but also to express his social and political concerns regarding the current and future condition of Kurdish society.

Nahae's attention to formal aspects in *Ballindekanî Dem Bath* prevents it from turning into a didactic or ideological novel and, thus, overtly and monologically expressing political messages. On the contrary, using modernist and postmodernist

formal techniques, he comes up with a new form in order to raise questions, for instance, about women's problems in the patriarchal Kurdish society, social justice, nationalism, politics, and subjectivity. The novel, for example, criticizes the law for not treating women as equal citizens and protecting their rights. As was the case in Hassan's *Temî Ser Xerend*, the protagonist in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* finds himself alienated among people who have forgotten their sublime values and ideals and are only concerned with their personal interests. While in *Temî Ser Xerend* and *Şarî Mosîqare* Sipyekan authoritarian Kurdish parties in Iraqi Kurdistan are to be blamed for the failure of Kurdish nationalism, demise of values, and the collapse of Kurdish society, in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*, disillusionment with Iranian 1979 revolution and the suppress of Kurdish uprising by the new regime are presented as the main reasons underlying people's disbelief in their ideals which has, accordingly, resulted in the disintegration of Kurdish society in Iran.

Likewise, Qawami's *Siweyla* is concerned with 1979 revolution and its consequences for Kurdish people in Iran. Like Nahae, Qawami pays as much attention to the formal aspect of his novel as to its content. He has deployed modernist formal features and narrative techniques such as non-linear and disjointed plot, frequent shifts in voice and perspective, and stream of consciousness to convey the changing forms of human relationships and to reveal the inner life of characters. It raises questions about Kurdish armed-struggle in Iran as an appropriate means to achieve freedom and democracy. In dealing with these questions and other socio-political concerns, except for gender and sexual relations, Qawami orchestrates different voices, each holding its own ideology, without one dominating the others. In other words, various voices in the novel enter into a dialogical relationship which makes the novel polyphonic, in Bakhtinian sense.

While in *Ballindekanî Dem Ba*, only the protagonist is presented as being alienated from others and his environment, in *Siweyla* most of the characters are demonstrated as being alienated and frustrated following the Iranian 1979 revolution and the ensuing social, political, and environmental changes in Kurdish society.

Although Qawami's experiment with prototype modernist techniques in *Siweyla* has led to a relativization of "truth" and a radical political viewpoint, it is not progressive in presenting gendered identity, femininity and masculinity. The way sex and gender are dealt with in this novel mostly reproduces and reinforces the traditional conventions on masculinity and femininity which presents the man to be both socially and sexually active and desiring and the woman passive in both. The myth of superiority of masculine sex over female sex, as reinforced in *Siweyla's* novelistic discourse, is a significant factor in perpetuating the patriarchy and women's subordination.

The last novel under scrutiny in this study was Amiri's *Zindexew* from Iranian Kurdistan. There is a big difference between this novel and the other two works from this region in terms of form. Unlike them and similar to *Temî Ser Xerend*, it enjoys a well-organized structure, cause-and-effective narration, and a reliable and trustworthy point of view. Having that said, the realism in *Zindexew*, in comparison with earlier Kurdish realist texts, including his own works, is more complicated and aesthetic as it has engaged in formal experimentation and symbolism. At times the novel suffers from its overtly political and ideological messages; yet, at other times, using symbolism and formal innovation, it skilfully raises questions over the privileges or discriminations based on ethnicity or nationality and dramatizes the oral stories of Mahabd region.

Whereas the other novels from Iranian Kurdistan in this study deal with 1979 revolution and its aftermath, *Zindexew* only covers the last years and months leading to it. That is, as reflected in the novel, a period when a great number of people were politically active and determined to overthrow Shah whom they assumed to be the main impediment in the way of establishing freedom, social justice, and the right to self-determination. The realist form of *Zindexew* – in stark contrast with *Ballindekanî Dem Ba* and *Siweyla* – constitutes a "stable" and "certain" world in which the individual is in tune with the social whole. Furthermore, within this familiar world the traditional and normative masculine and feminine subjectivities are (re)constructed.

Essentialist ideal masculinity and femininity are discursively constituted in the novelistic discourse of *Zindexew*. The characteristic features of an ideal man mainly relates to his deeds, actions, and thoughts, while an ideal woman first and foremost requires some degree of physical beauty and household skills. The traits of bravery, wisdom, and authority are highly recommended for a man which bring him political power and higher social status. On the other hand, chastity, shyness, submissiveness, physical beauty, and self-abnegation, according to the novel, are what an ideal woman needs which confines her to the domestic space and keeps her away from the sources of power.

For most part of the twentieth century, the unfavourable socio-political and economic circumstances made it difficult for Kurdish writers to write novel and yet more difficult to get published. When the very existence of Kurdish language and culture was in danger, writing and publishing novel, regardless of its literary quality, was a great achievement. The last decade of twentieth century witnessed an unprecedented boom in the number of Kurdish novels published. More significantly, as the situation had remarkably improved, especially in Iraqi Kurdistan and to a lesser extent in Iranian Kurdistan, Kurdish writers started to experiment with new forms and innovative techniques. Attention to the formal aspect of novel came to its zenith by the turn of the century. I have shown that the contemporary Kurdish novelists in this study have opted to bridge their aesthetic needs and political concerns. In a close textual analysis of these works, I have examined their formal aspects and their implication for subjectivity, followed by a discursive analysis of subjectivity in their novelistic world.

This thesis has shed light on the modes of subjectivity in contemporary Sorani Kurdish novels from Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan, yet there are many aspects of Kurdish novels in need of investigation which can deepen our understanding of subjectivity in Kurdish novels. For instance, a study of Kurdish novel, including Sorani and Kurmanji texts, from its emergence to present and an examination of its formal and thematic evolution is a gap that needs to be filled in the future. While I

have examined gendered identity in contemporary novels, extensive studies of gender in Kurdish literature, poetry (classical and modern), fiction, and theatre, is needed. Examining gender in Kurdish literature will shed light on the role of literature in reinforcing or challenging the patriarchal discourse and will uncover the literary representation of women and men in various genres over time. Furthermore, due to the scope of this study I had to limit myself to the contemporary Sorani Kurdish novels from Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan. A comparative study of novels from all parts of Kurdistan, in both dialects of Sorani and Kurmanji, would also uncover their formal and thematic specificity and the relationship between each region's socio-political circumstances and the modes of subjectivity presented in the novels from that region.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, H. M, and Harphams, G (2009) *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Ninth edition. Boston: Michael Rosenberg.
- Ahmadzadeh, H. (2003) *Nation and Novel: A Study of Persian and Kurdish Narrative Discourse*. Uppsala: Uppsala University Press.
- . (2005) The Kurdish Novel in Iranian Kurdistan. *Kurdish Studies*. Vol. 19 (1&2), pp. 25-36.
- . (2009) Magic Realism in the Novels of a Kurdish Writer, Bakhtiyar Ali. *Middle Eastern Literature*. Vol. 14 (3), pp. 286-299.
- Ali, B. (2010) *Şarî Mosaqare Sipyekan* [The City of White Musicians]. Silêmanî: Karo.
- Althusser, L. (1984) *Essays on Ideology*. Trans. Brewster B., and Lock G. London: Verso.
- Amiri, F. (2003) *Zindexew* [Nightmare]. Erbil: Aras.
- . (2013) *Ezmuni Jiyân* (interview). Television program, Kurd Channel, Iraqî Kurdistan, 12 December.
- Anderson, B. (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- 'Arif, H. (1977) *Çîrokî Hunerî Kurdî 1925-1960* [Artistic Kurdish Story 1925-1960]. Baghdad: Dar Al-Huriyah.
- . (1987) *Biblografiyay Çîrokî Kurdî 1925-1983* [The Bibliography of Kurdish Story 1925-1983]. Hewlêr: Roşinbîrî w Lawan, 1987.
- Auster, P. (1987) *City of Glass*. In: *The New York Trilogy*. London: Faber.
- Bakhtin, M.M. (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Holquist, M. (ed.) Trans. Emerson, C. and Holquist, M. Austin: The University of Texas Press.

- . (1984). *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Trans. Emerson, C. (ed.) Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Barthes, R. (1989) *The Rustle of Language*. Trans. Howard, R. California: University of California Press.
- Baruch, H.E. (1991) *Women, Love, and Power: Literary and Psychoanalytic Perspectives*. New York: New York University Press.
- Bascom, R.W. (1965) Four Functions of Folklore. In: Dundes, A. (ed.) *The Study of Folklore*. Berkeley: Prentice-Hall.
- BBC (?). Schools-Religion. [online] available from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/islam/eid_haj.shtml [accessed: 19/03/2014].
- Beauvoir, Simone de. (1972) *The Second Sex*. Trans. Parshley, H. M. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Belsey, C., and Moore J. (eds.) (1997) *The Feminist Reader*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Berzincî, 'U. (1978) *Lêkollinewe w Bîblografyay Çîrokî Kurdî 1925-1969* (The Research on and the Bibliography of Kurdish Story 1925- 1969). Baghdad: Korî Zanyarî Kurd.
- Bînende, M. (2010/1388) Promteose Hamishe Dar Band: Naghdi bar Romane Palto Deraz Asare Shahram Ghavami [Trapped Prometheus: A Reading of Sharam Qawami's The Man in the Long Coat]. *Zirêbar*. Vol. 12 (69&70), pp. 100-112.
- Blau, J. (2010) Written Kurdish Literature. In: (Eds.) Kreybroek, G. P. and Marzolph, U. *A History of Persian Literature: Oral Literature of Iranian Languages*. Vol. XVIII. London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd. pp. 1-32
- Booth, C. W. (1961) *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Bowers, A.M. (2004) *Magic(al) Realism*. New York: Routledge.
- Bradford, R. (2007) *The Novel Now: British Contemporary Fiction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

- Brecht, B. (2013) *A Life of Galileo*. Trans. Ravenhil, M. London and New York: Bloosmbury Publishing.
- Brontë, C. (1992) *Jane Eyre*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited.
- Brooker, Peter (ed.) (1992). *Modernism/Postmodernism* (introduction). London and New York: Longman. pp. 1-25.
- Butler, J. (1999) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Camus, A. (1988) *The Stranger*. Trans. McCarthy, P. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cixous, H. (1988) Stories. In: Lodge, D. and Wood, N. (eds.) *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. London and New York: Longman. pp. 262-70.
- Clinton. W. J. (2000) Nizami's Unlikely Heroines: A Study of the Characterizations of Women in Classical Persian Literature. In: Talattof. K., Clinton. W. J. and Luther A. K. (eds.) *The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi: Knowledge, Love, and Rhetoric*. New York: Palgrave.
- Curtis, V. S., and S. R. Canby (2005). *The British Museum Persian Love Poetry*. London: The British Museum Press.
- Dabashi, H. (2013) *Can Non-European Think?* [Online] available from: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/profile/hamid-dabashi.html> [accessed 05/04/2013].
- Dentith, S. (1995) *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader*. London and New York: Routledge.
- D'hae, T.L. (1995) Magical Realism and Postmodernism: Decentering Privileged Centers. In: Zamora, P.L., and Faris, B.W. (eds.). *Magical Realsim: Theory, History, Community*. London: Duke University Press.
- Dickens, C. (1992) *Great Expectations*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited.
- Eagleton, M. (2007) Literary Representation of Women. In: G. Plain and S. Sellers (eds.). *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 105–20

- Eagleton, T. (2005) *English Novel: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- . (2002) *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. London: Routledge.
- . (1996a) *Literary Theory: an Introduction*. Second edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- . (1996b) *The Illusions of Postmodernism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- . (1986). Capitalism, Modernism, and Postmodernism. In: *Against the Grain: Essays 1975-1985* (collected articles). London: Verso. pp. 131-49
- Eh'med, H. (2008a). *Pêrgerayî Rexnegir: Efrandinî Gendellî* [The Gang-Oriented Critic: Causing Corruption. Raman. Vol. 129, pp. 82-90.
- . (2008b). *Wercherxan le Bîr Kirdnewe: Dabirran le Sitemgerî* [Turnabout in Thinking: the End of Tyranny.] Silêmanî: Chapxaney Peywend.
- Faulkner, W. (1966) *The Sound and the Fury*. London: Chatto & Windus Ltd.
- Foad, I. (2008). *Pêşekî le ser Meseley Wijdan* [A Preface on Meseley Wijdan]. Second edition. Hwelêr: Aras. pp.7-12.
- Gagnier, R. (1991) *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Galip, O. (2012) *Kurdistan: A Land of Longing and Struggle*. Unpublished Dissertation, Presented to University of Exeter.
- García Márquez, G. (1970) *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Trans. Rabassa, G. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd.
- Geoffroy, É. (2010) *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam*. Trans. Gaetani, R. Indiana: World Wisdom.
- Germyanî A. (1996). *Ryalizm le Romanî Kurdî Hawçerx le 'Êraqda* [Realism in the Contemporary Kurdish Novel in Iraq]. Unpublished Dissertation, presented to Salahaddin University.
- Grosz, E. A. (1989) *Sexual Subversions*. Australia: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd.

- Haeri, F. S. (1990) *The Elements of Sufism*. London: Element Books Limited.
- Hall, E.D. (2004) *Subjectivity*. London: Routledge.
- Hassan, S. (2003) *Temî Ser Xerend* [The Misty Canyon]. Hewlêr: Aras.
- . (2012) *Dû Twê* (interview). Part one. Television program, KNN Channel, Iraqi Kurdistan. [Online] available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhU_Oh49gV4 [Accessed 20/09/2013].
- Hassan, S.H. (2008) *Befir û Girkan: Rexney Edebî u Fikrî* [Snow and Volcano: Literary Criticism]. Hewlêr: Aras.
- Hassanpour, A. (1992) *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985*. San Francisco: Mellen Research University press.
- . (2001) The Re(production) of Patriarchy in the Kurdish Language. In: Mojab, S. (ed.) *Women of a Non-state Nation: The Kurds*. Mazda Publisher. pp. 227-263.
- . (2003) The Making of Kurdish Identity: Pre-20th Century Historical and Literary Discourses. In Vali, A. (ed.) *Essays on the Origin of Kurdish Nationalism*. California: Mazda Publishers. pp. 106-163.
- Hawthorn, J. (2010) *Studying the Novel*. Sixth edition. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- H'isên, H. (2007) *Derwazeyêk bo Rexney Edebî Kurdî* [An Introduction to Kurdish Literary Criticism]. Hewlêr: Mukiryani.
- Hollows, J. (2000) *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture*. Manchester: Maanchester University Press.
- Hutcheon, L. (2002) *The Politics of Postmodernism*. Second edition. London and New York: Routledge.
- Jackson, S. (1999) *Heterosexuality in Question*. London: Sage Publications.
- Joyce, J. (1992) *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

- Kafka, F. (2009) *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*. Trans. Crick, J. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Khairallah, E.A. (1995) Love and the Body in Modern Arabic Poetry. In Allen R, Hilary K, and Moor Ed de (eds.). *Lover and Sexuality in Modern Arabic Literature*. London: Saqi Books
- Koohi-Kamali, F. (1992) The Development of Nationalism in Iranian Kurdistan. In: Kreyenbroek, G. F. and Sperl, S. (eds.) *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*. London and New York: Routledge. pp. 135-152.
- Koyî, H. Q. (2007). *Diwanî Hacî Qadirî Koyî*. Mîran, S.M., and Şareza, K. (Eds.). Sine: Pertook.
- Kreyenbroek, G. F. (1992) On the Kurdish Language. In: Kreyenbroek, G. F. and Sperl, S. (eds.) *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*. pp. 53-65.
- Matz, J. (2004). *The Modern Novel: A Short Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Meyer, G. S. (2000) *The Experimental Arabic Novel: Postcolonial Literary Modernism in Levant*. New York: Suny Press.
- McCallum, R. (1999) *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction: The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity*. London: Garland Publishing.
- McDowall, D. (2004) *A Modern History of the Kurds*. New York: I.B. TAURIS.
- McHale, B. (1987) *Postmodernist Fiction*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Millett, K. (1969) *Sexual Politics*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Mir'abedini, H. (2002/1380) *Sad Sal Dastan Nevisi* [One Hundred Years of Story Writing] (vol. 1). Second edition. Tehran: Nashre Cheshme.
- Moi, T (2002) *Sexual/Textual Politics*. Second edition. New York: Routledge.
- Morris, P. (ed.) (1994) *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov*. London: Arnold.
- Morris, P. (2003) *Realism*. London: Routledge.

- Muh'emed, Q. I. (1990). *Romanî Kurdî le 'Êraqda* [The Kurdish novel in Iraq]. Unpublished Dissertation, Presented to Salahaddin University. Nahae, A. (2007) *Koy Romanekan* [A Collection of novels]. Hewlêr: Aras.
- Najmabadi, A. (1991) Women, State and Ideology in Contemporary Iran. In: Kandiyoti, D. (ed.) *Women, Islam and the State*. London: Macmillan. pp. 22-47.
- Nicol, B. (2009) *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodernist Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'shea, T.M. (2004) *Trapped between the Map and Reality: Geography and Perception of Kurdistan*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Pearce, L. (1996) Sexual politics. In Mills, S. and Pearce L. (eds). *Feminist readings/Feminists reading*. Second edition. London: Prentice Hall.
- Propp, V. (1968) *Morphology of the Folktale*. Second edition. Texas: University of Texas Press.
- Qawami, Sh. (2007) *Şarî Deste w Taqmekan* [The City of Bandits]. Sine: Golberg.
- . (2004) *Siweyla*. Sine: Golberg.
- Qazi, F.X. (2009). *Kurte Mêjuy Bine Maley Qazî le Wilayeti Mukiryân* [A Short History of Qazi's Family in Mukiryân Province]. Erbil: Aras.
- Rahimieh, N. (1990) Magical Realism in Moniru Ravanipur's Ahl-e gharq. *Iranian Studies*. Vol. 23 (1/4), pp. 61-75
- Robbe-Grillet, A. (1989) Time and Description in Fiction Today. In: *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction*. Trans. Howard, R. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 143–56.
- Rushdi, S. (1982) *Midnight's Children*. London: Picador.
- Ruymbeke, V. C. (2009). Hellenistic Influences in Classical Persian Literature. In: Bruijn P.T.J. (ed.) *A History of Persian Literature* (vol. 1). New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.

- Sadjadi, B. (2009). Gêrranewey Nwêkarane w Pêkhatey Hunerî le Romanî Kurdîda: Xwêndneweyêkî Girewî Bextî Hellalle [Innovative Narration and Artistic Structure in Kurdish Novel: A Reading of Girewî Bextî Hellalle]. *Raman*. Vol. 140, pp. 29-42.
- Salih, S. (2002) *Judith Butler*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Scalbert-Yücel, C. (2011) Languages and the Definition of Literature: The Blurred Borders of Kurdish Literature in Contemporary Turkey. *Middle Eastern Literature*. Vol. 14 (2), pp. 171-184. [Online] available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1475262X.2011.583467> [accessed 11/11/2014].
- Schwarz, R. D. (2005) *Reading British and Irish Novel 1890-1930*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Sedgwick J. M. (200). *Sufism: The Essentials*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.
- Sheyholislami, J. (2012). Kurdish in Iran: A Case of Rstricted and Controlled Tolerance. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. Vol. 2012 (217), pp. 19-48.
- Showalter, E. (1979) Towards a Feminist Poetics. In: Mary, J. (e d.). *Women Writing and Writing about Women*. London: Croom Helm. pp. 22–41
- Spark, M. (1963) *The Comforters*. London: Penguin Books
- Stevenson, R. (1992) *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Vanly, C. I. (1992) The Kurds in the Soviet Union. In: Kreyenbroek, G. F. and Sperl, S. (eds.) *The Kurds: A Contemporary Overview*. London and New York: Routledge. pp. 152-173.
- Watt, I. (1963) *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Waugh, P. (1984) *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Woolf, V. (1984) Modern Fiction. In: McNeille, A. (ed.). *The Essays of Virginia Woolf. Volume 4: 1925 to 1928*. London: The Hogarth Press.

- . (1947) *Mrs Dalloway*. London: Hogarth.
- Xanî, E. (2008) *Mem û Zîn*. 'Ebdullah, N. (Ed.). Hewlêr: Aras.
- Yaryan, P. (2010/1388) Palto Deraz; Tasviri Postmodern az Jame'eyi Barzakhi [The Man in the Long Coat: A Postmodernist portrait of a Transitional Society]. *Zirêbar*. Vol. 12 (69&70), pp. 113-117.
- Ye'qûbî, E. (2008) Ballindekanî Dem Ba w Deretanekekanî Gêrraneweyêkî Postmodêrnîstî [Ballindekanî Dem Ba and the Elements of a Postmodernist Narrative] in: *Le Kutltûrewe bo Edebyat* [From Culture to Literature] (collected articles). Hewlêr Aras.
- . (2009) *Dyalog û Dahênan* [Dialogue and Innovation]. Duhok: Mukiryani.
- Zamora, P.L., and Faris, B.W. (eds.) (1995) *Magical Realsim: Theory, History, Community*. London: Duke University Press.
- Zeidel, Ronen. (2011) The Iraqi Novel and the Kurds. *Review of Middle East Studies*. Vol. 45 (1), pp. 19-34.