

## **A Critical Investigation of Traditional Treatment of Literary Schools and Movements in Kurdish Literature**

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### **Abstract**

The present paper seeks to address and examine the literary movements, trends, and schools in Kurdish literature, and to account for their true representations in Kurdish literary works. According to contemporary Kurdish literary historians, Kurdish literature before the era of the Renewal is referred to as the classical literature; Romanticism appeared simultaneously with the Renewal, and realism was manifested afterwards. Is it appropriate to refer to these trends and periods in the Kurdish context as classicism, romanticism, and realism? The present research argues that these terms applied to Kurdish literature were introduced into Kurdish letters and culture as the immediate result of the influence of European letters and trends. The central argument of this study is that Kurdish literary movements and the historical epochs assigned to them by the scholars are not the same as what is observed in the history of French and English literature. This study considers the whole body of Kurdish written literature into three distinct periods and sections that are the ancient literature, also called 'the literature of Diwan', from the beginning to the early twentieth century, 'the literature of the renewal period', from the 1900s to the mid twentieth century, and 'the modern and contemporary literature', from the 1960s to the present.

### **Keywords**

Literary Schools; Literary Movements; Classicism; Romanticism; Modernism; Renewal.

### **1. Introduction**

The classification of Kurdish literature into several groups, schools, trends, and periods has been the matter of a substantial argument, particularly in the work of recent Kurdish literary scholars. The critics have approached the issue of the categorization of Kurdish literary works from different viewpoints and arrived at often contradictory conclusions. The present study deals with the question of providing appropriate approaches for the following issues: Are the literary 'schools' and 'movements' in the Kurdish literary history assigned with specific and clear-cut periods? What are the major differences between the schools, trends

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and movements in the context of Kurdish literature? Do the literary movements have their own specific literary style and form?

Kurdish literature is not the product of a single Kurdish dialect; correspondingly, it is manifested in different Kurdish dialects. Although the number of the Kurdish dialects is rather high, Kurdish written literature was, and is now, manifested only in a limited number of Kurdish dialects. As Sadjadi argues, "the attempt to classify Kurdish literary works is first encountered with the dialect in which the text is written" ("Literary Historiography" 241). He has addressed four major branches of Kurdish classical literature that are Northern, Central, Southern, and Gorani Kurdish literature (243).

By Central Kurdish literary history, we mean the last two and half centuries, specifically from the time the city of Sulaimanieh was built (1784) up to the present. If Central Kurdish literary history is marked with 'literary schools and movements,' what are the main reasons for their emergence and what are the factors of producing such literary styles and techniques proposed by this literary current? Then, who were the poets and men of letters that played a significant role in the creation of that literary current? These questions are to be answered by considering the socio-political and cultural contexts of the specific literary movement. In addition, the similar characteristics of the neighboring literature, including Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, should be explored in order to arrive at the congruous stylistic features of these works. Attention should be also paid to the features and impacts of European literature, particularly to French and English Literature.

Literary currents and movements came to existence in French and English literary history in the sixteenth century and were, consecutively and continuously, in parallel to the dynamic evolution of the Renaissance era. In the French context the advent of literary currents began with the La Pleiades group of Poets in the sixteenth century, and throughout the succeeding periods, and prior to the twentieth century it arrived at different stations including Classicism, Romanticism, Realism, Symbolism, and Naturalism. In contemporary era the other trends and schools like New Literature, Surrealism, Absurd drama, and the Nouveau Roman emerged. The process is similarly observed in English literature with slight differences in their naming and the era of emerging. The key question to be addressed here is: why did the Western literary movements in general and French and English literature in particular become a conceptual civilizing and social mode that were directly transferred to literature and assigned with a specific period in the literary history of these nations? Why did not such configuration take place in the Oriental Literature in general and in the Kurdish Literature in particular? In the present research, attempt is made to provide an

illuminating answer to these complicated issues under the light of a comparative treatment.

The major constituent sections of the present paper are outlined as the following: first, the review of literature is presented regarding the views of Kurdish literary scholars in this regard. Then, the focus is on the influence of the Eurocentric treatments and thus on the exploration of the Western culture as the producing force behind the literary schools and movements. Then, French and English literary movements are concisely addressed in order to highlight the differences in context and manners. The study also investigates the poetic practices of Persian, Arabic, and Turkish literature. The central question here is: why are Western literary currents and schools missing not only in Kurdish but also in Persian, Arabic, and Turkish literary histories? The core section of the paper presents a critical investigation of the traditional treatment of literary schools in the context of Kurdish literature through reading the Kurdish sources, and examining the views of Kurdish literary scholars in terms of the terminology appeared in their works. The analysis moves forward by revisiting Kurdish Classicism, Romanticism, and Neo- Classicism.

## **2. Literature Review**

In this section, the perspectives cited in the Kurdish sources about the manifestation of literary currents and movements in Kurdish literature are presented. Most of the researches that have introduced the terms including Classicism, Romanticism, and Realism have been published in the last three to four decades. Such perspectives and interpretations about literary currents, movements, and periods had not been referred to by scholars before the 1960s and 1970s. For instance, Alaadin Sajadi and Rafiq Hilmi, to name a few, did not employ this terminology. The terms Classicism, Romanticism, Realism, and the other particular names of the literary schools emerged and were referred to only in recent decades.

One of the primary and pioneering authors who introduced a number of these concepts is Izzadin Mustafa Rasul. He published an influential book under the title of *Realism in Kurdish Literature* (1966) in Beirut. The book is in Arabic, and it was mostly based on his doctoral dissertation in Russian, conducted in the Oriental Sciences Academy in Saint Petersburg. The interesting point is that the book was not translated into Kurdish until recently; however, it obtained enormous fame for its author among Kurdish literary scholars. Another research, again in Arabic, which contributed to this mode of thinking, was published in 1969 by Marif Khaznadar, who was graduated from the same academy. Khaznadar in his article entitled "The Direction of Romanticism in Kurdish

Literature" focused on the new literary trend emerging in Kurdish literature, which he called "Romantic poetry" (115).

In both Rasul and Khaznadar, Romanticism and Realism in Kurdish literature are thoroughly addressed not only as literary schools but also as a specific and consecutive period starting from the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1960s. In my viewpoint, one of the significant weak points in these works is that they consider Romanticism and Realism as two quite different schools each with its specific period in Kurdish literature. The configuration of Romanticism and Realism at the levels of 'literary texts' and 'literary imagination and lookouts' normally happens; however, it is not correct to propose that these two schools are granted with their particular historical periods in that there emerged several literary works in the same era with sharp discrepancies in form and treatment. The same configuration is normally available in the other branches of Oriental literature including Persian, Arabic, and Turkish. What is exposed to the reader of these literary works is the poet's imagination and outlook, rather than a coherent current with characteristics specifically belonging to a specific period.

The point that the literary schools and trends in Kurdish literature did not emerge in the form of a coherent movement like what is observed in French and English literature has been ignored in most of the Kurdish sources on Kurdish literary history. They, simply and in a straightforward standpoint, consider the literature dating back before the nineteenth century as the classical literature and regard the literature that followed to be either romantic or realist in mode and manner. The other reductionist viewpoint, dominant in most relevant sources, is that poems written in 'Arooz', poems with oriental prosodic features, are taken to be "classic". Furthermore, all the works from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth is regarded by some literary historians as the manifestation of "Neo-classical" literature. Then, what comes next in the mentioned works is Romantic literature with its specific historical period. According to these works, what succeeds next is Realism with its corresponding period, and the other modes flourish respectively, including Socialist Realism and so on.

The above classification is not appropriate and all-inclusive in the case of Kurdish literature in that it lacks both the other trends of Central Kurdish literature and also the works written in the other Kurdish dialects. The major cause of this misunderstanding is that these trends were simultaneous with the renewal of the Kurdish language and literature that happened at the beginning of the twentieth century. It has gone unnoticed that the renewal of literature can include a diverse group of literary features and conceptual characteristics, not necessarily observed in the western literary schools and currents. This mixture is

neither possible nor viable simply because every current of literary renewal is a movement with its corresponding features.

A recent study addressing this challenging question in a rather critical way is observed in *The History of Kurdish Literature* by Bakhtiar Sadjadi. Although only a couple of the volumes of this research project have been published so far, the introductory chapters to the volumes on Gorani and contemporary Kurdish literature attempt to classify the Kurdish literary works first in terms of the dialect in which they are composed. Accordingly, Kurdish classical literature, which was mostly blossomed in Gorani, Northern, and Central Kurdish dialects and with a limited number of works in Southern Kurdish, was ultimately marked with a break in the early twentieth century that resulted in the emergence of contemporary Kurdish literature. Kurdish literature of contemporary times, though experiencing different modes and currents and including different trends, is so versatile and diverse that it is almost impossible to point to a clear-cut historical period for its corresponding trends (*Contemporary Kurdish* 23).

### **3. Eurocentric Influences and the Emergence of Literary Movements**

The Kurdish Renewal of letters at the beginning of the twentieth century is considered as a “renaissance” configured by exploring and searching for cultural and political identity. This Renaissance leisurely emerged in Kurdish literature and although it was a native movement with colors of originality, it was under the direct and indirect impact of the literature of other nations. The western influence concerning the new currents and even terminology is felt not only in Kurdish literature but also in the literature of neighboring nations including Persian, Arabic, and Turkish.

The way the western civilizing materialistic culture has given force to the birth and development of literary currents and movements is a key issue in the exploration of European literary schools. The one-to-one-relationship between western culture and literature is foregrounded in a way that the literary trends and schools of each historical period are the reflection of the socio-cultural context in which they emerged. The origin of the emergence of literary schools of the modern times goes back to the sixteenth century and, particularly, to the rise of Humanism in the Renaissance. In the literature of Europe in general, French and English in specific, literary currents and movements and their corresponding periods consecutively emerged in a way that most of them started from the Renaissance and went through the other stages in the succeeding centuries. The present research aims at drawing attention to the sharp discrepancy between the different features of the French and English literature that are not generally manifested in the oriental literature in general and in Kurdish in particular.

The major currents and periods of thought and letters that are observed in French literature include Humanism, Renaissance, the Pleiades movement, Classicism, Neo-classicism, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism, Parnassianism, New literature, Existential literature, Absurd drama, and Nouveau Roman, that is 'New Novel'. The same process with its corresponding stages is observed in the course of English literature with slight changes. In the English context, they include Humanism, Renaissance, Cavalier, and Metaphysical trends, Neo-classicism, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, Symbolism, Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Expressionism, Imagism, Modernism, Absurdism, and Post-Modernism. What is illuminating in a better understanding of these trends and schools is that they were sided by and in parallel to their corresponding contexts including the cultural, socio-political, and economic changes. They were manifested in thinking, lifestyle, and western civilizing characteristics before they occurred in art and literature. Obviously, these characteristics did not exist in oriental contexts.

Oriental literature, including Arabic, Persian, Kurdish, and so on, enjoyed wide popularity among their corresponding nations throughout the ages. The East is known for the birth and development of various religions and civilizations; however, the Renaissance that took place towards the Middle Ages in Europe was not manifested in the literature, arts, and sciences of the East in the same historical time. The movement similar to the Western Renaissance took place in some of the Eastern nations towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Religious discourses, especially in the Middle East, have been ever a major force beyond the formation and production of ideas in the letters and thoughts of the eastern nations. At the economic and political levels, until recent times the east could not go beyond the established dualism of 'Lord and Slave'. This bipolar social system acted as an obstacle in the process of the rise of social and literary movements. Moreover, due to the flourishing of modernity in the West for succeeding centuries, the nations in the Middle East could not exert influences on the West because of their special geopolitical status and their civilizing structures; subsequently, they could not avoid the external influence from the West either. Also, the strict religious and traditional interpretation of science and letters of the West made it hard for the intellectuals to experience new trends in arts and literature. Therefore, it was not that easy for the men of letters to create a new artistic movement and a new current of thought and letters.

It is not appropriate and sufficient to use the cultural criteria of Western culture and education for the eastern nations. European artistic and literary currents and movements have as their context a prominent socio-cultural ground of their own. We can go as far back as the literary norms and habits of Ancient

Greek philosophy and discuss the emergence of the movements in arts, letters, and philosophy like Platonism, Neo-Platonism, and the materialistic philosophy of Epicurus.

Towards the end of Medieval Ages, the Humanist spirit is manifested in the educational system of the Renaissance. Humanism proved to be a turning point in the views of Western artists and men of letters. The literary and artistic trends and schools in European context thus began to flourish only after the Renaissance. Humanism meant for the Renaissance scholars a constant search for the prices and values of the Antiquity period in the Latin language. Humanism highlighted the 'culture' which intersected and met the humanists' willingness and outlook whose aim was to receive, to deep down, and to evolve culture (Mougin 2012). In addition, the invention and introduction of printing machine and the rapid process of building publication houses resulted in the increasing rate of literacy on one hand and the availability of the sources to everyone.

The above-mentioned backgrounds are not observed in the context of the literature of the Middle East nations. The socio-cultural feature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the East is marked with a static premise, which was not in congruity with and in favour of the birth of new current and movements in literature and arts. Therefore, addressing and examining the birth and development of the literary currents and schools in Kurdish literature, the scholars should pay attention to the essentially different contexts that prevailed the western literature on one hand and the literature of the east on the other.

#### **4. Influences of the Literature of Other Nations**

##### **4.1. French and English Literary Movements Revisited**

The first literary movement in French literary history was la Pleiades (The Pleiades or the seven-star cluster), which was established in 1549 and ended up in 1569. This movement was run by seven French poets the most well-known of whom were Du Balley (1522-1560) and Ronsard (1524-1585). The most prominent miens of this movement were Lyricism, the passage of time, feeling of love and caring of the methods. In the context of English literature, the Elizabethan drama reached its climax in the same era; simultaneously there emerged a high number of sonnet cycles.

In the first half of the seventeenth century, 'Baroque Literature' emerged; the expression is derived from a Portuguese term of 'Barroco' that means 'oddly shaped pearl' or 'misshapen pearl'. Baroque Literature was reflected in poetry, novel, and drama, and employed in the arts of construction, sculpture, and drawing. The conceptual properties of this movement include the ideas that the world is constantly changing, everything changes, everything is premature and

has a short life, and there are no static rules for anything. The most noticeable characteristics of this movement are that the world has to be sometimes looked at as chaotic; space and emptiness have their own values, and there are puzzles and enigmas in outlook and thinking. The most well-known poets in this trend were Saint Amant (1594-1661) and Corneille (Omar 290). On the other hand, in England the Cavalier and Metaphysical trends of poetry appeared that were considered as two trends of the English poetry of the same historical era.

Classicism, as both a literary current and a historical phase, started from 1660 to the close of the century; however, the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries are generally called the Classic period in the French context. From there onwards, the term 'Classicism' is used in its general meaning as a specific cultural style and a mien of these two centuries. The major characteristic of the literature of the era includes the presentation of nice and humanitarian ideas in a highly prestigious literary form. They tried to imitate the ancient Greeks, having a worldly perception, and also moving from individuality to universality. This current mostly appeared in the genres of poetry and drama. The most well-known literary figures here include La Fontaine (1621-1695), Moliere (1622-1673), and Bossuet (1627-1674). The same historical phase and literary current are referred to, in the English context, as the Neo-Classical, including three sub-divisions that are 'Restoration', 'Age of Pope', and 'Age of Dr. Johnson', each one of them with its corresponding figures and styles.

The authors and philosophers of the Enlightening period sought to put an end to the classicist thought and period. This movement emerged in the mid-eighteenth century and lasted until the French Great Revolution. The main conceptual principles of this movement consisted of rationalism, developing knowledge, and experiencing the spirit of interpretation and analysis to perceive the phenomena and the world. The primary figures of this movement were Voltaire (1694-1778), Diderot (1713-1784), Rousseau (1717-1778), and Montesquieu (1689-1755). This movement was in close parallel to the Pre-romantic era in English literature. Also called the Age of Sensibility, it included both a historical era and a literary and artistic current that paved the way for the emergence of Romanticism.

Immediately after the French Revolution that took place in 1789, Romanticism emerged as a literary, artistic, and even socio-cultural current that presented a revolutionary style contradictory to that of the bourgeois class. This current started with the first publication of Lamartine's *Meditations* in 1820 and ended with the death of Alfred Louis Charles de Musset in 1857. The reverberation of that movement might have ended earlier with the industrial



revolution in 1848. The conceptual characteristic of the Romantic style is the representation of sensitivity, inspiration, infinity, and immensity of worldly things. The other characteristics of western Romanticism, particularly in French and English literature, include a specific religious feeling, flying inclination and leaving, the representation of life pains and sorrows, dreams, and emotion, and the value of the individual. Among the most prominent French Romantic figures are Chateaubriand (1768-1848), Lamartine (1790-1869), Alfred du Musset (1810-1857), and Victor Hugo (1802-1880). The outstanding English Romantic figures include William Blake (1757-1827), William Wordsworth (1770-1850), S. T. Coleridge (1772-1836), and John Keats (1795-1821).

'Parnassianism', or the 'Art for Art' movement, emerged in the 1850s and lasted for a couple of decades. This movement was established on the basis of being anti-Romantic. Whereas the ideal beauty had a specific benefit and aim in Romanticism, the proponents of this current advocated the assignment of the ideal beauty to the artistic and literary works themselves. The Parnassian poets were meticulous about the style of their works, and focused on the precise description and beauty in their poems. This movement was mostly practiced in the genre of poetry. The most well-known Parnassian poets are Leconte de Lisle (1818-1894), Gautier (1811-1872), and Heredia (1842-1905). The English counterpart of Parnassianism is the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which was a dominant anti-Realist movement that mostly focused on the representation of beauty in the works.

Realism was the dominant school of thought, arts, and literature from 1830 to 1870. Its basic philosophy was to care about human reality as it is and being against Idealism, Lyricism, and Romanticism. This period was simultaneous with the emergence of capitalism, banking, renovation companies, and the destruction of the old values of human beings. It evolved so prominently in the genre of novel that the nineteenth century is called 'the era of the prominence of the genre of novel'. The great French realist figures are Stendhal (1783-1842), Balzac (1799-1850), and Flaubert (1821-1880). In the English context, the development of realism was in close association with the Industrial Revolution that happened in the mid-nineteenth century in England. The prominent English realist writers included Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Anthony Trollope. Realism, as defined in the French Dictionary (1995), edited by Petit Robert, is

a Platonic current about the reality of the ideas in which the beings and individuals are not more than reflections of these reality ideas. Realism is a concept for art and literature by which artist or literary writer does not search to assign ideal descriptions to reality or make a precise picture out of it ... It correctly gives values to the things of

life and identifies the unrealities; that is why realism is seen as a style that confines itself to only representing what is related to reality. Contrarily to idealism, realism means reflecting reality and truth in all their forms and this is the message of realism.  
(3)

Naturalism, as the logical successor to Realism, emerged from the 1870s to the 1890s, mostly because of the consequences of medical, scientific, and psychological developments of that era. The influence of biological and social life of both the individual and the group to which he/she belongs is conspicuously observed in Naturalism. Emile Zola (1840-1920), Maupassant (1850-1893), and Les Goncourt (1830-1870) are the well-known figures of naturalism (Mougin and Hadda-Wotling, 2012). In English and American contexts, the notable naturalist writers include Thomas Hardy, Theodore Dreiser, Stephan Crane, and Frank Norris.

Symbolism in French literature developed due to the profound influences of the great French poet, Charles Baudelaire. It continued as a reaction against both Realism and Naturalism. The notable characteristics of Symbolism are the objectivity of knowledge and caring about the outlooks, feelings, and spectacular experiences of the individual in a rather symbolic way. Verlaine (1844-1896), Rimbaud (1854-1891), and Mallarme (1842-1898) are considered as the other significant figures of Symbolism. On the other hand, Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849) in the American context and Swinburne in the English context are the poets mostly assigned to this school.

The above-mentioned dynamic process concerning the flourishing and development of literary schools and trends in both French and English contexts prior to the end of the nineteenth century is observed in the twentieth-century literature when a relatively high number of schools and trends in arts and letters of these nations emerged, developed, and somehow deteriorated. The complicated and intricate history of the development of literary schools and trends, in parallel to the philosophical and scientific developments of the West in the nineteenth century, is not observed in the context of Eastern literature in general and Kurdish literature in particular. The differences are numerous and the characteristics are considerably high. We face two distinguishable worlds that are not equivalent and are not positioned at the same level. Therefore, the expressions and terminology of Western literature cannot be simply and exactly used for the literary history of Kurdish literature. For example, when the term Classicism is employed, the mind of the Western reader is immediately reminded of a specific period and a specific mode of aristocratic treatment of arts and letters. These characteristics, which lie behind the cultural features of Classicism,

are not observed in Kurdish literature, nor do they in Turkish, Persian, and Arabic.

#### **4.2. The Poetic Practices of Turkish and Persian Literature**

The nature of the renewal movement of arts and letters among most nations of the Middle East, including Kurdish, Persian, Turkish, and Arabic, is markedly similar; however, it should be noted that each of them has its particular characteristics and conditions. The central notion is that these characteristics are widely in affinity with their cultural identity that does not necessarily result in the production of new movements and currents.

The origins of the Ottoman Turkish literary renaissance go back to the direct relationship between Europe and the Ottomans Empire, which lead to tangible impacts, particularly, on Istanbul. This influence was extensively high and it appeared in many areas, starting from the political reform to arts, literature, and even administrations. The beginning of the renewal movement emerged with the advent of Tanzimat (i.e. Reorganization) in 1839, and lasted until the period of Turkish Youth in the early twentieth century. The European genres, novel, and drama, especially from a French origin, had considerable influences on Turkish literature. These two literary genres appeared in the new Ottoman Turkish literature quite sooner than the other areas. Namiq Kamal (1840-1888), poet, journalist, dramatist, and historian, is considered the father of New Ottoman Turkish literature. He wrote the first Turkish novel and his dramatic piece was performed in a theater house in 1873. This movement lasted prior to the establishment of modern Turkey in 1923.

This is a new historical phase, the later outcomes of which could be widely observed in the configuration of Kurdish literature. Kurdish organizations and associations of the educated and intellectuals emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century in Turkey. The first Kurdish newspaper was published in 1898, and the first Kurdish magazines and books were published in the early twentieth century. The same impact is observed in Kurdish literature of those days. Influenced by internal factors and particularly worked by the Kurdish intellectuals, the Renewal of Kurdish letters was mostly based on the external factors, the source and origin of which trace back to other neighboring nations and to the Turkish literature in particular.

The Persian literary history is pretty richer and more flexible to the changes of modern times. Persian classical literature covers several poetic styles that are rich in mode and treatment; however, the manifestation of any wide literary movement is hardly observed from the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century. After the Sasanians and the spread of Islam among the Iranian nations, a rich literary tradition in Persian emerged that lasted until the Safavids' period

(1501-1736). The Ghaznavids Empire (963-1183) and the Seljuqs (1037-1194) had contributed to arts and letters known as 'Islamic Era Literature.' In the Safavids' period, the Indian style of poetry ('Sabk-e Hendi') was largely practiced by the poets of the day. However, except for a traditional poetic style in the Qajar's era, called 'Restoring Style' ('Sabk-e Bazgasht'), there appeared no major and notable movement for more than two centuries. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the renewal of arts, letters, and thought, considered by most historians as the Iranian preliminary version of modernity, Persian literature underwent profound and revolutionary changes mostly due to the influences made by the establishment of the first Polytechnique school, the Western culture, the arrival of political liberalism and democratic ideology, and the newly-established journalism. The influences were so substantial that they led to the configuration of a revolution-like uprising, known as 'Mashrute Revolution', that is the Constitutional revolution, in 1906.

The 'new' Persian emerged out of this spirit of the renewal era, which also influenced, to some extent, the Kurdish poets of the day. However, what is of central significance to the present study is that the terms 'Persian Classical Literature' and 'Iranian Classical Literature' are not found in the authentic and well-known sources concerning Persian or Iranian literature. The terms 'Islamic Era Literature' and, for instance, 'Safavid Literature,' are employed instead in those sources. The terms 'Romanticism' and the French 'Romantisme' were not used as a period or a school either by the scholars of the day. The same treatment was followed in the studies of those days prior to the middle of the twentieth century. Edward Browne's *A Literary History of Persia* (1902) and Zabihola Safa's *History of Literature in Iran* (Volume V, 1988) do not employ this set of terminology. The interesting point is that the term "Romantic" was not used by the English and French Romantic poets; it was applied to their work by the literary historians almost half a century after the end of Romanticism in Europe.

## **5. Traditional Treatment of Literary Schools**

### **5.1. Kurdish Classicism**

Kurdish classical literature has been defined in the first volume of Khaznadar's *Kurdish Literary History* in a rather obscure way. He states that "by the classicism of written literature that precedes classic literature we mean Prestige Literature. Kurdish literature, what we attempt to write its history, is 'the literature of the Islamic era'" (159). The ambiguity of this paragraph hides the author's standpoint in that he has not presented a clear-cut definition of what Kurdish classical literature is. However, one can deduce that Kurdish classical literature is the literature written in the Islamic era. This definition suffers from another weak point which is the terms 'Islamic era' in that even the Kurdish

literature of the present day could be roughly called the literature of the Islamic era. The term 'literature of the Middle Ages' is not applied either to the Kurdish literature under discussion since most of the Kurdish literary works were composed in the Renaissance and the period after that. Khaznadar used the word 'classic' as old literature, and he argued that it went back to the Islamic era. He also used the term 'Prestige literature; to point to a major part of that literature. The modern scholars can find no close examination of dynamic socio-cultural features of the Kurdish cultural system in this perspective. Khaznadar does not tell us what the characteristics of Kurdish literature are and how it emerged and evolved.

Several scholars of the present day have followed the same incomplete interpretation in that they are not concerned with the variation points from which Kurdish classical literature moved away. In addition, the impact of the literature of the neighboring nations has been mostly neglected in the study of Kurdish classicism. The distinguishable aspects of Kurdish classicism from western literature are run out of attention in most of the literature available on the subject. The emergence of classic literature implies that all the other associated dimensions, including the political, economic, and socio-cultural, are supposed to in parallel to the nature of classicism. This also includes customs, norms, conversational etiquettes, dressing, food, living goods, housing, and construction (Asuad *A Short History of Classicism* 1985).

The question of the presence of the royal classes and aristocratic families is a matter of large controversy in that sharp discrepancies are marked between the socio-political structure of the Kurdish communities and that of the most European societies. The classicist literature in a European context is normally assigned with the supreme, noble, and august features of the aristocratic literature, representing the aristocratic elite and their standpoint. This characteristic feature is absent in the social and literary history of most nations of the Middle East in general, and in Kurdish literature in particular. Therefore, it is not appropriate to lavishly use the terms classic or Romantic in the context of Kurdish literature.

The other controversial thesis presented in the first volume of Khaznadar's *Kurdish Literary History* is that he uses the term 'Neo-classic' as a renewal of that classic literature that emerged around the Islamic era and by which he means the literature written in "Goran Dialect" (31). Khaznadar considers the literature written in, according to him "Goran Dialect," as classic and the literature emerged in Sulaimani with the advent of the Baban Emirate as Neo-classic. As demonstrated by other scholars and later by Khaznadar himself, the literature written in the era of the Baban Emirate is called classic, implying that it is a

glorious and august literature, with Nali as its greatest poet. Khaznadar also states that “with the establishment of this emirate in the new capital city of Sulaimani and the rise of Neo-classical poetry by Nali, Goran Dialect started to roll down and this process has continued up to now” (33). What is neglected in these remarks is that there appeared a highly rich Gorani literature throughout the nineteenth century. Gorani literature, emerged as early as the thirteenth century and developed throughout centuries, reached its climax towards the end of the nineteenth century. Gorani poems were composed in native homegrown syllabic meter, and are marked with their particular mode of stylistics (Sadjadi, Gorani Literature).

### **5.2. Romanticism in the Kurdish Context**

Hemdad Hussein in his *Literary Schools* (2007) likely employs the term ‘Classicism’ for the whole Kurdish literature before the Renewal (59). He has also used the term ‘Romantic’ for the Renewal era of Kurdish literature (59). Hussein, similar to most of the literary scholars, considers Romanticism as a period in Kurdish literature and argues that “when the rise and dissemination of Romanticism is under consideration, it is fair to say that it is directly in parallel to the Renaissance of Kurdish literature” (109). He goes further to classify the Gorani part of Kurdish literature within the category of Kurdish Classicism. Concerning the renewal stage of Kurdish literature, he states that “the disobedience, insurgence and innovative circumstance, and changes carried by Romanticism can be associated to modernism” (109).

Hussein thus not only considers Romanticism as a current and period in Kurdish literature, but also relates it to Modernism. However, what is worth mentioning here is that modernism in contemporary Kurdish literature has very few similarities with the Kurdish literature of the early twentieth century. Moreover, Romanticism cannot be mixed up with Modernism, since they are two highly distinguishable currents. Modernism in the context of European literature appeared almost a century after the advent of Romanticism. In the Kurdish context, these two movements and schools are intermingled in a way that none of them met the full features of these schools.

The other point in Hussein’s argument that needs further clarification is that there were no disobedience and insurgence to the condition of modernity in the renewal era of Kurdish literature simply because most of the elements were new to the Kurdish context, including Kurdish prose, journalism and even education. The period begins with the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century is considered as a watershed period for the Kurdish community and common sense; it was a period that did not resemble the previous stages since the first newspapers and magazines in Kurdish appeared

and this led to the changes in the written mode of language. This configuration of Kurdish literature is extensively distinguishable from the European Romanticism that emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century. Romanticism, as a movement, current and period, was under the obvious influence of the literature of the Enlightenment, which pioneered the first examples of German Idealist tradition of philosophy. This set of backgrounds, as mentioned earlier, is absent in the context of Kurdish literature; however, they are not mentioned by most of the Kurdish scholars (Abdullah *Kurdish Pre-Romantic Poetry 1851-1921*, 2006; Omar *Romanticism in Hemin's and Mohammad Nuri's Poetry* 2013).

Romanticism in the French context ended up with the death of Alfred de Musset in 1857. It was already done in the English context when the First Reform Bill was passed in the British parliament in 1832 and most of the English Romantic figures were literary inactive by that time. Whenever the term Romantic is used in Kurdish literature, attention should be paid to the Kurdish context itself. Romanticism, like the other modern European movements of thought and letters, has its roots in the socio-cultural system that dates back to the Renaissance Humanism. The critical outlook and the spirit of self-criticism, later developed in the Enlightenment, is not observed in the context of the literature of the eastern nations. Accordingly, the philosophical and socio-political dimensions of European Romanticism are lacking in the entire literature of the Eastern nations in general, and in Kurdish literature in particular.

One of the notable notions in demonstrating the true nature of Romanticism in Kurdish literature is, as Sadjadi argues, to call it "incomplete Romanticism" ("Literary Historiography" 256) by which he means that the literary school referred to as Romanticism in Kurdish does not necessarily meet all the pre-conditions and features of the European Romanticism due to the distinguishable character of this trend in Kurdish on one hand and in English and French literature on the other hand. Sadjadi employs the same term for the manifestation of modernism in Kurdish literature and he uses the term "incomplete" for what is generally considered as the Kurdish modernist works (257). In addition, as he has contended, whereas Romanticism and Modernism are two different literary schools that appeared in different historical eras in the European literature, they were simultaneously manifested in Kurdish literature in that Romanticism arrived at the literature of the Middle East almost a century after its representation in the western literature.

### **5.3. Neo- Classical Literature in Kurdish**

Neo-Classicism is mostly used in the context of English literature and is applied to the literature written predominantly in the eighteenth century. In the French

context, it was a materialistic and civilizing current that precedes the French Great Revolution. Neo-Classical literary theory, as the name implies, was a new but loyal treatment of classicism, which here signifies the works written in the ancient Greece and Rome. On the other hand, when it drew towards the latter stage of creativity, it caused the emergence of Romanticism. Neoclassicism is associated with the aristocratic discourse of the Western European societies of the eighteenth century, whereas Romanticism was the literature of the class who brought about the revolution and terminated the rule of the aristocrats. Yadgar Rasul in *Characteristics of the Renewal in Kurdish Poetry, 1898-1932* (2005) considers the stage of the literary production by the Kurdish poets Mawlawi and Haji Qadir Koye as the Neo-classic (64); however, he does not mention the civilizing and conceptual characteristics of Neo-classicism that are marked with a specific definition in the European context. Such configuration and factors are lacking in the history of Kurdish literature in that is marked with a distinguishable background.

On the other hand, whereas 'didacticism' was followed as a rule in the European Neo-classicism, it was employed in the Kurdish poetry both before and after the advent of central Kurdish literature. Still, the didactic aspect of Kurdish poetry in the later part of the nineteenth century was marked with a socio-political objective and in favor of the early glimpses of Kurdish nationalism while that was not the case with the European Neo-classical literature. The didactic poetry in the late nineteenth-century Kurdish literature emerged in the poetic practices of Haji Qadir Koye, Mahwi, and Shekh Reza Talabani. These examples include Haji Qadir's practice of socio-political didactic poems, Mahwi's practice of religious didactic poems, and Shekh Raza's practice of satiric didactic poems.

In the early and mid-twentieth-century Kurdish literature didactic poetry was further developed in the poetics practices of Shekh Nuri, Piraamerd and, more beautiful in, Goran. Several poems were then composed that were full of techniques, rhetoric, and literariness. Concerned with the renewal movement of Kurdish Poetry, Shekh Nuri states:

Beauty is the base of literature. A beautiful dress is to be given to meaning, and truth is the base of logic. In composing poetry beauty needed to be paid attention to, that which arises from artistic feeling, only for a word to be logically accepted, the truth need not be overstepped. (qtd. in Abdulwahid 183)

This short extract of the text written by Shekh Nuri demonstrates the full literary content and technique of the renewal current, which lasted to the very last days of Goran's intellectual life. The Renewal of Central Kurdish poetry deteriorated with the death of Goran. The succeeding trends in Kurdish poetry appeared in the late 1960s. What should be noted here is that Abdulwahid, who



has edited the complete works of Shekh Nuri, argues for the structure of the Renewal of Kurdish Literature in a way that is similar to the standpoints of the other scholars. Abdulwahid contends that the Kurdish renewal was a coherent and systematic movement. He states that “the points known as the basics of new poetry outlined the distinctive features of this school and separated new poetry from classical poetry: ‘rebellion’ and countermanding the norms, customs, rules and laws” (179).

Abdulwahid uses the terms ‘school’, ‘classical Poetry’, ‘distinctive features’ and ‘rebellion’ lavishly as if there was a unanimous coded system behind the Renewal of Kurdish literature. My analysis contends that there were no schools present in the period of the Renewal. Similarly, there were no ‘rebellions’, disobedience and insurgence in the sense of a political and conceptual mode that affected the folks in a way that it constituted the base of literary imagination and conception of the elites. The major features of the Renewal appeared in the works of Shekh Nuri, Piramerd, and Goran; however, these features were not generally available in the Kurdish community of that era.

Aziz Gardi in *The Meters of Kurdish Classic Poetry* (1999) considers all the poetry written in ‘Arooz’ and the poetry with prosodic features as ‘Kurdish classic poetry.’ He argues:

By the metrical feet of Kurdish classic poetry we mean those prosodic meters used by the Kurdish poets in writing their poems. Those prosodic meters with the advent of Islam arrived at Kurdish poetry, but after World War I, those prosodic features gradually retreated and gave their place to Kurdish homegrown meters. Those prosodic features, which stuck to Kurdish poetry in about a thousand years, were roughly quitted with the rise of neologist and purist movements of Kurdish new poetry. (11)

Gardi further contends that the old and new folkloric poetry in Kurdish and the entire poetry written in Gorani and Hawrami dialects belong to the heritage of Kurdish homegrown meters. Gardi does not attempt to investigate the reasons why all the Kurdish poetry written in Gorani style employed Kurdish homegrown meter. In addition, he does not explore the full and simultaneous employment of ‘Arooz’ in the poetry written in Sorani, Babani, Ardallani, Mukryani and Kurmanji. If the poetry with ‘Arooz’ and other prosodic features of the Central Kurdish tradition is called ‘classic,’ the poetry with Kurdish homegrown meters could not then be called classic either.

Gardi’s reference to the term ‘neologism’ makes the question appear more complicated. Was the Renaissance period considered as a movement of neologism? In the Kurdish context, the neologist and purist attempts in language and literature were originally the individual concerns and endeavors of the poets; hence, there was no coherent and all-inclusive movement of neologism in

the composition process of Kurdish new poetry. The renewal phase in Kurdish literature and, particularly, poetry, which emerged in the early twentieth century, was under the close influence of the slow socio-political and cultural changes that took place in the Middle East. The Kurdish renewal phase was, first and mostly, influenced by the Turkish literary Renaissance, which was itself under the impact of European literature.

The celebrated Kurdish poet, Goran, in the introduction to his collection of poems under the title of *Complete Works of Goran* makes no closures to the uses of the terms Classicism, Romanticism, movement and neologism. In the following text, Goran presents the characteristic features of Kurdish literary history with their periods, without being like the authors in thinking or writing about the sources. He states:

Most of the old poems were written in 'Arooz', poems with prosodic features or were written with an old mixed Kurdish style, or the writings that are pioneered in a style that my mentor 'M. Nuri' and his friends received from the new men of letters of Turkish Ottomans ... The new poems written in Hija meter, syllabic and homegrown meter, even though the old friends and lovers of poetry were not familiar with reading in such style. But because it is a specific national meter and suits the language properties better, I found it necessary in my literary career attempts to head towards using this meter day by day. I will be forever disposed of 'Arooz', unless there might be a provoking necessity. (40)

As it is clear from the above text, there are, in Goran's view, old literature and the literature of the Renewal period influenced by Ottoman Turkish literature and modern literature. Also, the question of being old and new in the composition of poetry is mentioned by him as a challenging issue. After Goran, a complete separation from the old figures of speech and the meters of Kurdish poetry occurred, mostly towards the late 1960s. The features of the period of literary renewal appear in Goran's other writings, which are far away from uprising, rebelling, or any other sorts of countermanding.

## **6. Discussions**

The central notion that the present research argues for is that the literary terminology employed in French and English literature for the designation of literary schools and trends are not to be lavishly and roughly used in the analysis of Kurdish literary movements. The expressions including Classicism, Romanticism, and particularly the succeeding western literary currents do not fully signify the periods and currents of Kurdish literary history. Kurdish literature, along with Arabic, Turkish, and Persian literature, to name only a few, are the major manifestations of literature in the Middle East, correlated by a group of somehow similar characteristic features that are distinguishable from the European literature. The number of literary currents and movements in

Kurdish literature prior to the mid-twentieth century is relatively low as compared with English and French literature. The Renewal in Kurdish literature was mostly manifested in the first half of the twentieth century, which is also called by some scholars as 'the renaissance phase', and the modern and contemporary Kurdish literature emerged from the 1960s onwards.

There are some external factors for the emergence of the Renewal period in Kurdish literature, the most significant of which go back to the influence of the new Turkish literature, issued and presented in Istanbul at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The new Turkish literature of those days had no chance of being a homogenous literary current; it was a Renaissance caused by consecutive changes and catastrophes without having any specific enlightening, cultural and political stances, plans and roadmaps. It is an indubitable fact that the impact of the cultural, political and conceptual modes of the west on the Ottomans Empire was substantial particularly towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The Renewal in Central Kurdish literature was practiced and developed by the Kurdish poets Shekh Nuri, Piramerd, and, later, Goran. This phase is considered by most Kurdish scholars as the period of Kurdish Romanticism. The premises and features of Romanticism were not fully manifested and employed in the works of these poets. Additionally, the socio-cultural changes that happened at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century on the advent of the European Romanticism were not at work in the cultural scene of the Kurdish communities in the mid-twentieth century. The Romantic features represented in the texts of the Renewal poets in the Kurdish context are mostly configured from individual imagination and sympathy. It was a practical treatment conducted by the poets themselves, rather than being a coherent literary movement or current like that of French and English literature. One of the sources that accords with the present viewpoint is Kamil Hasan Basir's *Kurdish Literature and Criticism*, published in 1983 in Baghdad. Unfortunately, the author did not fully develop his thesis. Basir argues:

There are some opinions that call Kurdish literature, from its beginning to the early twentieth century, Old literature, claiming that the term 'Classicism' cannot be given to Kurdish literature of that phase as there are many distinctive points in Kurdish Classicism that show the influence of Oriental and Islamic life and civilization. (9)

What is notable in Basir's argument is that, contradictory to this own standpoint, he uses the term classicism in another writing and calls Kurdish literature 'Classic' literature. This contradictory view is found in his paper "Kurdish Classical Literature and the Criticism of Nali, Salim, Kurdi and Haji

Qadir," which was published in *The Journal of the Kurdish Academy* (Volume 7, 1980).

As for the manifestation of Realism in Kurdish literature, Hemdad Hussein in his *Literary Schools* (2007) views it as a movement, current, and period in Kurdish literature (53). The history of Realism, in Hussein's idea, dates back to Baba Tahir and extending all the way crossing Haji Qadir Koyi up to the 1960s, called by him the period of Realism in Kurdish literature. The Realist writers and poets, according to him, include Goran, Fayege Bekas, Salih Dilan, Kamaran Mukri, Alaadin Sajadi, Ibrahim Ahmed, Hassan Qizlji, and Kakai Falah. In Hemdad's view, social realism appeared at the end of this period, which is also attested by Goran towards the last phase of his intellectual career, in the sense that he was a socialist.

The above clear-cut divisions and categorizations including Classicism, Neo-Classicism, Romanticism, Realism, and Social Realism, are not fully observed in the course of Kurdish literature. In my opinion, this sort of classification is taken as a mere imitation of the western scholars' treatment of French and English literary schools. Exploring the emergence and development of Kurdish literary currents, the scholars are supposed to keenly observe the socio-cultural and historical precision and interpretations belonging to the specific backgrounds in the context of Kurdish literature and that of the other neighboring nations; however, most of these analyses lack this characteristic treatment (Mustafa "Socialist Realism and Kurdish Literature" 1987).

There are hardly any specific and inclusive literary periods in the entire Kurdish, Turkish, Persian, and Arabic literary history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In none of the researches concerning the literary history of these nations, the terms current and movement are mentioned as pointing to specific 'periods.' On the other hand, some Kurdish scholars date the rise of Romanticism back to the period when Kurdistan was divided among four nation-states including Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. They also link Romanticism to the pessimism that covered the whole nation in those days, and to the unsteadiness and abnormal situation popped up in Kurdistan, particularly in socio-political aspects. This situation normally makes the feelings and impressions appear more sentient and responsive.

In my view, this standpoint sounds reductionist and straightforward as the responsive impressions cannot be the factor of making any imagination belong to a literary movement. It is not a cultural and dynamic motor for the emergence of literary movement either. Moreover, the number of the Kurdish elites of that era was surprisingly low and their attempts were limited to a small circle of friends and readers; therefore, they could not fulfill their objectives concerning

having dynamic, civilizing, and materialistic changes. The predominance of the static socio-cultural context and the lack of political dynamics led to the partial failure of any attempt to approach this dynamism.

### **7. Conclusion**

Offering harsh criticism of the traditional treatment of literary schools and trends in Kurdish, the present study argues that the set of terminology including Classicism, Neo-classicism, Romanticism, Realism, and so on, is not fully applicable to the literary movements and works in the Kurdish context. My research considers the whole body of Kurdish written literature into three distinct periods and sections that are the ancient literature, also called the literature of Diwan, from the beginning to the early twentieth century, the literature of the Renewal period, from the 1900s to the mid-twentieth century, and the modern and contemporary literature, from the 1960s to the present. Kurdish literary history, in each one of these periods, had a special configuration and character. Despite the changes, each period has its extension. The whole Central Kurdish poetry can be located in these three periods. This study argues that it would be a reductionist attempt if the features of the literary currents, movements, schools are applied to signify a specific period in Kurdish literary history.

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