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Homeland as mother in Some Irish and Kurdish Poems: A Comparative Study

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<p>Keywords:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- nationalism- resemblance- concept- upheavals-culture	<p>Abstract</p> <p>Nationalism and attachment to country and land is as old as man's existence on earth; yet, as a concept, it is almost modern, or may be, some steps behind the modern age. There are, undoubtedly, reasons and factors behind the rise of this concept and its appearance in the literature of some, if not all, nations throughout the history. This comparative investigation is an attempt to tackle a number of poems in both the Irish and Kurdish modern poetry. The resemblance between the historical, geographical, political, and cultural situations of the two nations was behind the germination of the idea of the paper. Despite the huge distance between the two nations' lands, history, and culture, the paper pre-supposes a sort of resemblance that marks 'the poetry of resistance' in each case and consequently some common features to be discovered through the poems under study here. The paper starts with a brief introduction about nationalism as a concept along with its development in the modern age due to the political upheavals in different parts of the world. It is followed by a critical analysis of selected Irish and Kurdish poems using some modern and up-to-dates sources. The comparative aspects between the two cases precedes the conclusions and list of</p>
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	sources where some points are concluded the most obvious one of which is the heavy and unexpected semblance between the two groups of poems in forms, themes, and even techniques.
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<p>الخلاصة: إن الوطنية وحب الوطن والأرض قديمتان قدم الإنسان، ولكنها كمفهوم تعد حديثة. وبلا شك هناك أسباب وراء ظهور المشاعر الوطنية في الأدب في بعض الأمم إن لم نقل في جميعها عبر التاريخ. تتناول هذه الدراسة عددا من القصائد من الشعر الحديث الأيرلندي والكردي. إن أوجه التشابه من النواحي التاريخية والجغرافية والسياسية والثقافية لكلا الشعبين كانت وراؤ اختيار الموضوع. فعلى الرغم من المسافة البعيدة بين أراضي البلدين وتاريخهما وثقافتها تفترض الدراسة وجود شيء من التشابه الذي يميز "شعر المقاومة" في كلا الحاتين وبالنتيجة وجود خصائص مشتركة يمكن إكتشافها في القصائد التي تتناولها هذه الدراسة. تبدأ الدراسة بمقدمة موجزة عن القومية وتطورها في العصر الحديث نتيجة للإضطرابات السياسية في أماكن كثيرة من العالم. ويتبع ذلك تحليل نقدي لقصائد محتارة من الشعر الأيرلندي والكردي. وبعد ذلك تتم المقارنة بين القصائد الأيرلندية والكردية وتستنتج الدراسة وجود تشابه كبير بين هاتين المجموعتين من القصائد من حيث الشكل والمضمون والتكنيك.</p>	<p>الكلمات الدالة:-</p> <p>معلومات البحث</p> <p>تاريخ البحث:</p> <p>الاستلام: ٢٠٢١_٨_١٢</p> <p>القبول: ٢٠٢١_٩_١</p> <p>التوفر على النت</p>
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1. Introduction

Nationalism which is defined "as a state of mind in which the individual feels that everyone owes his supreme secular loyalty to the nation-state" (Britannica, 12: 851), could be attributed to the beginning of humanity through different forms and nomenclatures rather than 'nationalism' per se. With his settlement on earth, man became aware of belonging and being loyal to a certain group or clique. This awareness helped in the formation of different groups of people on earth, though not based on the newly invented concept of nationalism. One can well speak of religious and cultural

nationalism where religion and culture were, respectively, the unit of gathering and co-existence.

Nationalism, as a modern concept started, as most critics believe, at the Eighteenth century in Europe and much later- the 20th century- in the east and other parts of the world. The French revolution and its aftermath which was often called the age of nationalism, is nominated as the real beginning of this critical concept. It should be noted that the majority if not all of the cases where nationalism arose to the uppermost, were direct results of oppression and feeling of deprivation of natural rights on the one hand; and the opposite sensation of the necessity of being grouped together and self-ruled, on the other hand. This idea is certainly shared by people who feel that they belong in one way or another to a common feature. In this respect, American and French nationalisms are stark samples; the first one being a humanitarian nationalism that culminated in the Declaration of Independence and consequently the formation of America as a nation, while the second one was fueled by Jean Jack Roseau (1712-1778). In the east, however, the Indian case with Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) is the most obvious example for nationalism.

Among the nationalist movements in Europe, the Irish nationalism could be considered as the most distinctive and attention-drawer for a number of reasons and causes the most obvious one of which is the fact that its consequences are still on the track. The political and even semi-military conflict between Britain and Northern Ireland activists upon the destiny of the six Irish counties which are so far under the British control, is still going on and the people there still do not have any feeling or sympathy towards Britain as their country and the British people as part of their nation. Different languages, cultures, and even history of the two parties pushes towards further conflicts and consequently a future split- at least as the Northern Irelanders hope- from Britain and its rule. The literature produced by the Irish men of letters, no doubt, reflects such a sensation and value especially from the 18th century. Johnathan Swift (1667-1745), Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774), Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), and William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), to name a few, are just examples in case. Yeats, in his "Easter 1916" for instance, presents not only this attitude; rather, he anticipates more sacrifice, more violence and bloodshed after the events he describes:

Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.
O when may it suffice?
That is Heaven's part, our part
To murmur name upon name,
As a mother names her child
When sleep at last has come
On limbs that had run wild.
(Ferguson: 1195)

These pioneers paved the way, through their works as mentioned above, to a long list of patriotic and enthusiastic writers who produced a huge amount of literature that focusses, in the main, upon the right of the Irish people to self-rule and self-determination. And this is a natural result for the lengthy instability and violence in Northern Ireland.

Along with this rapid overview, one more fact deserves attention: The Irish as a people are older than the English in their homeland, i.e., Ireland, and therefore, their angry military, political, and literary reaction and rebellion against what they regard as colonialization does not call for much surprise and disagreement for those who are aware of the history of that land.

The other part of the study deals with the Kurdish poetry, and therefore, it needs some elucidation about the Kurdish nationalist inclination. Most critics and writers about the history of the Kurds as a people and nation, including the orientalist, agree that the Kurds form a separate and independent nation by themselves and that they lived in the areas where they are now (in Western Iran, Northern Iraq, south east of Turkey, and North east of Syria) much before the other peoples, especially the Arabs. In Iraq where the most active Kurdish literature is seen, the Kurds lived long before the Arabs and much longer before the foundation of the newly born state called Iraq (Founded as a state in 1921) (See Alaaddin: 1-98)

The oldest Kurdish poetry that survived and documented, goes back to the 9th century; but nationalism in it, like the others, is young and new since the sense of oppression and subjugation did not appear in that poetry until its people fell under the sever yoke of the Ottoman and Safavid Empires. With the new developments that followed the two great wars and the distribution of the Kurds' land among the four neighboring countries (Iran, Turkey, Syria, and Iraq); sense of injustice and domination penetrated into the innermost of the Kurdish individuals and the poets took it as a responsibility to give it a mouth. But this was not a real initiation of the poets' anti-occupation feeling or objection; rather, it goes back to the 1800s when the poets got fed up with foreign domination over their land and people. Here is how Hamdi (1876-1936) pours over his distress and antagonism:

Oh, my land! Rome¹ & Ajam² are yearning for your Kurdistan,
The honour of the Kurds is your very dignity.

.....
The curved tubular line of the high mounts,
Ask clear for freedom & waiting your order.
(Ibid: 442).

1 &2: They are references to the Roman and Persian Empires respectively that occupied and ruled the land and home of the Kurds.

To call for freedom in the beginning of the twentieth century proves the fact that the Kurds like the Irish people are a distinctive nation and older on their land than the powers to which they fell victims. Arabs, Turks, and Persians did not inhabit the Kurds' lands before and, like the English, their existence as oppressors happened just through military campaigns. The cry out of Hamdi and the other Kurdish men of letters is, therefore, as legitimate as that of their Irish equivalents.

2. Mother-Myth

In a graveside panegyric on 1, August, 1915, Patrick Pearse said "We of the Irish volunteers, and you others who are associated with us in to-day's task and duty, are bound together and must stand together henceforth in brotherly union for the achievement of the freedom of Ireland". (<https://www.youtube.com>).

The fact that the Irish desolation is ancient and antique at least for the modern age is proved, among other things, through a number of early and later modern and even postmodern poems and other pieces of literature. One of those pieces that deserve existence in this context is a poem written in 1912 by the Irish poet and, essayist, nationalist, and activist, Padraic Pearce (1879-1916) under the Irish title of "Mise Eire". The poem, written just four years before his execution as a result of the Easter Rising in 1916, cannot be interpreted just by turning to his revolutionary and activist background; rather, a wider range of understanding about his thoughts and the accuracy of his

foreshadowing are of greater significance. Despite his appreciation of the significance of the ancient Irish literature, “he believed it was necessary to develop a modern literature in Irish which would use contemporary forms and thus lead Ireland away from what he saw as the Anglicized Backwaters into the European mainstream” (Joost Augusteijn qtd in Bonsey: 38). It seems that he himself started the campaign though not through using ‘contemporary forms’ but through the themes and messages he intended in his works. The poem ‘Mise Eire’ is an example in case where the classical mythology is espoused to the modern nationalism. The Irish title which is translated as ‘I am Ireland’, is the first glimpse of that theme since the speaker-the personified Ireland- is compared to a woman “I am Ireland: / I am older than the old woman of Beara” (Bloom: 116). The speaker, therefore, is simultaneously Ireland and an aged woman who is older than ‘Beara’. The first lines of the poem show that Pearse was aware of the necessity of connecting the present of his country to its myth since, as Gerardine Meaney states, “The Old Woman or Hag of Beare (Cailleach Bheara) derives from the sovereignty-goddess figure and was often used in politicized literature to personify Ireland” (148) and the word Cailleach, Deanna O’Conner says, “comes from the "caillech" meaning "veiled one" in Gaelic”. As far as the speaker is the personified Ireland-an antique land of history and myth- then she should refer to an old woman and Pearse had to look for a mythical or legendary character for the purpose of his poem. In this respect, Eleanor Hull states that “the reason why she is called the ‘old woman of Beare’ was that she had fifty foster-children in Beare. She had seven periods one after the other, so that her sons and grand-sons and grand grand-sons were tribes and races” (228).

The details leave no doubt that Ireland, here, is the woman and the mother who is proud of her history and golden age: “Great my glory: / I that bore Cuchulainn, the valiant (Bloom: 116). Ireland is the mother who ‘bore Cu Chulainn’, the legendary Gaelic gifted warrior who became a symbol of power, honor, and loyalty. This character was an ideal hero for Pearse who used him in his lectures and speeches; and described him in 1906 as “our first counsel to Gaels, let them always have before them a noble goal, an ‘ideal’ as the English speaker would say. Let us remember Cu Chulainn. Let his deeds and sayings or the deeds and sayings of some other hero like him be a guiding light shining gloriously in the sky before us” (Qtd in O’Leary: 23). The mother is proud of the glory associated with one of its valiant sons, yet it can serve as a caution both to the readers and to her people as well since this pride and glorification is accompanied with the smell of the past, history, and Gaelic legends and myths but not the present state of Ireland. Concerning this strong belief in the power of the myth of his country, Patrick O’Ferrell remarks; “Patrick Pearse saw in CuChulainn heroic violence sanctified. . . . Resurrected in the present, Ireland’s past glories, pagan and Christian, gave birth to a new messianism which looked forward to that future time when a new Ireland would rise equal to the old” (Qtd in Moran: 638). This ‘old’ is symbolized for Pearse, at least in this poem, in the image of the patriot and martyr, Cu Chulainn as the poet himself stresses “The story of Cu Chulainn I take to be the finest epic stuff in the world . . . the story itself is greater than any Greek story . . . the theme is as great as Milton’s in *Paradise Lost*: Milton’s theme is a fall, but the Irish theme is a redemption. For the story of Cu Chulainn symbolizes the redemption of man by a sinless God . . . it is like a retelling (or is it a foretelling?) of the story of Calvary” (Qtd in Shaw: 124). To urge his people towards this patriotic goal, Pearse sees that just boasting about history does not suffice; rather, an emotional connection between that the glorious and the despondent present through paradoxical images is of urgent need. That is why, the mother-land exclaims:

Great my shame:
My own children who sold their mother.

Great my pain:
My irreconcilable enemy who harasses me continually...
Great my sorrow
That crowd, in whom I placed my trust, died.
(Bloom: 116).

Pearse's use of juxtaposition is both expressive and significant because it encompasses the message the poet seems to convey to his people in the modern age and simultaneously to his Irish and foreign readers at all ages as well. Although condemned by some critics who alleged that his attachment to the Easter Rising was due to his failure as a poet, essayist, and dramatist; (see Moran for example), yet the political and nationalistic developments before and after the Rising leave no room for supporting such a criticism. It was much before the Rising in 1916 that he penned the present poem which expresses his separatist belief. The mother-land's 'Great my shame' was then, by no means in vain. Her children represented by the Ulster Volunteers did actually 'sold their mother' by forming a militia that worked for blocking or rejecting the Home Rule in Ireland. As for her enemy, the shame is transformed to pain and so, both the shame and the pain join forces to push the mother-land further to the lap of sorrow and wretchedness. The lines above can express vividly the poet's philosophy about nationalism and separatism for his country and people. The lines, and in fact the poem as a whole, disclose how Pearse equates fighting for the mother-home to a strict and even a religious duty. It seems that in a fit of anger and despair, the speaker has lost hope and confidence in her children and 'she' was realistic in that feeling than pessimistic since events that followed the publication of the poem proved 'her' right. The sorrow, in the poem was for the disloyalty of the Irish people towards their mother-land, but it turned just four years after to cry and sorrow upon the execution of the leading figures of the Easter Rebellion in 1916 one of whom was the composer of this poem.

As a result of the blows she is subjected to, the speaker declares her state of complete sense of solitude and pessimism: "I am Ireland: / I am lonelier than the old woman of Beara" (Ibid). The position of these two concluding lines calls for attention: They follow the bitter feeling, by the mother-Ireland, of being deserted by the very 'crowd' that she placed her 'trust' in. Their stance resulted not only in 'her' sadness, but in claiming the life of the few nationalists who decided to fight for their mother land four years later.

As mentioned earlier, Pearse's use of the parallel expressions of 'great glory' in the beginning of the poem and 'great shame', 'great pain', and 'great sorrow' in its last part is intended to emphasize the contradictory status of Ireland between the magnificent past and the wretched present. The image aims to revolutionize the Irish people towards acquiring freedom for the 'mother' who is in a dim state, through every possible strategy including the use of violence. In this respect, the viewpoints presented by the critic Sean Farrell Moran about the Irish nationalistic movement and in particular about Patrick Pearse are striking. To attribute Pearse's political stances to his desire to compensate for his social and sexual failure contains a great deal of injustice. In this respect, Sean Farrell Moran rebukes even the Irish myths. Quoting from George Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* (1907), he writes "there existed myths which were revolutionary canons of great social movements. These myths, . . . are not descriptions of things but expressions of a determinations to act. They represent the desire to destroy the status quo" (628). This claim in fact demolishes an essential part of the world culture and literature and puts into question most of the great masterpieces written with the use and support of such myths. It seems that this calculation is associated with the critic's personal view towards the poet as a person more than the case as a subject of assessment. While his point above is hidden behind another critic's point of view; he ushers, in the middle of his article, his personal

'rage' against Pearse: "Patrick Pearse's unique contribution to Irish political history was his expression of the 'mythic' ideas which served as the moral basis of physical-force nationalism. He was not alone in doing so, but his success lay in the coincidence of historical events with his own search for things to believe which could make him into a whole person" (630). The quote with its paradoxical expressions, the researcher believes, cannot devalue Pearse nationalistic views and stances which originate from his non-vibrant belief in the necessity of sacrificing for the mother-land and its people and this is what he achieved practically in 1916. As a result, Moran's viewpoints call for much hesitation and consideration before being taken or received as objective critical assessment.

Another poet who is praised and heralded highly in this respect is Seamus Heaney (1939-2013) who believed that "to remove Ireland's woes, one must retreat to the land and the ocean, for these existed before the religious animosity that created Ireland's long-standing grief" (Quoted in Bloom: 25). This mild attack at religion and namely the Catholic-Protestant conflict in his country includes within it the belief that the land and the ocean prove the right of his people, other than others, to Ireland as a home and place of origin. This concept of attachment and belonging to the land occupies a wide range of his poetic products especially those composed during the period of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Heaney's commitment to his homeland is shown more through the imagery of the relationship between mother and children. In "Bog Queen" from his 1975 collection *North*, for instance, the barrier between the queen mother and Ireland, the homeland, is blurred and they stand for each other. Heaney identifies himself with the mummied queen who stands as the only speaker in the poem: "My body was braille / for the creeping influences" (Heaney: 31). So, whose body was 'braille' for influences? The queen's or Heaney's or both? Taking the poet's political, social, and even religious bias into account, the queen's body stands for Heaney's as well and both of them symbolize their Ireland especially that traditionally homelands are presented in the image of women or mothers. And it is this idea, it seems to me, that urged doctor Christine Hoff Kraemer to believe that "Heaney encodes multiple layers of meaning in the poem by associating the Bog Queen with the body of the earth itself. In the context of his other bog poems, "Bog Queen" also reflects Ireland's exploitation by England, and warns that the revolutionary spirit of Mother Ireland will rise to avenge wrongs perpetrated upon her" (1). This 'multiple layers of meaning' and the queen's identification with the land becomes more obvious in the seventh stanza and those that follow it:

My diadem grew carious,
gemstones dropped
in the peat floe
like the bearings of history.

My sash was a black glacier
wrinkling, dyed weaves
and Phoenician stitchwork
retted on my breasts'
(Heaney:32).

The clever use of the diction 'diadem' 'carious' and 'floe' serves this double interpretation and keeps the balance upright. The speaker could be a desperate queen who is losing dignity symbolized by the jewelry crown; yet the word 'diadem' with its original meaning of a circular decoration for the head could allude to Ireland as a country. The words 'floe' and 'history' in the third and fourth lines respectively consolidate this belief since the state of the 'diadem' and

‘gemstones’ is likened to history. The queen’s belt which is associated to ‘a black glacier’ is another figurative meandering about the character of the speaker in the poem. Her clothes are as well compared to ancient deposits (Phoenician stitchwork) thrown upon her breast. This last roundabout by the poet pushes towards the same double standard meaning above. Heaney has the right to be proud of the deep history of his ‘mother Ireland’ for which the queen stands, here, as a symbol. In this respect, Christine Hoff Kraemer remarks that “Heaney identifies the Bog Queen more explicitly with the earth itself in the following three stanzas, in which the gemstones of her crown are compared to “the bearings of history,” her sash to “a black glacier,” and her fine clothing to sediment dropped by glaciers on the hills of her breasts”. (2).

The poet extends his ambiguous references in the next lines and stanzas where the boundary between Ireland and the queen is more squeezed: “I was barbered / and stripped / by a turf-cutter’s spade” (Heaney:32). The harsh and violent language exemplified by ‘barbered’ and ‘spade’ illustrates that the speaker is Ireland rather than a queen. The identity of the turf-cutter is also significant in revealing the underneath message and meaning of the poem. He, most probably, is an Irishman because the speaker says:

who veiled me again
and packed coomb softly
between the stone jambs
at my head and my feet.

(Ibid).

Why the turf-cutter re-buries the queen? As he re-buries the bog queen after stripping her of her belongings, the turf-cutter may stand for the occupiers of Ireland who target its benefits and riches and leave the deprived earth unattended. It could also refer to the Irish people who were deceived by the English occupiers into mistreating their own land and country. This last interpretation is confirmed in the next stanza where the speaker says: “Till a peer’s wife bribed him” (Ibid: 33). The turf-cutter is necessarily bribed by the occupiers of his country especially that this act of bribing is a common feature wherever occupation and colonialization happens and appears. He is bribed to betray his own homeland and its people; that is why the queen-speaker says bitterly: “The plait of my hair, / a slimy birth-cord / of bog, had been cut” (Ibid). This violent act is part of the change that happens in the tone of the poem from the soft and mild tone of the first half to a harsh and violent tone in the last six stanzas. The harsh mistreatment calls for a reaction as harsh as the action itself; therefore, mother Ireland, symbolized by the queen reacts:

and I rose from the dark,
hacked bone, skull-ware,
frayed stitches, tufts,
small gleams on the bank.

(Ibid).

The reaction takes the form of a revolution against the exploitation and violation she suffers from. The mother queen warns not only her occupiers, but even her own people

who have been deceived and pushed to mistreat her. The reference, here most probably, is to the Ulster Volunteers, a militia founded in 1912 to prevent the Home Rule in Ireland as mentioned earlier. Heaney's diction also plays a role in consolidating and emphasizing his message. The words 'coomb' and 'birth-cord' above prove the strong relationship between the queen-speaker of the poem and her country, Ireland, in a way that they could replace each other throughout the poem. This is, it seems, what Kraemer means when she stresses that "the mummified queen is both the sleeping earth and the spirit of Ireland, and the poem serves as a warning to those who would violate her – thus the poem carries both an environmental and a political message" (3).

Heaney re-affirms this imagery in one way or another in a number of other poems. He stresses the existence of "an indigenous territorial numen, a tutelar of the whole island, call her Mother Ireland, Kathleen Ni Houlihan, the poor old woman, the Shan Van Vocht, whatever; [whose] sovereignty has been temporarily usurped or infringed by a new male cult whose founding fathers were Cromwell, William of Orange and Edward Carson" (Qtd in Moloney: 72-3). This description applies among other poems, to "Ocean's Love of Ireland" from the collection, *North*. The poem seems clearly as an ironic parody for Walter Raleigh's (1552-1618) not-completed long poem "Ocean's Love to Cynthia" which was addressed to queen Elizabeth. It is thought that Raleigh composed it about 1591 and he never published it.

Heaney's quotation above, then, could include Raleigh, the English writer, poet, soldier, spy, and statesman from the Elizabethan age, especially that he was a leading character in suppressing the rebellion in Ireland. He addresses his mother-Ireland in the poem through the picture of a maid in the same way that Raleigh addresses mother Elizabeth in the form Cynthia:

Speaking broad Devonshire,
Raleigh has backed the maid to a tree
As Ireland is backed to England
And drives inland
Till all her strands are breathless:
(Heaney: 51).

The abrupt and non- introductory beginning of the poem signals his wrath and fury at the deeds committed both against the maid and Ireland. Two sovereignties are violated here; but Heaney seems to count them as one. Raleigh's mistreatment against the maid and the mother are stressed close to each other and within two successive lines. The possessive pronoun 'her' in the last line serves a double duty and Heaney uses it to make the two replaceable with each other. So, the male aggressor rapes both the maid and the land at the same time. This double standard hint goes further to the last three lines of the first part of the poem where Raleigh is condemned, though indirectly: "He is water, he is ocean, lifting / farthingale like a scarf of weed lifting / in the front of a wave" (Ibid). To the poet, Raleigh is a merciless water or ocean that rapes the maid symbolizing Ireland not only through occupying the land and giving it to English planters; rather, by sexually violating its inhabitants as exemplified in the image of the helpless maid. The allegory that Heaney uses here, serves a trope that has become common for every colonializing case and the nature of the relationship between the colonializing power and the colonized people and land.

Heaney follows this miserable case through connecting past to the present; thus, giving a state of permanency to the struggle in part of his homeland along with its consequences. In the poem "Kinship", again from *North*, for instance, he stresses this serial nature of the events and in its last section, he calls for history to back his belief:

And you, Tacitus,
Observe how I make my grove
On an old crannog
Piled by the fearful dead:
A desolate peace.
Our mother ground
Is sour with the blood
Of her faithful,
(Ibid: 49).

As the title suggests and the extract proves, the poet declares his kinship with the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus (c. AD 56 – c. 120) to connect the state of his homeland at the present to its past history and myth. This section of the poem, as Marie-Christine Veldeman states, is “particularly significant for he, there, addresses the Roman historian Tacitus who wrote about Ireland in his *Agrecola* and in his *Germania*, described the cult of the goddess Nerthus. Heaney’s poem views the present in terms of Roman Imperial conquest, which he calls ‘desolate peace’ because the price of peace was ‘fearful dead’ (135). Linking the sad story of his land to ‘the goddess Nerthus’ the goddess of fertility and to the Roman politician, and historian, Tacitus, aims at showing the sacrifice his motherland did and still do to ensure a free life and state for her people. He is inviting Tacitus to come and see how his land is under occupation as it was at the time of the Roman conquer by the military leader, Agrecola who supervised the conquer then. The crannog on which Heaney builds his ‘grove’ is filled with ‘fearful dead’ just like Agrecola’s days. His ‘mother ground’ sacrificed enough to an extent that it became ‘sour with the blood’. In the second line the speaker alludes to the Germanic goddess which he mentioned in his ethnographic piece *Germania* where he tells of a grove over which there is a cart that only priests can touch. Heaney likens that grove to his homeland, a place where he makes his grove at a time when it is ‘Piled by the fearful dead’. He is not satisfied with the allusion; therefore, he reminds Tacitus that his ‘mother ground’ is now ‘sour with the blood’ to remind everybody, through this apostrophe, of the continued misery of his people and land that is as old as Tacitus’s time.

3. Mother-Martyr

The status of Ireland that forced poets like Pearse and Heaney to react in a way seen in the examples above and a long list of other poems, can be applied to the Kurdish literature in general and its poetry in particular. Most of the Kurdish poets throughout ages- but specially in the modern age- reflected in their poetic products the status of their homeland and its people which was brought about by a long series of conquests and occupations that are going on until the present time just like the troubles in Northern Ireland.

One of those poets is Tawfiq Mahmood Agha, nicknamed as Peramerd (1867-1950). “The Martyrs Came” composed on May, 24, 1925, is of his many patriotic and nationalistic poems. Through this poem, Peramerd wanted to immortalize the leaders of an uprising in the Turkish part of Kurdistan similar to the Easter Rising of 1916 in Ireland. Following the events of the Treaty of Lausanne, an agreement was reached between Britain and Turkey concerning the Kurdish areas in Turkey, Iraq, and Syria, as William Henry Howell states, “But Curzon was authorized at Lausanne to tell the Turks that the British government was ready to drop articles 62 to 65 of the Treaty of Sevres which called for the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. Therefore, Curzon did not press for Kurdish independence. It was hoped that this would eliminate a conviction held by Mustafa Kamal that Britain was bent on dismembering Turkey by establishing a Kurdish

state in Anatolia and northern Iraq” (Qtd in Ali:524). This new status enraged the Kurdish nationalists against both Britain and Turkey alike and therefore, they started a series of revolts in both Turkey and Iraq against the two oppressing powers.

In March, 1925 for instance, a Kurdish revolt against the Turkish forces was led by Sheikh Saeed Piran (1865-1925) and was regarded by some critics as a reaction to the decision of the League of Nations about the destiny of the Kurdish areas in Iraq and Turkey. The event started before its decided time on March, 7, 1925 and ended by the defeat of the revolt and the execution of Sheikh Saeed himself and forty-seven other members by the Turkish authorities (See Rafeeq: 191-5). Peramerd’s poem seems to be a reminiscence of W. B. Yeats’s (1865-1939) “Easter 1916” because the latter’s poem also immortalizes the event where “on Easter Monday of 1916, Irish nationalists launched a heroic but unsuccessful revolt against the British government; the week of street fighting that followed is known as the Easter Rising. As a result, a number of the revolutionists were executed” (Ferguson et al; 1194).

The title tells that the poem, unlike Yeats’s poem, is devoted completely to the memory of the revolutionists who were executed at the end of that uprising. Through an apostrophe, the poet addresses his mother-land; “The red-bloody martyrs approached / Mother-land rise up & greet them” (Muhammad: 95). Following Yeats’s example in his “easter 1916”, the Kurdish nationalistic poet refers to some of the characters who lost their life for the rights of their country and land.

His patriotic feeling and enthusiasm moved him greatly and when he heard in Turkey where he was living, as Muhammad Rasoul Hawar states, “news of Kurdistan and Sheikh Mahmood’s revolutions, he could not stand staying away any further from his mother-land; so, he left his two children behind and after 20-25 years of expatriation, he headed to Suleimani to enjoy some peaceful moments in his mother-land’s lap” (62). He had been so anxious to those moments that he wrote an 11-couplets poem to her that starts with: “I am heading towards you, oh, loving mother; for 25 years / I lived with your memory in emigration, God knows” (Ibid:63). Here and wherever he refers to the home of the Kurds, he connects it strongly with motherhood and mother’s emotion.

One of Peramerd’s contemporaries who followed his example in spiritual attachment to homeland is Noori Sheikh Saleh (1896-1958), nicknamed Sheikh Noori Sheikh Saleh. Most Kurdish critics agree that he was the founder of the new Kurdish poetry in the 1920s and 1930s. The poet who held a number of administration posts at his time, was aware of the case of his people and nation as Azad Abdul-Wahid says “anybody who reads Sheikh Noori closely, he/she will understand that he was committed to the problem of his nation and associated with its people’s predicaments” (240). The reason is that he touched first hand and lived with the miseries of his people who suffered from oppression and occupation by the British-backed Iraqi governments and simultaneously the Persian, Turkish, and Syrian regimes.

Unlike the direct address of mother-land seen in the previous poem; the poet employs a meandering method to send his message. In “Homeland’s Cry” for example which is composed in 1925, the same year of the composition of Peramerd’s poem, the poet pretends to have seen a dream in a reminiscence of the child’s vision in William Blake’s (1757-1827) “The Chimney Sweeper”:

Last night I saw in dream a pitiable pure lady
Crying out: I am homeland, your mother,
Said in a sad and & melancholy tone:
I’m a fruitful shrub & also fruit’s flavor.
(Azad: 483).

In this one and, in fact in many of his other poems, the poet, as a critic states, “preserved the spirit of story-telling and tried to designate setting and heroes/heroines for his poetic short stories and he acquired these from the daily life of his people” (Marif: 378). The speaker’s dream is a perturbing scenario that foreshadows exhilarating things and evidences ahead: The uncontaminated woman is in a state that does not promise any desirable events to come. A feeble hope is discerned in her tone in the last line where she is both ‘a fruitful shrub’ and ‘fruit’s flavor’. Then, why she should be so miserable? “If watered and ploughed with compassion / My hope’s shoot will be with you” (Ibid). The mother seems to feel unhappy with her children and the conditional- metaphorical line is just an omen for her dissatisfaction which alludes to the fact that she is needy in this respect. The poet, however, does not let the reader in much anticipation about the vague complaint of the mother-speaker in the lines above and tries- unasked-in the third stanza to provide the anxious reader with a clue for that grievance:

Your full negligence and lack of provisions
Dropped my hope’s sprouts and leaves.
If you just take care of my life and existence,
Miseries will undone & you enjoy my shade and fruit.
(Ibid).

The stanza and, in fact, the poem as a whole is reminiscent of a quote by Declan Kibered about the Irish poetry in which he believes that “the monarch wedded to the land. . . . If she was happy and fertile, his rule was righteous, but if she grew sad and sorrowful, that must have been because of some unworthiness in the ruler” (Qtd in Moloney: 9). Considering Kibered’s quote, the bitter despair of the speaker in the first two lines translate the overall situation of her people as a result of their inactivity and dereliction towards what they and their mother-land suffer from. No ruler, here, is to blame since the rulers themselves are the oppressors and so, the mother-land is turning to her children for help and support against occupiers and oppressors. It should be noted that the poem, as Azad Abdul-Wahid states “was first published in 1925 in *Zhianawa* Magazine and later it was republished in No. 1 of 1927 of *Paizha* Magazine” (Ibid). These two dates coincide with a number of Kurdish revolts against the Turks. In this respect, a writer and critic says “the Kurdish revolts continued in the years that followed the failure of the 1925 revolt. In 1926, then on December 15, 1927, and lately on December 31 of the same year, battles happened between the Turkish forces and the Kurdish rebellions in Agri Dagh and Batlis where the rebellions lost again” (Rafeeq: 194).

Despite the harsh and severe rebuke, the mother-land as is usual with every mother, cannot stand being stiff with her children, and therefore, she turns to her motherly role of guidance and advice. Through another conditional line, she directs her people towards the real, though heavy and troublesome, responsibility they have to carry out so that the mother can get appeased and they can ‘enjoy my shade and fruit’.

Another prominent Kurdish modern nationalist poet is Muhammad Amin Hassan Sheikh Al-Islam, nicknamed Hemin (1921-1986) . This was his nom de guerre when he joined a Kurdish political movement in Mahabad in the Iranian Part of Kurdistan and then he used it as a poetic nickname. He is considered as one of the prominent modern poets in the Kurdish literature. His political affiliation and nationalist views are heavily reflected in his poetry and prose as well. In this respect, Osman Hamad Dashti writes:

In the beginning of 1945, the young boys of the party presented a play called ‘Mother-Land’ that was received warmly by the pubs. In it, the mother-land is shown as a black-wearing

chained prisoner. Her children rise and attack her enemy; and using daggers and swords, they break the chains of her hands and legs and free her. The performance influence affects the feeling and emotion of the audience; therefore, it continues shown for four months and even people from villages head to the city to see it (72).

The show inspired in the poet the idea of writing a poem which he gave the same title. The poem was composed when the poet's birthplace, Mahabad, was enjoying a relative independence from the Iranian collapsed regime but the Kurds in the other cities and towns were still suffering. A more accurate story about the event is presented by Archie Roosevelt Jr. in his article, "The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad". "As a result of the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran in 1941" he writes, "the Soviet International Propaganda Organization was starting a number of Iranian-Soviet Cultural Relations Societies in all sections of Iran". The Kurds also asked for such a joint organization not under the inclusive Iranian name "but as the Kurdistan-Soviet Cultural Relations Society" (Anjoman-i- Farhangi-i- Kurdistan-u- Shuravi) (252). The performance Osman Hamad Dashti mentions above was the result of that joint society as Roosevelt reiterates, "The main feature of the program was an 'opera' in which a woman called "Daik Nishteman" (Mother Native Land) was represented as abused by three ruffians, 'Iraq', 'Iran', and 'Turkey' finally to be rescued by her stalwart sons" (Ibid).

The poem is presented as a dream seen by the poet who starts it, "It was in the mid-yesternight / I saw an aged black-wearing woman" (Sayran: 146). The impact of the performance and the status quo of the poet's people at that time is clear here. And so, the scenario would be expected and an imaginary dramatic dialogue will ensue where the poet-speaker surprisingly asks about the reason for the addressee's state:

I calmly went to close and asked her,
O mother! What and who are ye?
Why are you sad and depressed?
What happened that ye're so worried?
Why do you wear black suits,
And your head & shoulders are mud-covered?

(Ibid).

The extended questions serve as a technique for elucidating the scenery more than receiving required information due to the heavy impact of the performance above upon the poet imagination. Yet the responses are essential for the main theme of the poem. In a wide range of his poetry, the poet discusses recurrently the critical situation of his nation and people as Dr. Abdul-Rahman Qasmlo (1930-1989) (the academic, politician, and head of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan-Iran who was assassinated in Vienna on July, 13, 1989) writes; "In his poetry, Hemin discusses in many occasions the oppressive state of his nation, defends the lost rights of his people, and hopes that the Kurds can get rid of the national oppression they were subjected to" (Qtd in Sayran: 23). One of the poems Qasmlo is referring to, is the present one with a little different method and technique, so that it can affect the majority of his people who were suffering from the malady of illiteracy as well. The addressee starts identifying herself bitterly: "My ignorant son, don't ye know? / Who am I? your mother-land" (Sayran: 146). The line seems to allude to the fact that, in reality, most of the naïve illiterate Kurds do not know their homeland or do not appreciate its value properly. The 'ignorant son' proves the non-alignment of many Kurds towards the miserable situation of their nation and the speaker's use of the half-satirical word 'ignorant' could be an address both to the ordinary rank and file who are by nature ignorant to such political and national controversies and the more aware Kurds

who, on purpose, serve the benefits of their nation's enemies for trivial and temporal gains. The poem was composed at a time when a political movement was going on in the poet's birthplace that was called "Komala" and led, in 1946, to the establishment of the first Kurdish independent country in the modern age called The Kurdish Republic. The mother-land is therefore, justified to get surprised at the ignorance of the addressee about a great inclusive development around him. Considering that simplicity and naivety, 'she' tries to tell him and simultaneously warn him about the temporal and bound-limit range of the pleasure some Kurds were enjoying then: "Because of you I am so sad miserable, / For you I bruise and burn" (Ibid). The status quo of the Kurds as a nation and people at the time was deteriorating under the yoke of the three oppressing regimes of Iran, Turkey, and Iraq, as Roosevelt refers to above; the temporary and very time-bound pleasure of a small part of it in Mahabad did not win the approval or consent of the mother-land who is concerned about the nation as a whole. So, she tries to make the addressee understand the reality of the state of his people:

You are sick, so I am sick too,
You are captive, so I am full in black.

.....
What a shame you are in smile,
While they're desperate & crying.
(Ibid).

The comprehensive perspective of the mother-land is clear which – in reality-denotes the poet's perspective for his nation as a whole rather than a small part and particle of it. The impact of the poet's political party affiliation is strongly felt since at that time, the Kurds in Iraq, Turkey, and Syria were suffering from chauvinist measures by the regimes in those countries and the relative temporal freedom in Mahabad did not convince the poet neither the mother-land who is the poet's mouthpiece in the poem. A whole-hearted hope and pleasure for the limited gain, therefore, calls for 'shame' rather than acceptance from the mother-land's perspective. Hemin concludes the poem with a huge gleam of hope, "Will get freed from tyranny & oppression, / All Kurdistan like Mahabad" (Ibid: 147). The shiny bright view above which stands as a stark contradiction to the mother-land's pessimistic and desperate tone can be attributed to one main reason: Although he had been elected as secretary of a significant committee in his party, but it should have not been suitable to his literary taste. In this respect, he writes, "I left the secretary and started working in the media committee of the party" (Qtd in Sayran: 77). It is obvious that this post necessitates raising the moral and emotion of the people and filling them with hope and positive anticipation. Yet the essential belief seems to be the one expressed by his mouthpiece in the earlier extract of the poem. Leaving the mother-land in fear and worry about the future of 'her' children in the poem was a strong and true foreshadowing by the nationalist poet because the mother's children are suffering nowadays not only in the other parts of Kurdistan that are mentioned in the poem; rather in the same Mahabad which carried the glimpse of hope for the Kurds at that time. The only exception is part of Iraqi Kurdistan which enjoys a relative freedom, but not with continuous attempts of harassment and enmity by the Iranian, Turkish, and even the new Iraqi regime.

4. Phases of Closeness and Diversity

The study that covers a wide span of time in the poetry of both nations, came up with interesting points that relate them together or split them apart in this specific aspect. The more attractive point could be that despite belonging to two different continents and

lack of connection between their related histories and cultures; the similar features in their poetry, as exemplified in the study, are astonishing along with some few diverse aspects. They can be summed up as the following:

1. Both poetries tell of more ancient peoples and cultures than the peoples and cultures of the nations to which they are annexed. The only difference, here, is that the Kurdish texts did not tackle mythical characters or events since the Kurdish culture and history is almost neglected in this aspect and did not receive its due because of different factors. But the study is not a suitable occasion to dig deep into those factors.
2. The modern form of Irish selected poems reflects the status of the Irish poetry from the dawn of the twentieth century, i.e., the modern age; while this aspect is not so clear in the Kurdish texts except for Sheikh Noori's poem because modernity in form and even in content penetrated into the Kurdish literature much later than its Irish counterpart.
3. Both poetries express senses of pride about their related peoples and nations; yet the pride, in both cases, is espoused with acrimonies and despair because part of their people did not and do not stay faithful to the service of their history, culture, and means of existence; rather, they helped and supported their oppressors against their own peoples. The reference to this fact is more obvious in the Irish examples than the Kurdish ones due to a number of factors that are related the nature of their occupiers.
4. Both poetries imply that the trouble and misery of their people are related to the ambition of oppressing powers that subjugated their lands and subordinated their peoples.
5. The plain and shame-ridden reaction of some of the studied poems notify the political circumstances under which they are composed when the poets felt relative liberty to give mouth to their streams of consciousness.

Conclusions

Through the marriage of two completely different poetries and cultures, the study came up with some concluding remarks that draw attention and may guide towards further studies in these original but not much attended literatures especially the Kurdish one. The most interesting part is the astonishing resemblance of the situations and environments under which both groups of poems, representing their related poetries in general, are produced. The Kurdish examples displaced allusions to myth, which is almost absent in the Kurdish culture because of historical backgrounds, with taking shelter in dreams as a technique to convey their messages. The psychological states of the poets at the time of composing the poems seem to have played an essential role in bringing about the poems in the way seen and studied here. Another related point is the antiquity of both people on their related lands which preceded the existence of the peoples who are ruling over them and this, undoubtedly, creates the feeling of betrayal and injustice that their nations are subjected to. Unfaithfulness, and the absence of the spirit of nationalism and patriotism at home is blatantly touched in the selected poems above which generated the extreme bitterness and obvious reaction of the poets seen in the studied texts. A further conclusion of the study is the realization that for any literature to be prodigious, it needs a sincere feeling of nationalism and a great nationality on its part can produce a wealthy literature.

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