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T.S. Eliot's Modern Style as Reflected in Sherko Bekas's Poem "A Fall Letter": A Comparative Study

Mariwan Hasan 

Department of English, University of Sulaimani, Sulaymaniyah, Iraq

ABSTRACT

This study endeavors to show analogous ideas in Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and Sherko Bekas's "A Fall Letter." Bekas, who was a good reader of English poetry, was greatly influenced by Eliot. He familiarized himself with English literature and follows it truly. For the idea for his poem, "A Fall of Letter" Bekas benefits from Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and uses it in composing his poem. Eliot's modern style has been revealed in his works as presenting complicated ideas through a simple language to reassure the modernity in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," as well as the modernity in "A Fall Letter." A sad and gloomy tone is seen in both poems – Eliot may be speaking to his soul or with a partner, but Bekas expresses the poem through apostrophe. The study culminates with an analytic comparison between the two poems: "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "A Fall Letter" in terms of their themes.

摘要:本文旨在论证艾略特的《J·阿尔弗雷德·普鲁弗洛克的情歌》与谢尔科·贝卡斯的《秋天的信》之间的相似之处。贝卡斯受到艾略特的影响。他熟悉了世界文学,成为了世界文学的真正追随者。在这种特殊的背景下,他借用了艾略特的《J·阿尔弗雷德·普鲁弗洛克的情歌》的思想,并将其用在了他的一首难忘的诗《秋天的信》中。它致力于描述T.S.艾略特的现代主义风格,通过简单的语言表达复杂的思想,以确认《J·阿尔弗雷德·普鲁弗洛克的情歌》中的现代性,以及《秋天的信》中的现代化。在这两首诗中都可以看到悲伤和忧郁的语气——艾略特可能在他的灵魂或伴侣说话,但贝卡斯通过省略符说出了这首诗。文章最后对《J·阿尔弗雷德·普鲁弗洛克的情歌》和《秋天的信》这两首诗的主题进行了分析比较。

KEYWORDS

Comparative literature; modern poetry, T.S. Eliot; cultural influence; Kurdish poetry & modern poetry

关键词

关键词:比较文学;现代诗歌;T.S.艾略特;文化影响;库尔德诗歌和现代诗歌

1. Introduction

This study endeavors to investigate the possible influence of English literature on the poetry of Sherko Bekas. The Kurdish poet, Sherko Bekas is looked at in thoughtfully moving literature of his nation toward a brand new direction. Bekas wrote a few poems under the influence of the works of T.S. Eliot, among them "A Fall Letter." This paper examines how Bekas was inspired by and used the ideas by borrowing the idea from

CONTACT Mariwan Hasan  mariwan152@live.com  Department of English, University of Sulaimani, Sulaymaniyah, Iraq

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T. S. Eliot's famous poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in composing his poem "A Fall Letter." Even though the two poets share different cultures, backgrounds, and languages, yet these two great figures' works reveal certain similarities. Looking at their poetic works, it is easily recognized that their poems are, if not slightly less, mutually concerned in certain common points.

Modernism is a particular era in England of art history. It is defined as a series of movements characterized by a radical change of intellectual upheaval at the beginning of the twentieth century, which is particularly seen in art and literature, especially after the First World War. Artistic figures who developed modernism were intellectuals who had questioned realities and the old-fashioned way of humans conceiving themselves (Abrams). Thornley and Roberts further elaborate and say that the history of English poetry in the twentieth century tends to support the frequent remark that poetry is essentially a private art form. Certainly, poets are often influenced by other poets and those who live through the same social and political events may well share a common outlook. However, eventually, each poet works as a private and separate person who makes his or her world from his own deep concerns (2008). Modernism is associated with some techniques and elements such as free verse, fragmentation, startling imagery, and epigraph, which are prominently displayed in Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (Nisar). A number of Kurdish poets were the vanguard of a new movement in Kurdish poetry in the 1970s. Bekas was a prominent member of the group, which introduced a new wave of modernity. He was introduced and exposed to poetry in early times of his age as his father was a well-known poet, which led his passion to grow for it. Moreover, the uneasiness of Bekas's life inspired him greatly to become a poet and reveal his bitterness through writing poetry. He participated and became an initiative leader of a literary movement known as *Rwanga*. (2013) which is a revolutionary movement in Kurdish poetry that emerged in 1970 by a considerable number of poets and modern writers who wrote a manifesto. They introduced radical changes in Kurdish poetry's material that were made under the presentation of the influence of schools of western art. Bekas was one of those poets who became the pioneer of that literary movement (Bakr). Reingard and Mirza discuss that traditional Kurdish poetry before the 1970s was prone to many laws, such as rhyme, in which obstacles impeded the free flow of thought. A poet had to give up several beautiful ideas and concepts only because they weren't going to rhyme. *Rwanga*, on the other hand, helps the poet to express his thoughts fully and transcend language barriers. Therefore, a radical shift in Kurdish poetry occurred (8).

2. Modernist literature

The employment of the term "modern," indeed, varies with the transition of time. However, it is often applied to the artistic works written in the former decades of the present century, to be exact, after World War I (1914–18). It is broadly used to indicate new and distinguishing characteristics in the subjects, forms, concepts, and styles of literature and the other arts (Abrams). Mariwan Barzinji in several of his works, has provided a clear definition to the term of modernism. He believes that modernism has started from France and spread to America and then the UK. The characteristics that mark modernist literature differ with the writer that adopts it, but many literary critics

agree that it carries the meaning of a deliberate and drastic break with many former traditional foundations not only of western art but also of western culture (Abrams).

3. Methods

Two poems have been selected to study on the basis of their thematic similarities. First, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T.S. Eliot and then, “The Fall Letter” by Bekas, have been chosen for this study and this study is a comparative study relying on the French school. This school believes that it is possible to make a comparative study if one author influences another author, time and place, as well as culture, not causing any issues for such studies. T. S. Eliot has influenced Sherko Bekas. This influence was reflected in “The Love song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” Eliot’s poem is considered to be a modern poem; whereas, Bekas’s poem is considered a contemporary poem. Although the language, the time and the culture of the two poems are different yet one can say that it is possible to conduct such research. A textual approach as well as an analytical approach along with the reader response approach have been used to show the similarities of the two poems along with a comparative approach (French school of comparative literature).

4. Modernism

There is not a specific date for the beginning of modernism. Besides, where it starts is not clear (Barzinji, *The image of modern man in T.S. Eliot’s poetry*). Some critics say that modernism is a specific period of art history that appeared in England. It is described as a collection of movements marked by a radical shift of intellectual upheaval in the early twentieth century evident in the art and literature, especially those of post-World War I. A shift in politics, science, philosophy, and ideology has substantially shaped modernism (Abrams). Important figures who formed modernism are intellectuals who had doubted and questioned certainties that used to support the traditional modes of social organizations, morality, religion, and also the old-fashioned way of humans conceiving themselves (Abrams). The literary historians specify the starting point of this literary revolt as far back as the 1890s. What is called modernism is signified by the unpredictable range and swiftness of change that came after World War I. The year 1922 itself was characterized by the coinciding arrival of such innovative works of modernists like James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, T.S. Eliot “The Wasteland,” Virginia Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room*, as well as many others (Abrams). The calamity of war resulted in the loss of faith in morality, coherence, and the enduringness of western society. Moreover, it raised uncertainty about the sufficiency of traditional literary modes, whether it denotes the grating and discordant actuality of aftermath (Abrams). Modernism is a revolution of reviving human consciousness with new motivations to break traditional ways of writing in both poetry and prose, on the one hand, and to extract the beauty of literature on the other hand. However, the influence of modernism on poetry is more obvious because of its closer relationship with the human spirit and emotions. Yet, modernism is not as easy as it is thought to be. It takes slow steps in normal situations and fast paces forward during intellectual and cultural movements. It motivates poets to seek for alternatives for old poetic forms by adopting new ones that harmonize with modern life. Kurdish

literature was never slow in function; therefore, it headed towards realism and folk, nationalism, patriotism, and politics. It is obvious from her lecture notes that the characteristics of modernism in Kurdish literature appeared in two major forms: structure and content. As for structure, pure Kurdish terminology, local rhyme and free verse are top aspects of Kurdish modernism, whereas content is a platform for self-expression, on the one hand, and hunger to overturn traditional modes on the other hand. Any revolution is accompanied by factors involved throughout the process. Likewise, Kurdish poetic modernism mainly reacted to elements inspired by poets from all around the world. Based on the references, the factors are either internal or external. In rare cases, both factors are involved in the process. Difficult times give birth to new experiences. That being said, the fall of the Ottoman Empire introduced a new environment to the Kurds to emphasize patriotism and ask for freedom. Luckily, this development was guided by the intellectual and Cultural Revolution. The second factor is related to opening schools and educational institutes in the Kurdish language. Certainly, this improved the Kurdish language in many ways. Numerous magazines and newspapers were issued in Kurdish such as *Zhyan* (1926–1938), *Zhin* (1939–1950), *Runaki* (1935–1936), and *Galawezh* (1939–1949). After the innovative revolution of Kurdish poetry that came about by Goran, Kurds have noticed no further change and started to notice a sort of weakness and a sense of no actual growth. This inactivity in Kurdish literature caused a conscious spark inside the hearts of Kurdish poets to bring about change and return liveliness to poetry. For this reason, the poets began to establish groups among themselves for each one to serve Kurdish poetry. The most notable among them were Kifri and Rwanga groups (Bakr). Whenever one speaks about Kurdish literature, especially literature before the 1980s, mentioning Rwanga (vision) movement is a must.

5. Rwanga (Vision)

Rwanga was an intellectual ground-breaking Kurdish poetry movement that came to light when a group of innovative, creative, rebellious poets like (Sherko Bekas, Hussain Aarf, Jalali Mirza Karim, Jamal Sharbajeri, and Kaka Mam Botani, Latef Halmat, Anwar Shakaly, and others), who were living in Baghdad decided to issue a manifesto in the late nineteen-sixties and early nineteenth-seventies. Unfortunately, after the revolutionary period initiated by the Kurdish modernist poet Goran (1904–1962), ever since, as stated earlier, the condition of poetry sounded frail. Hence, it demanded change (Bakr). Rwanga movement initiators aimed toward growth and globalization and to break out from the traditional restricted modes of Kurdish poetry. Poets of the group used the concept of globalization in their poetic works through translated English literature texts by adopting modern poetic elements in both structure and content. Nevertheless, their message signalled modernization and encouraged the young generations of that time to express their suppressed feelings and raise their words against the socio-political condition of Kurdistan (Bakr).

5.1. Comparative literature: The French school

Comparative literature in its modern meaning is crucial to the chronicle of literature and criticism as it reveals the trends of rational and artistic sources for the National Literature. Many scholars suggest that this sort of study can be considered as an output

of three main schools: the French, the American, and the Russian, which all help in the development of this discipline. Yet each has its own characteristics (Muhammad). The French school was the first trend to appear and the first to coin comparative literature as a theoretical field which later became an academic discipline established in Europe in the nineteenth century. It demonstrates the historical background of comparative literature that caused the start of a brand new discipline innovated in the late nineteenth century. This school was not only the first to emerge but it also paved the way for the other schools of comparative literature to follow, especially the American school (Ismail 3). François Goyard who is one of the leading pioneers of comparative literature defines it as “the history of international literary relations” or the science that chronicles foreign relations between literature,” indicates that it establishes boundaries on both the literary studied texts and the relation of influence as well. It is also concerned with terminology and differentiates among imitation, borrowing, reception, and influence. French theorists also differentiate between direct/indirect influences, literary/non-literary influences and positive/negative influences. All the boundaries established by the discipline of French schools have created a barrier for the comparative study of literature (Muhammad).

This school described comparative literature as a subdivision of literary study, which investigates interrelated features among a couple of lingual distinct literary texts. Usually, comparative studies of literature are connected to history and to an extent, one can say, relations between different nations share a sort of mutual footage. Building on Jane Marie Carré’s statement in his forward to Marius Francois Guyard’s book *La Litterature Comparée* that indicates “comparative literature is a branch of literary history, for it tackles the international spiritual affinities” (Enani). According to this school, the two literary works should follow certain strict rules; one of which is the historical connection. By all means, the two literary works that are being compared to each other in the process, one must share a mutual historical context proving one of them is influenced by the other. Thus, literary works belonging to different nations and languages that have some sort of similarities, cannot be compared to each other, unless they share a historical link which is recognized as the most crucial condition of the school. The study is done between two nationally different works and must be written in different languages. The French School divides the arts and culture of the nations into two parts; positive art and negative art, and connects the idea of the influence and influenced party to the state of colonialism and the relation of the colonial country to the colonialized one (Muhammad).

6. T. S Eliot’s Modern Style

Modernist literature is typically characterized by a radical break with literary subject structures, forms, ideas, and styles. In terms of meaning, the meaning of a poem has different interpretations for various readers. Thus, any poem cannot have a single and fixed meaning. Modernist poets have also infringed all recognized norms and defined past laws; old traditions have been demolished and new experiments are tested in the shape, stanza, rhythm, and such other technical devices of poetry (Sharma).

Eliot’s interest in poetry came to light in his early teenage life and this interest soon enough developed into writing. More or less, Eliot was encouraged clearly by his eloquent

mother who was immersed greatly in prophetic religious writings and was commonly interested in artistic works of imaginary thinkers as seers. As a matter of fact, Eliot's initial efforts and immersion into the world of literature, particularly poetry, were rather modest compared to her mother's poetic taste. He began his early poetic enthusiasm with Rudyard Kipling to Elizabethan dramatists along with the cavalier poets of England. His mother's religious encouragement is evident in some of Eliot's works displayed in the form of saints and martyrs but, of course, to an extent is less intense compared to his mother's poetic works (Cooper). At the start of the First World War, Eliot was destined to travel to England, which became the most fruitful event of his life. There he met with the socialable Ezra Pound. Their friendship lasted until the ending of his life. Due to Pound, Eliot met many important artistic figures in England. Later on, with the help of Pound, in July 1915 "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" was published (Cooper). Cooper states that Eliot's poetic style is unique compared to other modernists. His works reflect the conditions of life post-war which depict the devastating psychological condition of life as seen in "The Wasteland" that was written in a chaotic time. The poem is originally written through fragmentation (that later was put together and excised some parts by Pound) to convey the feelings of incoherence among the society after the First World War (64). The German philosopher Heidegger made a statement about the despoilment of language in modernity as an essential means for communication, saying that: Language, in general, is worn out and used up – an indispensable but masterless means of communication that may be used as one pleases, as inadvertent as a means of public transport, as a streetcar which everyone rides in. Everyone speaks and writes away in the language, without hindrance and above all without danger. Heidegger goes on saying that language has fallen dead in modern times and those who can revive the language are very little in number. Eliot soon recognized this duty as his own (qtd. in Cooper). The concept of rejuvenating language is seen in Eliot's early poems such as "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915) and "The Portrait of a Lady" (1915). Cooper verily put it nicely in words "The poems heightens our sense of inveterate languageness of experience." The usage of language in the poem is quite fascinating and the reader could immediately identify her or himself with it. The poem displays a seemingly endless conversation about the moon, music, and inability to communicate between the two lovers. The relation between the two is elaborated through the extended use of metaphor about the moon (2006). In his poems, especially in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "The Portrait of a Lady" Eliot digs down into the reader's psychological identity and lightens consciousness in the mind of the reader. Eliot uses stream of consciousness in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," which is simply the way a human's brain works when one sees, reads, or visualizes. It is a writing technique used by the twentieth-century writers to enhance a psychological effect within the poems. It shows the flow of thoughts of the characters in the poem and therefore, engages the reader with the anguish experiences, thoughts, and dilemmas of the character (Cooper).

6.1. *The manifesto of Kurdish contemporary poetry*

Literature as the reflection of life has to naturally adjust and, directly or indirectly, associate with the development of the world. With that being said, artistic works of any country are highly influenced by the era they were born in and have to, of course, be aligned with the socio-political state of that time (Hasan, *Rwanga movement and modern*

Kurdish poetry). The artistic movement of *Rwanga* is seen as one of the best outcomes of Kurdish modernist literature, particularly in poetry. The idea of modernism in Kurdish literature came to sight even before *Rwanga*; it actually started in the 1930s led by the poets Noori Shekh Salih, Abdulla Goran and others. The intention and desire of modernizing and bringing about change in poetry sprouted in the minds of some intellectual Kurdish poets who noticed a sort of inactiveness in the poetry of that era and were ready to bravely investigate the reason for the underdeveloped state of Kurdish poetry, take action, plan, and hopefully bring about change.

7. Discussion

The 20th-century poets observed that the era of composing classical poems was over. By all means, the classical elements used by Nali and his companions in their poems were expired. Also, the later generation poets were simply imitating and taking the same classical footsteps as the former poets perchance with different expressions and artistic styles but with the very identical and limited elements. The 20th-century poets did not claim the rejection of these classical poets, they simply felt that it was time to shake this still water with the wave of something new, namely, romanticism (Hasan, *Rwanga movement and modern Kurdish poetry*). This drastic change from classism to Romanticism was initiated by several revolutionists; Goran, Sheikh Nuri Sheikh Salih, and Rashid Najib that aimed to break rules that were set for poets when composing a poem because classical poets were subject to many poetic rules that limited their fantasy and prevented them from expressing themselves wholly due to strict rhythmical conditions set to be followed by classical poets, besides other boundaries of structure and content. The changes demanded the use of authentic Kurdish words in the Romantic poems and purifying the language of poetry from Arabic and Turkish (Hasan, *Rwanga movement and modern Kurdish poetry*). In the late 1950s and the beginning of the 1970s, many literary movements came to sight to spread the idea of modernism across the globe. These movements spread greatly in England, France, and Austria. Ahmad Shakali in the *Journal of Hawkari* says that a group of young modern aspirants published a manifesto in 1958 as an English voice on behalf of their fellow companions explicitly expressing the rejection of anything related to the past (qtd. in Hasan, *Rwanga movement and modern Kurdish poetry*). Unsurprisingly, the political state of the 1970s had a great role in developing and moving forward the artistic movement. As it is known, the political autonomy agreement of March 11, 1970, between Kurdish leaders and the Iraqi government paved the way for the poets to write and express themselves freely without fear through their writings for the sake of the Kurdish literature (Hasan, *Rwanga movement and modern Kurdish poetry*).

Another factor that contributed to the emergence of this artistic movement was the Kurdish poets obsessing over foreign literary works and poetry, especially the ones of Albert Camus, Collin Wilson, and Jean-Paul Sartre. The writers of *Rwanga* keened on their works. Hence, they wished and wanted the cultural intellectuality of Kurdish literature to reach the level of theirs (Hasan, *Rwanga movement and modern Kurdish poetry*).

Ever since the revolutionary effort of the innovative poet Goran, Kurdish literature has witnessed no further change and the poetry of that time was simply the imitation of

former existing forms of poetry and the reusing of the very same elements over and over again resulted in not only the boredom of 1970 poets but also the loss of audience. Assuredly, few efforts have been made and movements appeared in the hope of modernizing and altering the present state withal that could not make much difference. Therefore, Kurdish literature demanded a series of efforts for change. As Sherko Bekas in the journal of *Esta* stated, “the artistic condition of the sixtieth was like still water, but Rwanga somehow shook the water” (qtd. in Hasan, *Rwanga movement and modern Kurdish poetry*). By all means, this change would have been made through Rwanga or any other artistic orientation (Hasan, *Rwanga movement and modern Kurdish poetry*).

The Thematic Similarities between “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and “A Fall Letter”

Sherko Bekas was born and raised in Sulaymaniyah in Iraqi Kurdistan. Later, he spent most of his life in exile due to political matters. He is one of the most apparent artistic figures of Kurdish literature, particularly poetry. He contributed to different phases of the literature of the Kurdish language from classical, romantic, and eminently to the modern period. He was an innovative man of letters who, with his companions, stepped forward to introduce change into Kurdish poetry, because traditional ways of writing and composing poems were no longer suitable for the poets nor preferable for the audience of that time that manifested in the Rwanga literary movement (Hasan, *Rwanga movement and modern Kurdish poetry*). Moreover, Bekas was not only an expert in traditional authentic literature of the Kurdish language but was also acquainted with world literature. This experience of being familiar with universally popular written works made him become interested in reading famous writers’ works which were very famous and evoked the idea in him of borrowing modern poetic elements that were new for traditional Kurdish poetry to utilize in their writings as “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” had influenced him in composing “The Fall Letter.” Under the light of this discussion, we try to provide “A Fall Letter” with a thematic analysis. Additionally, the influential presence in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” over “A Fall Letter” is presented. The poem is about a character who writes “A Fall Letter” for originally a long lost lover or possibly a poem to bring either one of them back. This means the ability to compose poetry faded and therefore, it has been lost over time. Through this letter, the poet wants to express his need for regaining his ability for writing, again. Sherko Bekas writes in a seemingly autumn-like time of the year. He and autumn are very much alike; they both are sorrowful, pale, and lonely. The colorless and pale look of his face is caused by his parted and distant lover/poem. Throughout the poem, the reader senses the isolated psychological state of the poet. This isolation is similar to void empty streets covered in yellowish color. For this reason, he asks the lover/poem to have a walk in the sad, isolated, and colorless memories of his. Let us go then you and I; it is sunset and void streets wore a yellow sorrow waiting for our walk (“A Fall Letter” 1–4).

The autumnal image mixed with an evening time refers to the shortage of time: getting old. It illustrates that he has become old and does not have much time left. Autumn has become a mirror for him that witnesses the elderly image of his face. Consequently, Bekas has succeeded in presenting a wholesome picture of himself modernizing and hopefully giving, if not completely, a notable contemporary look garnished in a new style, content, and form. From this given point of view, under the influence of world literature and the universally preferable works of T. S. Eliot, Bekas penned one of his attractive poems; “A

Fall Letter” (1987) which he confirmed that Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” is aligned with fall and is drowned in a deep sorrowful state of mind. He wants to acquaint the readership with the time he was left alone by either lover/poem. Moreover, he shows the abandonment effect on his life. He says: a pale-colored evening in the mirror of this late autumn is like my face of seven years ago when you left me: My face was as pure and clear spring when your anger blew you became dust and polluted me! (“A Fall Letter” 5–13). The suggesting lines explain the reason for writing this letter; for forever retrieval. The poet asks either one of them to come back to him and never will leave him again. He compares their return to never-ending streets and sleepless nights.

Oh my flying poem
 come to fill the streets one by one
 the long streets like our sleepless nights are never ending.
 Come to embrace the gardens again
 of which its tree leaves are as
 my heart’s secrets full and dense
 uncountable and never-ending.
 Let us go then you and I
 Quite like dew on my eyelashes. (“A Fall Letter” 14–28)

He addresses the poem/lover one more time demanding a walk to make up with trees and rivers that he, too, abandoned after he was parted from his lover or desire of composing poetry. He compares the precious and colorful time with the sunlight, peacock, and rainbow in beauty, shininess, and colorfulness.

Let us go then you and I
 We are blamed a lot blames of the rivers that we pass by
 But did not visit their waves
 Blames of the trees that we pass by but did not visit their shades.
 We are blamed a lot let us go then you and I
 The sun is yet to climb another hill! (“A Fall Letter” 29–39)

As long as he is with his loved one, he would do anything to the extent of combining her with every possible beautiful color and light to make a queen out of her.

Sunset is now a canopy
 Canopy of houses’ windows and
 On the cupolas and trees.
 Now the sun between stars and waters
 Is like a round kindled peacock,
 A burning rainbow on water’s surface.
 Let us go then you and I
 I want to bring the canopy
 Of windows, domes, and trees
 And put it on your head
 I want you
 To be the purple queen
 Of sunset and I a burned word
 Of this meeting.
 Let us go then you and I
 I have a new collection
 With us walking
 I feed you its sweet words

I put yellow, red, and green letters
 In your hair and body
 And put blue sentence
 Around your neck. ("A Fall Letter" 40–62)

He closes the poem by informing the reader that his everlasting loneliness would not come to an end and that his dream of either one coming back would not come true. Hence, this keeps the poet in a tragic cycle of loneliness.

Let us go then you and I
 There sun has reached
 Its last hill
 It could make a sudden jump
 Into night's lap
 You did not come to go
 My poem reached night time.
 You did not come to go
 You did not come.
 You did not. Not. ("A Fall Letter" 63–74)

"A Fall Letter" explores several deep themes that are worth mentioning. Hence, the first theme we shall encounter in the poem is pessimism, which is usually described as a down-feeling mental state of human beings, "Feeling that bad things will happen and that something will not be successful; the tendency to have this feeling" ("Pessimism") where they anticipate negative outcomes of a desirable situation. The element of pessimism can be experienced not only by the poet who composed the poem but also by the recipient who reads it and roams between the words. The readership can identify itself with the poem, in this particular situation, through the elements of pessimism. During the time that the reader reads an "A Fall Letter," one instantly finds oneself in a depressive position. The astonishing act of selecting words such as pale, evening, sleepless, void streets, dust, gives a startling image and a wholesome effect of bleakness. The reader can most probably identify the pessimistic state of the overall setting that the poet describes from the first stanza when it goes on like:

Let us go then you and I
 It is sunset and void streets
 Wore a yellow sorrow
 Waiting for our walk,
 A pale coloured evening
 In the mirror of this late autumn
 Is like my face my face
 Of seven years ago

When you left me:

My face was as pure and clean spring
 When your anger blew
 You became dust
 And polluted me! ("A Fall Letter" 1–13)

The pessimistic mood of this poem is rather identical with that of Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." Although the first line of the first stanza of Eliot's poem

demonstrates a somewhat romantic visit with a loved one but the upcoming suggestive lines suggests a sorrowful and vague mood through the metaphors; “patient etherized upon a table,” “half-deserted streets,” “sawdust restaurants,” “tedious argument,” and “an overwhelming question.” The character known as Prufrock in the poem continues to offer a pessimistic view to the readers. His view of himself is negative; additionally, he is insecure about himself which results in his indecisiveness. Prufrock’s fear of rejection is evident in the later stanzas as it reads:

And indeed there will be time
 To wonder, “Do I dare?” and, “Do I
 dare?”
 Time to turn back and descend
 the stair,
 With a bald spot in the middle of my
 hair – (They will say: “How his hair is
 Growing thin!”)
 My morning coat, my collar mounting
 firmly to the chin,
 My necktie rich and modest,
 but asserted by a simple pin –
 (They will say: “But how his arms and legs
 are thin!”)
 Do I dare Disturb the universe? (“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” 37–46)

The matter of objectivity and subjectivity in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” is debatable. It is hotly controversial whether Prufrock, the character of the poem, represents Eliot himself or not. Prufrock exhibits a rather insecure emotional state of modern man. Therefore, he represents a modern man including Eliot himself. Needless to say, some might disagree looking at Eliot’s personal life in comparison with Prufrock. However, Sherko Bekas’s “A Fall Letter” is quite subjective; Bekas composed the poem while centering himself as the character of the poem. To prove this point, one can observe in “is like my face/my face of seven years ago” (7–8). Not only did he use the subjective pronoun “I,” but also the internal meaning of this line brings the reader, since the poem is composed in 1985, back to 1972 when he was exiled from his homeland due to political reasons. He makes an effort to tell his readers the agony he experienced when he was forced to leave his country. This concludes that Bekas is the speaker and character of his poem. Throughout the whole poem, he shares his emotional state of not being able to write for a long time, as in “Oh my flying poem” (“A Fall Letter” 16). This gives the readership eyesight of the addressee of the poem, which might be his skill of writing poetry; therefore, typical feelings of a revolutionist, poet, or even a common person is demonstrated when one loses the ability to continue one’s passion for a particular period due to psychological barriers in this case; separation from the motherland.

Sherko Bekas characterized the antiheroic attributes of a character. Abrams puts the definition of antihero nicely:

The chief person in modern novel or play is a character who is widely discrepant from that which we associate with the traditional protagonist or hero of serious literary work. Instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, power, or heroism, the antihero is pretty, ignominious, passive, ineffectual, or dishonest. (2011)

In “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” Prufrock is an anti-hero. Typically, we see heroes as heroic people who are continually throwing themselves into the riskiest conditions without caring about the consequences. But we reckon that Prufrock here is a man who is terrified by the very notion of entering a civilized people, especially women, the completely innocent elderly matrons who come and go, speaking of Michelangelo. Unlike a typical character, Prufrock is drowned in uncertainty, this was Hamlet too, but at least he did certain stuff to keep his focus from destroying Claudius, including, for example, sending his high school fellows Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their graves. The poem describes his failed efforts at winning over women and fitting in with the community. Prufrock is depicted as a quiet and nervous man whose behaviors and opinions are deeply damaged by disappointment and negative self-esteem. Because of fear of being rejected, he becomes indecisive, unable to confront in any given situation. He develops feelings of solitude and depression due to his continuous self-doubting personality, manifesting an anti-hero position (2016).

Similarly, the character in “A Fall Letter” displays antiheroic behavior through his low self-esteem and his pointless waiting. He lacks conventional heroic traits that are universally preferable. These attributes of an antihero are often found in modern man. “A Fall Letter” fits into the modernist category of literature since he was magnificently influenced by T.S Eliot’s works, particularly “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” Hence, the speaker of “A Fall Letter” is similar to Prufrock.

The characters in both poems are real examples of modern men who cannot lead their own lives, on one hand, Sherko Bekas continuously awaits his bygone lover/poem which has caused him to live a cyclic life of tragedy and hopelessness. His only dream is for it to come back one day before he is aged and too late. Additionally, Bekas has cut off his communication with trees, rivers, and orchards because of his tragic abandonment. Additionally, he demands the lover/poem to come back and hopefully reconcile with them. So, he, as a modern man, is unable to communicate and fit into society. On the other hand, Prufrock is in a perpetual predicament because of the mistreating environment around him. This debilitating interference leads to total alienation from the community as they try to run away the acerbic truth by covering themselves, as a consequence of that isolation, anger, and confusion that are now the characteristics of modern inhabitants. To be able to be accepted by others and join a community, man has to be as close as possible to them but he is incommunicable, unconscious to what to say, nevertheless, the people around him are also isolated and withdrawn which makes the communication more difficult for them (Hussein, “T.S Eliot’s Construction of Prufrock as a prototypical modern hero in “the love song of J. Alfred Prufrock”).

8. Conclusions

Judged from the previous discussion and available literary evidence, we have come to the conclusion that in the late 1950s and the beginning of the 1970s, many literary movements appeared for the cause of spreading the concept of modernism across the globe. Soon enough, the idea reached Iraqi Kurdistan, and several young Kurdish writers seized the opportunity to bring about change in Kurdish literature. The Kurdish contemporary poetry embraced this transformation, and some modernist movements launched; the most widely known was Rwanga. Sherko Bekas was among those writers who published

their works in the name of Rwanga; he was familiarized with world literature and made an effort to borrow artistic elements that were new to Kurdish literature; namely, poetry, to utilize it in his poetic works. He was astonished by universally preferable poets like T.S. Eliot. Sherko Bekas penned his marvelous poem “A Fall Letter” inspired by T.S. Eliot’s incredible poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” The central themes of both poems are identical. Needless to say, the two poems share a pessimistic mood combined with a brilliant selection of words that help the reader to feel the intense emotions of the poets, and both parties represent a modern man trapped in his negative mentality in an industrialized world of today that is too busy to work rather than communicate, care, and share. The speaker of “A Fall Letter” is frustrated by his lover or poem that abandoned him. At the same time, Prufrock is caught up in his world of insecurity and inability to act and decide. Thus, the two speakers of the poem manifest an antiheroic attribute of a modern man. In the final analysis, although the poet was not an English speaker, the writers of world literature still influenced him notably, and he made an effort to show us he was a real observer of the literature of the world. He was also a great preserver of poets’ rights displayed by him referencing that he was benefited by and imitated T.S. Eliot’s work. Sherko Bekas in his own beautiful way imitated T.S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” Hence, he introduced the Kurdish audience to world literature and created a magnificent combination of both.

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ORCID

Mariwan Hasan  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7768-889X>

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