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Original Research Article

An Adaptation-Based Study of the Influence of Ahmad Khani's Epic "Mem û Zîn" on Kurdish Drama in Comparative Literature*

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Abstract

Problem statement: A large number of dramas that have been created, published, or performed in the Kurdish language are rooted in stories, legends, and epics previously produced by Kurdish writers and poets. Among these, playwrights have paid more attention to some of the works. The epic "Mem û Zîn" is one of these works, based on which a noteworthy number of dramas and other literary and artistic genres have been created. This work is the first long epic written in the Kurdish language, which Ahmad Khani composed in the second half of the 17th century AD.

Research objective: This article examined the various influences of this epic on Kurdish drama using Linda Hutcheon's theories on adaptation and its types, and it aimed to answer the main question of how the epic "Mem û Zîn" has influenced Kurdish playwriting, and to identify the similarities and differences between the works that are derivative of it, as well as among themselves.

Research method: The research method in this article was descriptive-analytical, based on adaptation and its types from Linda Hutcheon's perspective; and existing library resources in this field, and the epic "Mem û Zîn" itself and two derivative dramas "Mem û Zîn" by Pirmard and "Mem û Zîn" by Rasul Bangin were used to answer the posed research question.

Conclusion: The findings of this research indicate that the epic "Mem û Zîn" has been a popular source for the creation of Kurdish dramas. Kurdish playwrights, while incorporating significant similarities in their works based on this epic, have also included their unique viewpoints, transforming the epic into a performable play from various perspectives.

Keywords: "Mem û Zîn", comparative studies of adaptation, Kurdish drama, Ahmad Khani.

Introduction and Problem Statement

The use of stories, legends, myths, and narrative epics, and the adaptation of these sources to create new literary and artistic genres such as drama, feature films (cinema), animation, visual arts, music, etc., is a common and popular practice among writers in countries around the world. Adaptation, especially in world cinema, has a long history, and a number

of the most prominent films in the history of world cinema have been prepared and produced based on this approach. For example, the following films can be mentioned:

"Blindness", directed by Fernando Meirelles, adapted from the novel "Blindness" by José Saramago; 1984 directed by Michael Radford, based on the novel of the same title by George Orwell (1949/2012); and "The

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Woman in Black”, directed by James Watkins, based on the novel of the same name by Susan Hill.

In Iran as well, many literary works, both in verse and in prose, have been adapted and have attracted the attention of filmmakers, leading to the production of numerous films based on them. Among these, the following films can be mentioned:

“Golden Dreams”, directed by Mo`ezzeddin Fekri, 1330 (1951), adapted from the play “One day in the life of Shah Abbas, Mistake”, directed by Mansour Mobini, 1332 (1953), adapted from a story by Andre Maurois– “The Slip”, directed by Mehdi Raees Firouz, 1332 (1953), adapted from the novel of “The Lady of the Kamelia”– “Legend of the North”, directed by Ebrahim Bagheri, 1338 (1959), adapted from Fyodor Dostoevsky’s novel “the Humiliated and the Insulted”.

Drama works have also been created and presented based on classical and contemporary literary works in Iran and other countries around the world. Also, a considerable number of plays in Iran have been created based on major works such as Ferdowsi’s “Shahnameh”, as well as various narrative poems and both contemporary Iranian and non-Iranian literary works. Some of these adaptations include:

“Decline” (Ofoul), written by Akbar Radi, based on “An Enemy of the People” by Henrik Ibsen; “Mahan Koushyar”, written by Reza Ghasemi, based on the story of Mahan Koushyar the Egyptian in “Haft Gonbad” (seven domes) by Nezami Ganjavi, the original adaptation and the story of “Chegel Mah” in One “Thousand and One Nights”, and a story in Sang-e Ayar by Faramarz Ibn Khodadad Arjani; “Facts About a Dead Fish” by Mohammad Charmshir, from the film “Bonnie and Clyde” by Arthur Penn; “The Legend of Mardoush” written by Manouchehr Akbarloo, based on the story of Zakhak from the Shahnameh; the puppet opera “Rostam and Sohrab” and the performance “Haft Khan-e Rostam” (The Seven Labors of Rostam) directed by Behrouz Gharibpour from the “Shahnameh”; “three storytelling (Aži Dahak, Arash, and Karnameh-ye Bandar-e Bidakhsh)” and “The Killing of Sohrab”, by Bahram Beyzayi, based on stories of “Shahnameh”; “The King and the Handmaiden” by Sakineh Ahmadian, based on a

narrative from Rumi’s “Masnavi-ye Ma`navi”; “Garden of Gnosis”, the life of Sohrab Sepehri, directed by Pari Saberi, based on the poetry of Attar.

It may also refer to the plays of non-Iranian playwrights such as Bertolt Brecht, several of which were created based on ancient Eastern stories. There are plays in the Kurdish language that have been created through adaptation from other literary works. One of the great and valuable poetic epics that has served as the basis for the creation of many performing arts in the Kurdish language is the epic “Mem û Zîn” by Ahmad Khani. Mem, the protagonist of the epic, holds an eminent position in Kurdish culture. More than three hundred years after its composition, the creation of dozens of plays, films, hypertexts, and its frequent use in various poems and stories have turned him into a symbol of love among the Kurdish people.

The process of adaptation in the production and creation of literary works plays an important role in familiarizing contemporary generations with works that employ forms and structures that may no longer be novel today. An adaptive approach makes it possible to evaluate the structure and content of the adapted work and to identify its points of similarity and divergence. Therefore, attention can be given to the changes and transformations resulting from the process of adaptation, alongside the themes that are emphasized in the new work, and the extent of the author’s fidelity or infidelity to the source text can be assessed.

Research Questions

What similarities and differences exist between the adapted text and the source text?

What changes and transformations have been made in the adapted works to achieve a dramatic treatment of the source text?

What interpretations of the gaps within the original text are presented in the adapted texts?

Research Hypothesis

The main hypothesis of the article is based on the lack of fidelity to the source text and on the extent of the influence of Ahmad Khani’s epic on adapted dramas and on

Kurdish playwriting, examined through the framework of adaptation and its types as proposed by Linda Hutcheon.

Research Method

The research method in this article is descriptive-analytical. Library sources in the field of comparative literature and the adaptation approach were consulted, along with an examination of the epic itself and the dramas influenced by it, to address the research question.

Research Background

• Comparative literature

Since around the 19th century, when comparative literature began to receive attention as an academic field, numerous books and articles have been written on this subject, and a number of them have also been translated into Persian. In addition, some Iranian scholars have authored books and articles in this field. The following works can be mentioned:

The book "Initiation à la littérature comparée"; Criticism and Perspectives, written by Ilmira Dadvar (2022); in this book, the author attempts to present a comprehensive definition of comparative literature and discuss its various approaches in chapters such as the history of comparative literature, adaptation, intertextuality and comparative literature, epic, myth and archetype, translation and comparative literature, comparative literature and the arts, comparative literature and colonial and postcolonial criticism, and comparative literature, travelogues and iconography.

Francois Jost (1974/2023), in his book "Introduction to comparative literature", provides his audience with a complete and comprehensive picture of comparative literature. Questions have been added to the end of each chapter in the Persian translation, which, along with the teaching guide, make the book more useful for Iranian instructors and students and can serve as a source of inspiration for new and systematic research in this field. This book opens new horizons for research in the field of comparative literature in Iran and offers scientific responses to many of the questions posed by Iranian researchers in this area.

"Comparative literary studies; an introduction" by

Siegbert Salomon Praver (1974/2014) is another valuable book that has been translated into Persian in this field. This book is considered one of the most authoritative classic textbooks in prestigious universities around the world. The basis of the book is based on this principle that national literature cannot be properly understood without knowledge of the literatures of other nations. Praver explains the theories and research methods in comparative literature in ten chapters, illustrating each with explicit examples. He begins his book with a discussion of literary influence and similarity, and with scholarly precision guides the reader toward the newer domains of comparative literature, including translation and adaptation, themes and archetypes, genres, classes and periods, structure, configuration, and literary criticism.

• Adaptation

Many scholars, writers, and artists have regarded adaptation as one of the approaches in comparative literature. In addition to Linda Hutcheon's book (2006/2021) "A Theory of Adaptation", which forms the theoretical basis of this article, several other books and articles have been written and published in this field. Among these works, cinematic adaptation constitutes the largest share (volume). Some of these publications are as follows:

Fredric Sabouraud (2016), in his book "Adaptation in Cinema", focuses on the subject of cinematic adaptation. From his perspective, adaptation is a form of interpretation in which the film director takes inspiration from a literary work to produce a cinematic one.

Another work that can be mentioned is Mazda Moradabbasi's (2017) book "Memoir-Writing on the Magic Screen: Recognizing Cinema's Adaptation of Fictional Literature". In the book's brief preface, the author describes the work as the product of a cultural initiative (cultural movement) that emerged within the Adaptation Working Group of the Fictional Literature Foundation, which has sought to highlight the influence of narrative literature on the production of cinematic works and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the relationship formed between the two media.

With regard to adaptation in theatre, it is also possible to mention Frances Babbage's book (Babbage, 2017) "Adaptation in contemporary theatre: performing

literature”, which has unfortunately not yet been translated into Persian. In this book, Babbage addresses the subject of adaptation in contemporary theatre and offers examples of the transformation of literary texts into drama.

The articles that have addressed the subject of adaptation and drama are as follows:

The intersemiotic translation articles: “From Ancient (Classical) Literature to Contemporary Performance” by Leila Nik Nasab (2024); “The Metamorphosis of a Greek Myth through Two Poetic Adaptations by Shakespeare and Iraj Mirza: A Study from the Perspective of André Lefevere’s Translation Strategies” by Abolfazl Horri (2024); “Imagination in Adaptive Integration for Radio Drama” by Enali et al. (2017); “The Challenge of Form and Content in Dramatic Adaptation of Iranian Composite Novel; With a Focus on Two Selected Fictional Narratives (the Fog and the Low Tide and Summer of the Same Year)” by Paidarnobakht & Yousefian Kenari (2022); “Dramatic Capabilities of Historical Tales: A Case Study of the Tales of Sultan Mahmud” by Elaheh Attarodi (2021); “Assessing the Dramatic Potentialities for Play Adaptation, Case Study: “The Pious Woman” in Attar’s *Ilāhī-Nāma*” by Hossein Aghahosseini et al. (2015); “A Study on the Capacity and the Methods of Dramatic Adaptation of the Tales in Bokhala” by Ruhullah Nasiri et al. (2013).

• **Mem û Zîn Epic**

Ahmad, son of Sheikh Ilyas, known by his pen name Khani, was born in 1650 in the village of Khan near the city of Bayezid in the province of Hakkari, located in present-day Turkey, and died in 1707. In addition to Kurdish, Ahmad Khani was also familiar with Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. His Kurdish works include “Aqida Kurdi” (The Kurdish Creed) and “the dictionary Nubahar” (New Spring). However, his most significant work is “Mem û Zîn”, a Masnavi (poetic form in rhyming couplets) composed of 2650 verses in Kurmanji dialect (one of the two main dialects of the Kurdish language). Across the Kurdish regions, Khani is known as a spiritual figure, a nationalist intellectual, a pioneering philosopher, and an insightful writer. Among Khani’s works, this epic poem is the best known and the most extensively studied, and it has inspired many creators across a wide range of

fields – from poetry and novels to theatre, cinema, and politics. Due to space limitations of this article, only a few notable adaptations in the performing arts are mentioned here.

In the field of the performing arts, several works have been produced based on this epic poem (Masnavi). In cinema, however, due to logistical and technical reasons, no particularly significant work has been created to date, and the existing adaptations have been produced within the formats of feature films and television series. In this regard, examples include the film “Mem û Zîn”, directed by Omid Ilchi in 1992 in Turkey, and the television series “Mem Alan”, produced by Hossein Mesri in 2000 in Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Ilchi’s film presents a faithful narrative of Khani’s epic poem, with the exception that in this adaptation, Zîn commits suicide. The 30-episode series directed by Hossein Mesri, based on the legend of Mem Alan and following the same storyline, offers a faithful adaptation of this tale.

In the field of animation, only one work titled “Mem û Zîn”, produced by Fardin Zarei in 2021 in Sanandaj, can be identified. The author’s effort to obtain further information about this work has so far been unsuccessful, and the present reference is therefore limited to a report published on the website Aparat.com: this animation was produced in a three-dimensional format by an animation team known as Khat-e Tolid (Production Line).

The “Mem û Zîn” epic and “Mem Alan” legend are widely represented in Kurdish dramatic literature and theatre. The play “Mem Alan”, written by Abdulrahim Rahmi Hakkari in 1919 in Istanbul, Turkey, was initially published in two consecutive editions of the newspaper “Zîn”, and subsequently performed on stage (Pirbal, 2001, 47). This work is considered the first written Kurdish drama. It resembles the “Mem û Zîn” epic poem only in the title of the play, the character of its hero “Mem”, and its tragic ending.

In this drama, Mem is portrayed as a warrior under the command of Salaheddin Ayubbi, who goes to battle against the infidels and returns after a year, and spends the night with his wife. Mem’s mother sees a stranger in her daughter-in-law’s bed and kills Mem with a dagger. In 1932, Tofiq Mahmud Hamzeh, known as Pirmard

(Oldman) (1968), serialized his play “Mem û Zîn” in the Jîyan newspaper (Life), and in 1935, the play was performed on stage by Komele Zanisti (Scientific Association) in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq (ibid, 76). Recognized as the first dramatic text written in the Sorani dialect in the city of Sulaymaniyah, this play, while preserving the framework of Khani’s Masnavi, addresses issues of patriarchal society and violence against women. In 1958, Amin Mirza Karim wrote a play titled “Mem û Zîn”. In 1975, Talaat Saman wrote another play with the same title, which was staged in the same year under his own direction in Erbil, Iraq. In this play, Mem is introduced as a man from the Ardalan principality who travels to the principality of Botan and meets Zîn. In 1979, Ibrahim Salman published the play *Lebûk: the story of “Mem û Zîn” De Wotret (The Bride: A Narrative of the Story of Mem û Zîn)* in Baghdad through Nabil Publications (Porchak, 2021).

In 1990, a group of Kurdish students and workers founded the “Botan” Theatre Group. In 1991, they staged “Mem û Zîn”, written by Asghar Booyink, in Cologne. In 1994, Shwan Jaafar staged “Mem û Zîn”, which he had translated into French. In 2011, Fathi Karakçili directed “Mem û Zîn”, which became the first Kurdish musical play to be staged at the “Isabel Bader Theatre” in Toronto, Canada. The performance included twenty dancers from eleven different cultures and distinct dance styles, combining Kurdish and non-Kurdish forms of dance (national dance, contemporary dance, and ballet) (Jost, 1974/2023, 75).

Salah Mohammadi wrote the play “Karvankujeh” (The Morning Star) in 2011. In this play, “Mem û Zîn” are actors who escape from the Emirate of Ardalan to the Emirate of Baban, and due to Bekir’s conspiracy, are executed on charges of espionage. Mohammadi subsequently wrote the play “Jân” (Labor Pain) in 2003. The author of this play focuses on class and ethnic differences and portrays Zayn al-Din, the governor of the Botan Principality, and Tajdîn, the commander of the army, as figures of Arab descent. Contrary to the popular belief that regards Tajdîn as a symbol of friendship, the playwright depicts him as disloyal and a traitor to Mem. Mem is ultimately killed

by Tajdîn under the Emir’s command, who considers the love between Mem and Zîn unworthy for himself and his lineage.

In 2011, Khaled Khaki created a free adaptation of this epic poem with the play “Pejarekanî Xatû Zîn” (The Melancholies of Zîn). He turns his attention to Tajdîn and argues that injustice has been done to him, and the issue of his palace burning deserves more careful and detailed analysis and examination. Rasul Bangin (2024) performed the play “Mem û Zîn” at the Saqqez Kurdish Theatre Festival in 2024. The play “Mem û Zîn”, written by Mirza Matin with an adaptation from the Mem Alan legend from Turkish Kurdistan in 2020, was performed in Saqqez with a selected version of the Mem Alan legend in a narrative format.

These examples represent some literary and artistic adaptations of this epic poem and indicate the significance it has maintained for more than three centuries. A significance that this article also seeks to address. Several articles and books have also been published in the Kurdish language, which collectively demonstrate the capabilities of Khani’s epic. However, to date, no research has been conducted on dramatic adaptations of this epic and its role in Kurdish playwriting. This article can be a starting point for this important work in Kurdish theatre and drama in Iran.

The Study’s Theoretical Framework

• Comparative literature

Comparative Literature, as one of the new disciplines and epistemologies of contemporary humanity, is an important branch of literary studies that examines the relationships between texts, traditions, and literary movements across different cultures and languages. This discipline seeks to discover the similarities, differences, mutual influences, and interactions among the literatures of different nations. Comparative literature engages in a translingual and transnational study of literature, and instead of being confined to a specific culture, it focuses on comparing literary works within different cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts. In this field, issues such as influence and adaptation, analogies without direct connection, translation and cultural transfer, and the relationship

between literature and various artistic movements and disciplines are investigated (Remak, 1961/2012).

The emergence of comparative literature as an academic discipline began in France in 1828 with Abel-François Villemain (one of the pioneers of this field), and was later continued by Jean-Jacques Ampère (Mohseninia, 2014, 45). However, its origins can be traced back to ancient Greece and Rome. Plato and Aristotle can be considered among the earliest thinkers who have paid attention to this subject. Plato, with his distinction between narrative and imitative adaptations, and then Aristotle, with his explanation of the differences between tragedy and comedy, can be considered among the first individuals who paid attention to this field of study, albeit not with today's intention and purpose. Quintus Horatius Flaccus was also among the first to compare dramatic literature between Rome and Greece. Comparative literature continued in the Middle Ages with the comparison of religious texts in different religions, and in the Renaissance with the translation and adaptation of classical texts (Ghandeharion & Anushiravani, 2013).

The emergence of this discipline in France led to the formation of a branch known as "French class", which emphasized the study of historical influences and direct relationships between texts. It subsequently gained popularity in other European countries such as England and Germany, where Goethe introduced the concept of "World Literature".

This discipline gained further prominence in America through the emergence of theorists and critics such as René Wellek and Austin Warren, giving rise to the "American Class", which adapted a more structuralist and expansive approach to comparative literature. Over time, subfields such as postcolonial comparative literature were incorporated into this discipline by figures like Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, exploring the relations of power and colonial discourses in literature. Today, this discipline has expanded through interdisciplinary approaches, translation theory, cultural studies, and postcolonialism, and continues to develop as a dynamic and interdisciplinary domain of research. With the globalization and digitalization of literature, new areas such as machine translation studies and digital literature have also entered

this field. Comparative literature, as a bridge between cultures and the literatures of different nations, plays an important role in the global understanding of literature (Attarzadeh & Khalilizadeh Ganjalikhani, 2014).

The principal classes in this field are French and American classes, each of which follows a different approach to comparative study. Although other classes also emerged in countries such as Germany and Russia, their intellectual sources largely derived from one of these two classes or from a combination of both. Comparative literature refers to a method that is generally used in literary studies, which, through a new approach, serves as a means to achieve a higher goal, which examines the similarities and differences among literary works. What is considered in a comparative study is not merely the role of a literary work itself, but rather the discovery of the quality, manifestation, and reflection through which that work appears in the literature of another nation, or within the works of a single nation where it has consciously or unconsciously exerted influence across various literary genres. Comparative literature not only seeks this connection and the establishment of a dialogue with other humanities (Human Science) disciplines, but also endeavors to promote mutual understanding among different cultures.

• **Comparative literary studies from an adaptation perspective**

The term "adaptation" signifies the act of acquiring and deriving ideas and knowledge from a source. In a broader sense, it refers to the process of transformation and adaptation of an artistic work from one specific form or medium into another. In this sense, literary adaptation can be considered as taking the idea of a literary work and using it in another work. This process involves the recreation of the story and characters in a format suitable for the new medium, while its primary goal is to preserve the spirit and essence of the original work. Adaptation is a creative and complex process that requires a balance between fidelity to the original work and innovation within the new medium. This work facilitates a broader recognition and introduction of literary and artistic works among new audiences and provides creative opportunities for artists to produce new and exciting narratives.

Linda Hutcheon (Hutcheon, 2006/2021) is a postmodern theorist and the author of “A Theory of Adaptation” in this field. She examines the pervasive nature of adaptation across various forms of media and argues that adaptation can be found everywhere today: television and the cinema screen, theatre and films or musical performances, the internet, novels and comic books, amusement parks and video games. Adaptation has always been a primary mode of storytelling and deserves to be studied in all its forms. It encompasses a wide spectrum, both as a process of creation and reception and as a product in its own right (ibid., 14). Hutcheon’s theory on adaptation is a well-reasoned, illuminating, bold rethinking of how adaptation operates across media types and genres.

Hutcheon argues that adaptation is not merely the transfer of content from one medium to another; rather, it is a creative and interpretive process that produces a new text with an independent identity. In her view, adaptations are not repetitions, but critical re-creations of the original works. Accordingly, she regards adaptation as a “process” rather than a “product”. She emphasizes that adaptation is a dynamic activity that constantly redefines the relationship between the original text and the new work. She opposes the fidelity theory that adaptation must be identical to the original text. Classical theorists regard faithful adaptation as the primary criterion of adaptation and consider any deviation from it as a form of plagiarism. Hutcheon, in contrast to this view, agrees with Umberto Eco, the Italian philosopher and semiotician, that literary adaptation is not an act of copying, but rather a kind of creative interpretation of the original text (Ghandeharion & Anushiravani, 2013).

Eco (2003), using theories of semiotics and hermeneutics, explains that each medium (cinema, theatre, etc.) has its own specific language, and adaptation is an intermedial translation that inevitably brings about changes. She considers adaptation as translation plus recreation and believes that just as linguistic translation is not exactly equivalent to the text in the original language, adaptation also cannot be identical to the original work. Hutcheon (2006/2021, 24) introduces three key aspects for the analysis of adaptation “transposition, commentary, and analogue), which align with Deborah

Cartmell’s view. From the first perspective, adaptation as the formal entity or product refers to the explicit and extensive transposition of a specific work or set of works. From the second perspective, the act of adaptation, as a process of creation, always involves re-commentary (reinterpretation) and recreation. From the third perspective, adaptation as reception or analogue is a form of intertextuality. In summary, adaptation can be described as the overt transposition of a recognizable work or other works, a creative and interpretive act of appropriation or salvaging of a work, and an extensive intertextual engagement with the adapted work. As an example, it can refer to the feature film “Romeo and Juliet”, directed by Baz Luhrmann (2013). This version presents a distinctive atmosphere of the story by combining classical and modern elements, ranging from modern costumes and weapons to dialogue that remains faithful to Shakespeare’s text. The love of Romeo and Juliet, portrayed with complete purity and passion, symbolizes an attempt to escape social constraints and prejudices; nevertheless, their tragic fate reveals that love, even in its most beautiful form, can become a victim of the merciless world around it (Behnam, 2021). Hutcheon’s (2006/2021, 24) theory about “changing and commentary” follows that every adaptation inevitably involves transformation and modification of the source text. In this respect, while observing what has been identified through the recognition of the source text, particular focus should be placed on how the core ideas and fundamental concepts of the original work are transmitted, in such a way that the main idea can be updated to engage new audiences. Like imitation in classical art, adaptation is not a form of blind copying; rather, it is a process of appropriating the content of the adapted work. An example of transformation and commentary of a source text can be found in Shakespeare’s play “The Tempest” and Aime Cesaire’s adaptation, which, through a new transformation and commentary approach, links the work to colonial relations in the contemporary world.

Aime Cesaire employs the same characters used by Shakespeare (1623/1978) and places them in a similar situation; however, by shifting the timeframe, historicizing the text, and emphasizing racial differences, he turns the

focus on a land whose people insist on the essence of humanity, and they strive to maintain their independence, freedom, and existing way of life free from the intrigues and deceptions of modern powers. The same ideals that modernity proclaims. In this adaptation, Prospero is portrayed not as an artist or a thinker, but rather as a symbol of modern thought that considers anything unlike itself to be outdated and harmful. A concept that Césaire (1962/2002) expresses explicitly through the words “colony” and “freedom”, voiced by the wise Gonzalo. The domination of virgin and wild lands inhabited by peoples regarded as equally primitive and savage. A land whose value is recognized by the European/White men, while its inhabitants are perceived merely as savage, barbaric, and black people who are considered to have no worth beyond servitude, the wealth production, and the provision of pleasure for modern European whites.

Analogue, as the third key aspect of adaptation, functions as a complement to the other two dimensions. According to Hutcheon (Hutcheon, 2006/2021), an adaptation should be approached and analyzed as an independent work, rather than being assessed merely in comparison with the source text. In other words, the adapted text, while acknowledging the source text, generates a new and creative work by introducing transformations and distancing itself from it, thereby activating the audience’s awareness.

In this approach, specific elements of the source text are foregrounded, and a correspondence is created between the elements of the original and those of the adapted work. Adaptation is a dialogic and evolving process whereby a previously known work enters into comparison with the work we are currently encountering. For example, this can be illustrated by Arthur Miller’s (1949/2012) play “Death of a Salesman” and Asghar Farhadi’s film “The Salesman”. Miller’s drama resides in the background of the film’s narrative, situated within a distinct spatiotemporal context; nevertheless, the relations and events in the film serve to connect the corresponding elements across both works. Willy Loman’s house is little more than a shack overshadowed by surrounding skyscrapers, and Emad’s apartment is likewise on the verge of collapse as the adjacent lot is being excavated for

the construction of a high-rise complex. Willy is an aging man unable to fulfill his aspirations within the capitalist system, and Emad likewise finds himself incapable of conveying existential ideas and humanistic philosophies to today’s young generation in the face of modernity’s attractions. Charley, Willy’s neighbor and almost a family member, tries to help him, yet his efforts ultimately have the opposite effect. Likewise, Babak, Emad’s colleague in the theatre, assists him by arranging a rented apartment, but his support leads to an adverse result.

Although it is not necessary for all three aspects to be taken into account in the analysis of an adaptation, the convergence and integration of these key aspects can elevate the adapted work into a remarkable artistic work.

Mem û Zîn: A Kurdish Romantic Epic

• Plot summary

In the Kurdish-inhabited city of Cizre, a district of Botan province, Stî and Zîn -the sisters of Emir Zayn al-Din – go among people celebrating Nowruz, disguised in masculine attire. At the same time, two friends named Tajdîn and Mem attend the festivities in female disguise, wearing women’s clothing and makeup. The boys disguised as women and the girls dressed as boys¹ spend several affectionate hours together, and as the day comes to an end, they exchange their rings as well (In female disguise, boys and in male disguise, girls). The next day, the girls’ nursemaid begins the search prompted by their persistent pleas. The girls believe that they have fallen in love with other girls. The old woman (the nursemaid) becomes worried that the girls have fallen in love with other girls, considering it contrary to social norms and merely a product of delusion and imagination. With the guidance of an old talisman-maker, the nursemaid eventually finds the boys and manages to retrieve Stî’s ring from Tajdîn; however, Mem refuses to return it. Tajdîn subsequently goes to ask for Stî’s hand in marriage, and they are married, while Mem takes no such action.

Another spring arrives, and the emir orders all the men of the city to accompany him on the hunt. Mem, pretending to be ill, stays home and then enters Emir’s garden, where he sees Zîn. In a rare moment of solitude, the two lovers are overwhelmed and lose all awareness of themselves.

The emir and his attendants return from the hunt and enter the garden. Mem is forced to hide Zîn and confront the emir alone, having to justify his intrusion (his unauthorized presence). Tajdîn, aware of Zîn's concealment, sets his own house on fire to distract the emir and the people, thereby allowing Mem to escape the predicament. Bekir, the emir's advisor, suggests that Tajdîn's role in arranging Zîn's meeting with Mem and approving their marriage stems from his concealed desire to position himself as the emir's successor. The emir agrees to Bekir's proposal for a chess contest with Mem, on the condition that the winner shall be granted any request he makes. The emir wins and asks Mem to name the woman he loves so that the emir may arrange the marriage for him. Mem, in a tender and poetic description, declares Zîn as his beloved. The emir, angered by this perceived insolence, issues Mem's arrest and imprisonment.

Following a year of Mem's imprisonment, the emir consents to Bekir's treacherous plan to eliminate Mem by poisoning his food. The emir then endeavors to appease Zîn and orders Mem's release. Zîn goes to visit Mem, but he refuses the emir's pardon, entrusts her with the divine promise of the lovers' eternal union, and dies. Tajdîn kills Bekir. Overwhelmed by grief, Zîn also passes away and is buried beside Mem.

• **Mem û Zîn in Kurdish playwriting**

In the literature review, several dramatic adaptations of this epic were noted. In this section, two dramas selected from the works written on the basis of "Mem û Zîn" are examined in order to investigate the influence, thematic and structural similarities and differences between these adaptations and the original narrative. In this process, the major characters of the epic and the key events influencing the progression of the original narrative are first introduced and are then analyzed and examined within the chosen dramatic works. The selected dramas are as follows: "Mem û Zîn", written by Pirmard (1968), and "Mem û Zîn", written by Rasul Bangin (2024). As these dramas are written on the basis of Khani's epic, a summary of their plots is omitted due to the limited scope of the article. The reason for selecting these two adaptations is the availability of their printed versions.

• **Characters and transformations in the adapted dramas**

Mem is a young Kurdish man, the son of the court scribe, and one of Emir Zayn al-Din's soldiers. He maintains a close and sincere friendship with Tajdîn. He falls in love with Zîn, but he does not regard himself as worthy of marriage with her social class. As a result of Bekir's deceit and the disclosure of his love to the emir, Mem is imprisoned and eventually dies there. Mem meets Zîn at the beginning of the story and remains faithful to his love, lamenting their separation until the end, without taking any action. After spending a year in prison and receiving no visit from Zîn, he becomes mistrustful and turns toward mysticism. Accordingly, he promises Zîn an eternal and celestial love during his final meeting with her in prison, and asks her to join him after his death so that they may begin an everlasting life together in the promised paradise. In the play of Pirmard (1968), Mem is represented as one of the rulers of the Ardalán principality who, dissatisfied with the governance of his brother, Sarkhab Beg—the emir of the province—renounces his authority and travels to the principality of Botan (Zîn's dwelling place) secretly and in an anonymous identity. In Rasul Bangin's (2024) play, Mem, as in Khani's epic, is one of Emir Zayn al-Din's soldiers and a close friend of Tajdîn. Zîn is the sister of Stî and Emir Zayn al-Din. She falls in love with Mem, but faces her brother's opposition and lacks the courage and ability to confess her love to him. At the end of the story, she dies weeping at Mem's grave and is laid to rest beside him. Zîn is portrayed in the same way in these two selected plays, as well as in almost all dramatic adaptations—except for the plays of "Karvankujeh" (The Morning Star) and "Jân" (Labor Pain). Tajdîn, the vizier's son, is one of the emir's military commanders. He is of Arab origin, related to the emir, and later becomes son-in-law. He has a close and genuine friendship with Mem, whom he likes even more than his own brothers, Chako and Aref. To rescue Mem and Zîn, who are meeting secretly in the emir's garden, he burns his own house. This act has earned him the title of a legendary symbol of friendship. In Pirmard's version, Tajdîn is portrayed as a middle-aged military commander who is married to Stî. He has two brothers, Bako and Aref. In this version,

only one brother's name has been altered -from Chako to Bako. In Rasul Bangin's play, Tajdîn, as in Khani's version, marries Stî, but there is no indication that they have a child. Similarly, in Pirmard's version, there is no mention of any offspring of Tajdîn.

As Zîn's twin, Stî reflects her sister's attributes in every aspect. The fundamental distinction between them is the trajectory of their love, which they both experienced simultaneously. Whereas Stî marries Tajdîn, Zîn's love remains unfulfilled, leading her to be buried alongside Mem. In both selected dramas and all existing adaptations, Stî remains the same character profile as Khani's version; any difference pertains solely to her age, not to her function. Emir Zayn al-Din is the ruler of the Botan principality, whose capital is the city of Cizre, an emirate located within the geographical boundary of present-day Turkey. He is a generous, courageous, and righteous ruler – more munificent than Hatam al-Ta'i and braver than Rostam-e Dastan. Ahmad Khani introduces him as a descendant of Khalid ibn al-Walid, one of the prominent companions of early Islam, and as a member of the Arab people.

*In Cizre's realm, in ages long before
A glorious king ascended to the throne
Nations and tribes submitted to his word
Arab in lineage, yet the emir of Kurdish world
Rome, Persia, and Arabia under his command
Famed everywhere as Botan's emir
(Khani, 1692/2017, 51)*

He is influenced by the advice that Bekir offers him. Having been persuaded that Tajdîn and Mem are plotting a coup to depose him, he consents to Bekir's plan for the chess game; for the emir does not wish to offend a commander like Tajdîn, who has a particular affection for Mem, and risk provoking Tajdîn's rebellion and disobedience. In all existing adaptations, Zayn al-Din retains the same traits found in the Khani's version. Even the realm he governs is the Emirate of Botan. The Baban and Botan principalities were under the Ottoman state, while the Ardalán principality was under the protection of the Safavid state; therefore, this does not create any interpretive difference in the geographical setting of the two narratives. Bekir, the emir's gatekeeper and ethnically

Kurdish, is a hypocritical and deceitful figure who surpasses even the devil in cunning and falsehood. Bekir's duplicity and flattery have led the emir to fall under his influence and to issue unjust commands. He persuades the emir that Tajdîn, by marrying Stî and facilitating the marriage of Mem and Zîn, is plotting a coup to depose him and assume his position. Bekir is ultimately killed by Tajdîn. This character is called Bekir in the Pirmard version, but his name is altered to Bako in the Bangin version. But in both adaptations, he preserves the same traits found in the epic about opposing the marriage of Mem and Zîn. In Pirmard's (1968) version, he opposes the marriage due to his ambition to take the emir's place and rule over the principality, while in Bangin's (2024) version, his opposition stems from Tajdîn's refusal to marry Bekir's daughter. The nursemaid is an experienced elderly woman who serves the emir's sisters and appears only twice throughout the narrative. Her first appearance follows the sisters' meeting with Mem and Tajdîn at the Nowruz celebration, and her second occurs in the prison, where she accompanies Stî and Zîn to convey the glad tidings of Mem's release and the emir's consent to their marriage. In Pirmard's version, this character is renamed Parizad as the handmaid of Zîn, yet she remains the same middle-aged woman found in Khani's epic. She likewise appears as an unnamed handmaid in Bangin's play. Gorgîn is one of the Emir's guards and soldiers who shows great loyalty and affection toward Mem. He appears only once in the narrative, when he informs Tajdîn and his brothers of Bekir's conspiracy during a chess match to save Mem. In Pirmard's play, this character's name is changed to Bangin, who is portrayed as an alcoholic, and Bekir exploits this weakness to entrap Mem and Zîn. Towards the conclusion of the narrative, Bangin realizes his mistake and secretly travels to the Ardalán citadel to inform Mem's brothers of his imprisonment. He reveals Bekir's conspiracy to the emir when he returns. This character does not appear in Rasul Bangin's version. Ghazanfar/Iskandar is an eminent minister at the emir's court and the father of Tajdîn. He is known as Iskandar among the people of Botan, whereas he is known as Ghazanfar among Arabs. He appears only once in the story during Stî's betrothal, and is never mentioned again.

This character is omitted from both selected dramatic versions.

Mem's father is the court scribe and secretary. In the narrative, he is referred to only as Mem's father, and he has no role or presence in the epic. Mem's father has already died in Pirmard's version. In Rasul Bangin's play, however, he makes a brief appearance early in the drama to play a game of chess with the emir; this scene serves to inform the audience of Mem's skill in chess, which is explicitly mentioned in a line of dialogue. Chako and Aref, Tajdin's brothers, appear twice in the narrative: first, when they participate in Mem's arrest at the court, and later at the end of the story when they propose a plan to attack the prison and rescue him. Their introduction at the beginning of the epic serves solely to highlight Tajdin's affection for Mem, a friendship depicted as stronger than fraternal bonds. Tajdin's brothers assume the same presence and function in both versions.

Narrative Structure and Dramatic Adaptation

• The dramatic language

The fundamental principle that distinguishes drama from other written texts is its use of dramatic language. Given its considerable overlap with ordinary language and conversational forms, drawing clear distinctions between the two has become a significant challenge. This challenge is directly related to the context in which the speech is delivered. Such that the differences between these two forms of speech cannot be discerned without reference to the surrounding context. The most significant criterion of distinction can be found in the specific functions of dramatic language. This is because every dramatic speech simultaneously fulfills multiple functions within its internal communicative system, one of which may assert dominance over the others. Manfred Pfister (1988/2016) identifies six functions of dramatic language: expressive, performative, referential, poetic, phatic, and metalinguistic; each of which serves as the dominant function within a specific internal or external communicative system. Therefore, the multifunctional nature of dramatic speech must always be taken into account in drama analysis, since it is the relations between dramatic speeches and the specific patterns of

connection between them that determine which function becomes dominant. Adaptation as a nature or a formal product consists of the explicit and extensive transfer or transposition of a work. The use of dramatic language is the first and perhaps the most significant principle in transforming a story into a dramatic and performable form. Although language in this process is not confined to verbal expressions alone, it is the functional role of speech within the written text in drama that shapes the structure and formal configuration of the adapted work. The formal approach chosen by playwrights examined in this study relies on the use of speech with referential and expressive functions, through which the poetic narrative is transformed into a prose text. In fact, these speech forms do not develop into dialogue and do not produce any dramatic action. In other words, these speech forms do not alter the dramatic situation, and the speech in both plays lacks a genuinely performative function; it does not qualify as dialogue in the dramatic sense, but rather it relies on referential, poetic, and expressive functions of narrative texts. The staging of the play has likewise created the conditions for this type of speech. Rasul Bangin's play, with its 52 scenes, and Pirmard's play, consisting of six scenes, are both founded upon speech forms with non-performative functions that adopt a quasi-narrative structure. Essentially, transposition as the primary principle of adaptation has not been taken into account, and the work lacks a dramatic structure.

• Nowruz and role impersonation

From the second perspective, the act of adaptation as a creative process is always based on reinterpretation (re-commentary) and re-creation. Nowruz and its unique ceremonial traditions in Kurdistan provide the setting for the lovers' first meeting in Khani's epic. Mem and Tajdin, disguised in girls' clothing, encounter Zin and Stî, who are disguised in boys' clothing; they fall in love at first sight and exchange rings to affirm their love and facilitate future meetings. In Pirmard's play, Mem and Zin's first meeting takes place at Nowruz, and they recognize each other through Mani's Arzhang². This drama contains neither the impersonation nor the exchange of rings. In this version, Mem is portrayed as the brother of Sarkhab Beg, who has come to Botan. In Bangin's drama, the

lovers' first meeting takes place during Nowruz, where both impersonation and the exchange of rings also occur. In this drama, unlike in the epic, the use of impersonation does not prevent the four characters from recognizing one another, and no explanation is provided for this narrative. Whereas in Khani's epic, impersonation is explicitly presented as a means of preventing possible difficulties. Commentary or modification in an adaptation serves as a means of filling gaps in the source text. However, this situation in both adaptations remains without any dramatic function; it neither generates a new narrative nor produces a new situation, and it is subsequently abandoned.

• **Mem and Zîn's secret meeting**

In Khani's epic, one year passes after lovers' first meeting, during which Tajdîn and Stî marry and have a child. As a new spring comes, the emir goes hunting with the men of the city, but Mem weakened in the sorrow of being parted from his beloved, and he pretends to be ill to avoid joining the hunt. Mem leaves his house on the day of hunting, and after the emir and the men have left the city, he suddenly finds himself in the emir's garden. Zîn, experiencing a condition similar to Mem's, also goes to the garden, where they see each other. The emir and his men return from the hunt and find Mem in the emir's garden. Tajdîn, following Mem's gesture, realizes that Zîn is there as well. Tajdîn quickly returns to his house and sets it on fire so that the emir and his companions will leave to quench the fire. Through this strategy, he manages to rescue Mem and Zîn from their predicament. Bekir finds Zîn's scarf at the place of the meeting and presents it to the emir as evidence, to confirm his scheme to condemn Mem. In the Pirmard version, Tajdîn is a middle-aged army commander who has long been married to Stî. Mem first resides in Tajdîn's house, but he is subsequently invited to the court through Bekir's deception, and dwells in a part of the emir's palace. The lovers' secret meeting takes place in this room. Meanwhile, Bekir, who is aware of this meeting, persuades the emir to visit Mem since he is ill. The handmaid hides Zîn when she sees the emir and his companions, and then she goes to see Tajdîn. Tajdîn regards burning his own house as the only way to save the lovers. Zîn escapes the predicament, but the discovery of her scarf at the meeting place by Bekir's daughter

becomes evidence that enables Bekir to continue his plot to accuse Mem before the emir. In Bangin's play, the secret meeting between Mem and Zîn takes place in the emir's garden. Tajdîn and Stî are the first to arrive at the garden. Stî takes Zîn with her and hides her, and Tajdîn sets his house on fire to rescue the lovers. In this version, no evidence remains to confirm the presence of two lovers.

• **The chess match and Mem's imprisonment**

When Bekir's plots prove ineffective, he proposes that the emir employ the chess match as a pretext for obtaining a confession from Mem. He attributes this to Mem's honesty, for Mem is truthful and not one who lies. Therefore, the emir must win this match to reach his desired judgment, and such a victory will offer him the ideal pretext both to condemn Mem and to silence Tajdîn's protest over Mem's imprisonment. The chess match does not appear in Pirmard's version. In this version, Bekir advises the emir to send Mem as the commander of the army to fight an enemy that has advanced to the borders of Botan, as a means of getting rid of him. The emir accepts this proposal, convinced that Mem will be killed in this battle. Mem agrees, and he returns after defeating the enemy army. The emir promises to grant Mem and Zîn's marriage in response to this bravery and victory; however, Mem refuses, which greatly angers the emir, and he orders Mem's imprisonment. The chess match appears in Rasul Bangin's play, and after Mem loses, the emir asks him to speak about his beloved. When Mem utters Zîn's name, he is thrown into prison.

• **The tragic death of Mem and Zîn**

In the epic, Mem gradually dies from poisoned food that Bekir has prepared with the emir's awareness and consent. Zîn also dies in the cemetery after lamenting over Mem's corpse, and Tajdîn kills Bekir with a dagger he carries. Mem and Zîn are buried next to each other, and following Zîn's testament, Bekir is buried at the base of their tomb. In both versions, Mem is imprisoned. In the Pirmard version, Bekir informs him that Zîn has been married to one of the enemy commanders. Sarkhab Beg, Mem's brother, travels to Botan after being informed by Bangin of Mem's imprisonment and waits outside the city gate with several of his military commanders. The emir welcomes

Sarkhab Beg and takes him to see Mem. Mem is released from prison, and he dies in Zîn's embrace after meeting Sarkhab. Zîn also commits suicide with a dagger. In Pirmard's version, Bekir remains alive. In Rasul Bangin's play, Mem dies in Zîn's embrace. Zîn dies of grief after seven days of lamentation at his grave. Bekir is killed by Tajdîn.

Analysis of Adapted Dramas

Every story or tale is formed within a narrative framework that involves one or more human agents: protagonist, antagonist, helpers, and opponents, whose motives and actions produce events across time and place, ultimately bringing the tale to its conclusion. Mem û Zîn's epic is no exception to this rule, and all of these factors are present throughout the narrative. Drama, as a narrative genre, also employs these factors within different structural frameworks and through its own distinctive features, which is precisely what distinguishes it from narrative forms such as the story and the novel. Dramatic adaptation of a narrative text is typically carried out with these distinctions. Based on this premise, the adaptations of "Mem û Zîn" can be analyzed within the dramatic framework, enabling a comparison of their structural similarities and differences. In both dramatic adaptations, Mem serves as the protagonist and retains the same motivation and action attributed to him in the epic. A young and faithful lover whose mind is occupied with nothing but his love for Zîn and the desire to be married to her. Bekir, as the antagonist, albeit motivated by a different motivation, serves as the principal obstacle to the protagonist's attainment of his goal. Tajdîn, one of the protagonists' helpers in both dramas, marries Zîn's sister and sets fire to his own house to save Mem and Zîn from the consequences of their secret meeting. Emir Zayn al-Din, the story's opponent, is a just and fair ruler who can easily be deceived by Bekir. Ultimately, he becomes aware of his mistake, but is never questioned or held accountable for it. Zîn, the protagonist's goal, is depicted as a figure whose actions are limited to lamentation over separation; ultimately, she either succumbs to grief or commits suicide and is buried beside Mem. Chako or Bako, Aref, and Gorgîn or Bangin, together with the

nursemaid or handmaid, also function as helpers. All the characters in the dramatic adaptations are portrayed in a form that remains relatively faithful to the source text. However, this fidelity does not imply that the playwrights are unaware of the gaps within the source text. These gaps are embedded in the epic from the very beginning to its conclusion. Here, the analysis must begin with the narrative's ending and the protagonist's death. Mem, the protagonist of the epic, refuses to accept the emir's pardon and forgiveness, which would grant him release from prison and permit his marriage to Zîn. Mem tells Zîn that she should not address Zayn al-Din as Emir, since such an address would cause him to see himself as a captive or a slave: "It is unworthy of us to bow like captives before the emirs" (Khani, 1692/2014, 156). However, this aspect is not taken into account in all of the selected dramas, and the emphasis is placed on the emir's remorse and kindness. Major gaps can also be observed in the treatment of key narrative events and in their transposition into drama, which indicates a lack of attention from playwrights in interpreting the epic. During Nowruz celebration, Mem and Tajdîn, disguised in female clothing and makeup, meet Zîn and Stî, who are similarly disguised in male clothing and makeup. A fervent love is sparked between them, to the point that they even exchange rings. This episode never attains dramatic significance and remains functionally irrelevant to the plot; it is regarded as a pleasant occasion that facilitates the lovers' first meeting. Khani embeds this gap within the epic, yet he prepares the reader for it by announcing beforehand that, among all of the people of the city, only four persons are forced to adopt impersonation: Mem-Tajdîn-Zîn-and Stî. Commentary or modification in adaptation serves as a means of filling the gaps of the source text. If impersonation is regarded merely as a pretext for the lovers' meeting and acquaintance, then further examples would be required to link it to a collective and habitual act in the context of the story. The playwrights have also paid no attention to this. However, Ahmad Khani provides an explicit and meaningful explanation that the playwrights, unfortunately, have been unable to understand, transmit, or interpret within their adaptations. Khani explicitly identifies Emir Zayn al-Din as an Arab and a Muslim.

As a member of the Emir's tribal-political circle, Tajdîn is compelled to adopt an impersonation, fearing the Emir's Islamic convictions, which reject fire rituals as well as celebrations and dancing³ where men and women participate together. Mem, who is the only close and loyal friend, is likewise compelled to adopt this impersonation. Since these two always appear together in public. Zîn and Stî, who are the Emir's sisters, are no exception to this rule. Yet this point has been ignored in all adaptations – without any modification or commentary.

What is narratively significant in this meeting is the girls' confession that they have fallen in love with someone of the same sex. Homosexuality is overtly present in this epic, though it appears only briefly. An old man from the town, responding to Tajdîn's question about the people's agitation, refers to the presence of two beautiful boys (Zîn and Stî), whose presence has thrown the men of the city into a state of distress:

Tajdîn addressed an old man:

Why do people lie in sorrow and despair?

The old man said:

*Two youths, two cypresses, proud and free,
Like executioners of beauty (slayers of beauty) move
through the people,*

*Whoever has seen these two,
Has left the entire assembly in distress*

(Khani, 1692/2017, 68)

The girls also speak to their nursemaid after the ceremony and return to the palace, and say:

*Two lovely girls came our way today,
Glowing in silk and shining brocade,
Their beauty bewitched us with wonder,
Till they were caught in our snare,
And our minds and hearts were blown away*

(ibid., 61)

The nursemaid also declares explicitly:

A marvel this!

*How comes it that a human being loves so fiercely one of
his own kind?*

*By what means have you become enamored of these
girls?*

And that without any prior sign to herald such a love?

(ibid., 70)

A significant aspect of the nursemaid's response lies in the anonymity of the girls with whom the two sisters have fallen in love. This indicates that the nursemaid was aware of the existence of homosexuality within society. Accordingly, she advises them to act with caution and to ensure the other party's inclination before expressing this kind of love. Although Ahmad Khani, as a religious figure and upon the historical conditions of this time, did not – or perhaps could not- focus further on this aspect, as with numerous other unwritten aspects of the epic, it remains the responsibility of modern playwrights and critics to refrain from overlooking these episodes or treating them as mere entertainment. Unfortunately, this is precisely what they have done. The secret meeting of Mem and Zîn in the Emir's garden, which forces Tajdîn to set his palace on fire, is yet another gap within the epic; however, the playwrights have tended to overlook this, and they have settled for a simplistic analogy instead. From Hutcheon's perspective, analogue or evaluation should emerge from the audience's recognition of correspondences between elements of the adaptation and those within the adapted text, rather than through resemblance to the source text. Whereas this act, within the public imagination of Kurdistan, transformed Tajdîn into a legendary symbol of loyalty and friendship, yet throughout the epic and dramatic adaptations, he is never granted the opportunity to host the two lovers (Mem and Zîn) in his house. On the other hand, he makes no action to secure Mem's release from prison. Tajdîn neutralizes his brothers' scheme to attack the prison in order to free Mem and to revolt against the Emir, converting it merely into the act of sending a message to the Emir – requesting either Mem's pardon or Bekir's execution; then he simply waits until Mem's death. Accordingly, these gaps can likewise be filled. Tajdîn sets his palace on fire not for Mem's sake, but to preserve his own honor and that of his lineage. If the Emir and his attendants had discovered Zîn in Mem's bed, they would have issued an instant order for the lovers' execution, and the people of Cizre would have become aware of this scandal within the household of the Arab Emir. The most significant indication of this ethnic gap can be observed in Zîn's testament. Zîn asks Emir to bury Bekir beside the graves of herself and Mem, so that just

as Bekir had once prevented their disgrace and scandal due to premarital affection, she would also preserve them from falling into sin in the hereafter. There is also a significant point in the chess match played between the Emir and Mem in the palace, which the playwrights have overlooked in their transposition and commentary. The main question is whether the emir is provoked to anger and orders Mem’s imprisonment merely by his explicit confession – uttered simply through mentioning Zin’s name – or whether something more substantial must have occurred. Here, it is essential to revisit the beginning of the story, the episode of impersonation, and the lovers’ exchange of rings. As Mem confesses to the act of impersonation undertaken by himself and Tajdīn, he also refers to Zin’s ring, which he still wears on his finger. Hence, when Tajdīn appears in the palace at the moment of Mem’s arrest, he shows no reaction; he merely requests that the emir himself place the handcuffs on Mem rather than the soldiers or state officials, and the emir agrees. Thus, the episodes of impersonation and the exchange of rings can be integrated into the adaptive dramas as a form of dramatic suspense. An element that, like many others, has been left unaddressed in the selected adaptations. Ahmad Khani embeds all these narrative gaps through deliberate textual omission within the texts, which must be interpreted and transferred to adapt a new tragic drama; unfortunately, such a task has not been accomplished in

Kurdish drama, and to date, no dramatic text has emerged apart from adaptations faithful merely to the epic’s superficial storyline (Table 1).

Conclusion

Adaptation, as a formal entity or product, consists of the explicit and substantial transposition or transfer of a work. The adoption of dramatic language is the first and perhaps the most essential principle in the transposition of a story into a performative or dramatic form. Although language in this transposition is not confined solely to words and dialogues, it is ultimately the function of speech within the written texts that gives shape to the structure and form of the adapted text. The dramatic form chosen by the playwrights discussed in this article relies on referential and expressive modes of speech, through which a poetic text has been transformed into a prose text. In fact, it can be said that these speech forms do not develop into dialogue and finally do not produce any dramatic action. In other words, these speech forms do not change the situation, and the speeches in these two plays lack a performative function and thus do not qualify as dramatic dialogue. Rather, they serve as referential, poetic, and expressive functions that are used more in narrative texts.

From the second perspective, the act of adaptation as a creative process requires both reinterpretation (re-commentary) and re-creation. Commentary or

Table 1. Similarities and differences. Source: Authors.

Elements	Khani’s Epic	Pirmard	Rasul Bangin
Mem	The son of the court scribe and one of the Emir’s soldiers	The brother of the ruler of the Ardalan principality	The son of the court scribe and one of the Emir’s soldiers
Zin and Stī	The twins and the emir’s sisters	The emir’s sisters	The emir’s sisters
Tajdīn	A young man, the commander of the army, and the son of the vizier	A middle-aged man and the commander of the army	A young man, the commander of the army, and the son of the vizier
Emir Zayn al-Din	The ruler of Botan and of Arab origin	The ruler of Botan and of Kurdish origin	The ruler of Botan and of Kurdish origin
The reason for Bekir’s opposition	Jealousy of Tajdīn’s political position	The ambition to succeed the emir	Tajdīn’s unwillingness to marry Bekir’s daughter
The lovers’ acquaintance	Nowruz celebration + impersonation and the exchange of rings	Nowruz celebration	Nowruz celebration + impersonation and the exchange of rings
Mem’s imprisonment	Explicit confession of love following a defeat in a chess match	Mem’s refusal to marry due to rumors of Zin’s marriage to another	Mem’s refusal to marry due to the rumors of Zin suffering from leprosy
Mem’s death	He rejects the emir’s pardon, remains in prison, and dies in solitude.	Immediately upon being released from prison, he dies in Zin’s embrace.	Immediately upon being released from prison, he dies in Zin’s embrace.
Zin’s death	She dies of grief while lamenting over Mem’s corpse.	She commits suicide upon hearing of Mem’s death.	She dies of grief after seven days of lamenting for Mem.
Bekir’s death	With a dragger by Tajdīn	He survives.	With a dragger by Tajdīn

modification in the adaptation process serves as a means of filling the gaps of the source text. Yet the significant episodes in Khani's epic (Nowruz and Impersonation) lose their dramatic function in the adapted dramas; they neither generate a new creation of the plot nor produce new situations, and consequently, they are forgotten. Commentary or modification in the adaptation process serves as a means of filling the gaps of the source text. If impersonation is regarded merely as a pretext for the lovers' acquaintance and meeting, then additional examples would be required to justify it as a collective and customary practice within the narrative. Khani explicitly identifies Emir Zayn al-Din as an Arab and a Muslim. Tajdin, as a member of the emir's tribal and administrative circle, is forced to conceal his identity through impersonation, fearing the emir's Islamic disapproval of fire, public ceremonies, and dancing in the simultaneous presence of men and women.

Mem, who is the only close and faithful friend, is likewise compelled to adopt this impersonation. Because the two appear together in public. Zin and Stî, the emir's sisters, are no exception to this rule. Yet this point has been ignored without any modification or interpretation in all the adaptations. From a third perspective, adaptation as a reception or analogue process is a form of intertextuality. Although the story of "Mem û Zin" shares thematic similarities with the legend of Mem Alan and numerous narratives from other cultures (such as Romeo and Juliet, Layli and Majnoon, etc.), this point has not been addressed in the present article due to limitations on word count and the number of pages allocated to each article.

The ultimate aim of the article is the introduction and examination of Kurdish playwriting. Kurdish playwriting in the epic of "Mem û Zin" began with adaptations of the protagonist character (Mem), who, to date, has received the highest number of adaptations in the performing arts. The adaptations produced to date indicate that the transposition of this story into the dramatic medium has not been accompanied by an interpretation attentive to the narrative gaps of the source text; consequently, a narrative structure is dominant over a dramatic one. Kurdish drama has likewise followed the model of Mem in the process of protagonist's characterization, and has

created a protagonist like Mem by defining features of this character, and continues to do so until now. These issues have been examined and analyzed in the dissertation from which this article is derived.

A review of the epic, its dramatic adaptations, articles, and various literary and performative productions highlights the significance of this story within Kurdish culture and art. In both dramas, the title of "Mem û Zin" as well as the themes of war, love, jealousy, betrayal, and tragic death assume a prominent and pronounced role. This article first examines the mode of characterization. In Kurdish drama, the most important factor is the protagonist's recognition and understanding of the antagonist. The life and love of Mem and Zin are transformed by the emir's commands, but the main factor emerges in the figure of a deceitful and subordinate character. Meanwhile, Emir Zayn al-Din is portrayed as a generous, brave, and virtuous ruler who is easily deceived, and in the end, no one speaks about his faults or mistakes. In the dramatic adaptations, Bekir is introduced as the antagonist. However, at the end of the epic, Mem realizes his mistake in identifying the antagonist and regards Zayn al-Din as an antagonist. Disregarding this important aspect in the adapted texts results in the protagonist being rendered into a simple character, whose primary and foundational trait can be regarded in the single word "honesty". This "honesty" extends to love, friendship, and politics, and is accompanied by an awareness of the antagonist's deceit. In other words, the protagonist consciously submits to deception and regards this as a sign of honesty. Instead of confronting the antagonist, the protagonist turns to resistance – not as a means of achieving his goal, but as a way of preserving the "honesty" he continually proclaims. Accordingly, within Kurdish people, Bekir has been regarded as the antagonist and a symbol of evil, and Emir Zayn al-din has been regarded as a symbol of the Kurdish righteous ruler and the protagonist's helper. The second feature of the protagonist in Kurdish drama is the modification of the main motive and objective- an aspect that can be understood as the opposite of the honesty attributed to him. In Khani's epic, this modification occurs at the end of the story, and when Mem refuses to accept the emir's pardon. In order to avoid censorship

and the pressures of political and religious authorities, Khani abruptly directs the protagonist toward Islamic mysticism and selects a celestial love. In the adapted versions, this transposition occurs when Mem refuses to marry Zin because he has heard a rumor that she has been afflicted with leprosy or that she has married one of the enemy commanders. The third feature can be observed in events that appear early in the story with considerable significance, yet are subsequently forgotten, and play no role in the development of the drama. The impersonation and the exchange of rings are among such instances. The fourth feature is the dramatists' emphasis on nationalism. While nationalism appears in the preface of the epic, it is absent from the main narrative. Yet this process becomes pronounced in the adapted dramas, pushing the dramatic concerns to the margins by situating them within a nationalist frame, and then diverts the playwright from a dramatic development.

Under the influence of Khani's nationalistic preface, Kurdish playwrights have neglected the essentials of dramatic development in characterization, articulation of a main subject, the identification of a principal antagonist, and attention to the protagonist's aims and motivations. Consequently, apart from producing a faithful adaptation of the source text and failing to transpose the narrative into a dramatic form, they have not created a notable work. Accordingly, dramatic adaptations can be regarded as an outcome of Ahmad Khani's mode of writing, produced without a critical reading of the explicit and implicit layers of his narrative, particularly in the shaping of both protagonist and antagonist.

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The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Endnotes

1. The two terms Zan-push (female impersonator) and Pesar-push (male impersonator) are adopted on the cross-gender of traditional Iranian theatrical role-impersonator.
2. Mani was the founder of Manichaean religion and Arzhang was one of his books. To ensure that even the illiterate could comprehend his doctrines, he rendered his books with beautiful images. In this drama, Pirmard identifies him as "Tourist Arzhang", a figure endowed with magical powers who paints the images of Mem and Zin, adds their names and brief descriptions, and facilitates their meeting by presenting each portrait to the other.

3. The term "Perkeshan" introduced by the researcher as a rendering of the Kurdish dance "Helperin" in the Persian translation, is an academic

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