

## INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE ACTS OF REMEMBERING IN TWO NOVELS ABOUT FAYLI KURDS BY DIASPORIC IRAQI WOMEN WRITERS

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This article discusses two novels written in Arabic by diasporic Iraqi women writers: *The Wall* by Laylā Tshurāgī, published in 2009, and *Qismat* by Ḥawrā' an-Nadāwī, published in 2018. The works are devoted to Fayli Kurds and thus represent a noticeable trend in recent Iraqi fiction towards (re)discovering Iraq's ethno-religious minorities. In contrast to the vast majority of literary texts by Iraqi Arab authors that include secondary Kurdish characters, the novels by Tshurāgī and an-Nadāwī provide an insightful portrayal of the collective fate of Fayli Kurds in Iraq and Iran and in exile in the West in the 20th and 21st centuries. In the article, these two novels are examined as *fictions of memory*, in line with Birgit Neumann's concept. *The Wall* is considered as an *autobiographical memory novel*, while *Qismat* is scrutinized as a *communal memory novel*. Both works are concerned with the marginalised memories and ethno-religious identity of Fayli Kurds, and provide a stage for depicting individual and collective acts of remembering by their fictional representatives. In the final section of the article, conclusions are drawn with respect to these works and other selected studies in cultural memory.

**Keywords:** Fayli Kurds, ethno-religious minorities in Iraq, Arabic literature, cultural memory

### Introduction: Towards a More Comprehensive Representation of Fayli Kurds in the Iraqi Novel

In a considerable number of post-2003 novels by Iraqi authors living in their homeland and abroad, one can observe a clear trend towards (re)discovering Iraq's ethno-religious minorities and their sub-identities. Before 2004, these communities were marginalised in Iraqi fiction, as many writers chose or were forced to embrace the concept of a unified national Iraqi identity, which was promoted through the official state narrative during the period of Ba'ath Party

rule.<sup>1</sup> In several post-Ba‘ath-era novels, however, characters belonging to Iraqi minority groups, including Kurds and their Fayli subgroup, Christians,<sup>2</sup> Jews,<sup>3</sup> Turkmen, Yezidis, Sabian Mandaean, Gypsies,<sup>4</sup> and others are portrayed as members of urban and rural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities. They frequently appear as secondary characters in order to illustrate the variety of Iraqi groups living side by side, all with their own cultural identities and facing the same harsh realities of life in the country throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries. However, sometimes they play a more pivotal role in the plot, with a growing number of novels concentrating (almost) exclusively on protagonists who represent one of these minorities. These narratives show, among other things, the way of life, their religious practices and traditions, both past and present, shared by members of these groups. Moreover, these literary texts make references to their tragic memories of persecution by other ethno-religious

<sup>1</sup> See HANOOSH, Y. In Search of the Iraqi Other: Iraqi Fiction in Diaspora and the Discursive Reenactment of Ethno-Religious Identities. In *Humanities*, 6 October 2019, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 2, 5–6, 30 [online] [cit. 15 November 2019]. Available from <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/8/4/157>.

<sup>2</sup> See ZEIDEL, R. Al-Masīhīyūn fī ar-riwāya al-‘irāqīya [Christians in the Iraqi Novel]. In SALLŪM, Sa‘d (ed.). *Al-Masīhīyūn fī al-‘Irāq: at-tārīkh ash-shāmil wa at-taḥaddiyāt ar-rāhina* [Christians in Iraq: A Comprehensive History and Current Challenges], pp. 427–466; ZEIDEL, R. The Iraqi Novel and the Christians of Iraq. In *Journal of Levantine Studies*, Winter 2014, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 113–141 [online] [cit. 5 April 2018]. Available from <https://levantine-journal.org/product/the-iraqi-novel-and-the-christians-of-iraq/>; ZEIDEL, R. *Pluralism in the Iraqi Novel after 2003. Literature and the Recovery of National Identity*, pp. 119–140; JĀSIM, ‘Imād. *Al-Huwīya al-masīhīya fī ar-riwāya al-‘irāqīya. Dirāsa taḥlīlīya li riwāya mā ba‘da ‘ām 2003* [The Christian Identity in the Iraqi Novel. An Analytic Study of Novels after 2003]; ŞAKABĀN, Tāriq Jamīl. Ash-Shakhsīya al-masīhīya fī ar-riwāya al-‘irāqīya aṣ-ṣādīra min 2003 ilā 2015 [Christian Characters in Iraqi Novels Published from 2003 to 2015]. In *Majallat al-Bāḥith* [The Researcher], 2017, No. 19, pp. 77–88 [online] [cit. 15 July 2019]. Available from <https://www.iasj.net/iasj/download/b0459a636b71f076>.

<sup>3</sup> See ZEIDEL, R. Writing about the “Other”: Israel in Recent Iraqi Novels. In *Arabica*, 2013, Vol. 6, No. 6, pp. 778–794 [online] [cit. 19 July 2019]. Available from <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700585-12341284>; ZEIDEL, R. On the Last Jews in Iraq and Iraqi National Identity: a Look at Two Recent Iraqi Novels. In *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 2018, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 207–221 [online] [cit. 20 July 2019]. Available from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14725886.2017.1372070?scroll=top&needAccess=true>; ZEIDEL, R. *Pluralism in the Iraqi Novel after 2003. Literature and the Recovery of National Identity*, pp. 161–178.

<sup>4</sup> See ZEIDEL, R. *Pluralism in the Iraqi Novel after 2003. Literature and the Recovery of National Identity*, pp. 145–160.

communities, former regimes and terrorist groups.<sup>5</sup> Hence, these fictional works not only depict the cultural diversity within Iraqi society, but also function as sources of alternative historical narratives. In this sense, they constitute a literary response to some Iraqi intellectuals' call for respecting pluralism and for a careful handling of the "wounded memory" of Iraq's minorities.<sup>6</sup>

In this article, I discuss two novels about Fayli Kurds written in Arabic by diasporic Iraqi women writers of Fayli Kurdish origin: *The Wall* by Laylā Tshurāgī (Ġurāgī), published in 2009,<sup>7</sup> and *Qismat* by Hawrā' an-Nadāwī, published in 2018,<sup>8</sup> in order to exemplify the aforementioned trend in recent Iraqi fiction towards focusing on a particular ethno-religious group and its sub-identity.

According to the literary critic ʿAbd Allāh Ibrāhīm, as quoted by Yasmeen Hanoosh, a US-based academic, the diaspora fiction of Iraqi writers "is the product of the author's impression of belonging to two identities or more at once, and at the same time the impression of not belonging to any identity".<sup>9</sup> In media interviews, Tshurāgī stresses that she feels Iraqi, even though she has not seen her homeland since the 1980s, when she was forced to leave it at the age of thirteen during the war with Iran owing to her Fayli Kurdish heritage. She currently lives in Egypt after having previously spent over twenty years in the Netherlands, where she worked as a psychologist. The author admits that she is torn between her Kurdish, Iraqi and Dutch identities. But at the same time, she appreciates the fact that her complex identity has enriched her life in terms of her intellectual development. As an Iraqi in exile, she writes her novels in Arabic. And thanks to her personal and professional experiences, she tackles in her fictional works such issues as intolerance and fanaticism in the Arab world, the diasporic situation of Iraqi, and the alienation of an exiled individual stemming from the former two problems.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See JAMĪL, Ḥanān Maḥmūd. *Al-Huwīya fī ar-riwāya al-ʿirāqīya baʿda suqūt Baġdād 2003* [Identity in the Iraqi Novel after the Fall of Baghdad in 2003]; ASH-SHABĪBĪ, Jamīl. *Jadal al-huwīya fī ar-riwāya al-ʿirāqīya al-jadīda* [The Polemics of Identity in the New Iraqi Novel].

<sup>6</sup> See ZEIDEL, R. *Pluralism in the Iraqi Novel after 2003. Literature and the Recovery of National Identity*, pp. 4–6.

<sup>7</sup> TSHURĀGĪ, Laylā. *Al-Jidār* [The Wall].

<sup>8</sup> AN-NADĀWĪ, Hawrā'. *Qismat* [Qismat].

<sup>9</sup> HANOOSH, Y. In Search of the Iraqi Other: Iraqi Fiction in Diaspora and the Discursive Reenactment of Ethno-Religious Identities. In *Humanities*, 6 October 2019, Vol. 8, No. 4, p. 3 [online] [cit. 15 November 2019]. Available from <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/8/4/157>.

<sup>10</sup> See Fāṭima as-Sardī wa al-adība Laylā Tshurāgī wa duktūr Midḥat al-Jayyār [Fāṭima as-Sardī, the Writer Laylā Tshurāgī, and the Doctor Midḥat al-Jayyār]. In *Al-Qanāt al-Taḳāfiya* [The Cultural Channel], 22 January 2015 [online] [cit. 1 July 2019]. Available

When Ḥawrā' an-Nadāwī, born in 1984, was an infant, she stayed with her Fayli Kurdish mother and other female members of her family in Ar-Rashād prison in Baghdad, while her dissident father and other male relatives were detained in Abū Ġurayb prison, located west of the capital. They were released in 1986. After the First Gulf War ceasefire was declared, however, an-Nadāwī's father was arrested once again.<sup>11</sup> Many months later, “when Hussein briefly opened the borders to facilitate a mass exodus of his political rivals,” – as the writer recalls – she travelled with her parents to Jordan.<sup>12</sup> An-Nadāwī spent her childhood and youth in Denmark. In her debut novel, *Under Copenhagen's Sky*, which was longlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2012,<sup>13</sup> she examines the identity dilemmas of a teenage girl of Iraqi origin living in Denmark, drawing on her own experiences. In 2006, her family moved to London, where she currently lives.<sup>14</sup> In recent press interviews, an-Nadāwī has

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from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_9EzLkLSFOY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9EzLkLSFOY); Barnamaj “ḥikāyatī ma'a al-makān”: ma'a al-kātiba Laylā Tshurāḡī [Programme “My Stories with the Place”: with the Writer Laylā Tshurāḡī], 18 September 2018 [online] [cit. 1 July 2019]. Available from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7o\\_IW1uM\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7o_IW1uM_U); Al-‘Irāqīya Laylā Tshurāḡī fī maqhā al-ma'rifa [The Iraqi Writer Laylā Tshurāḡī in the Knowledge Café]. In *Al-Qanāt at-Taḡāfiya* [The Cultural Channel], 29 April 2019 [online] [cit. 1 July 2019]. Available from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NExq\\_8SNR0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NExq_8SNR0).

<sup>11</sup> It was due to the assumption of Iraqi intelligence agents that he would join Shiites rising up against the Ba'ath regime. See AL-NADAWI, H. They Came for My Father Nearly 30 Years Ago. It Still Haunts Me. In *The New York Times Magazine*, 6 October 2020 [online] [cit. 10 February 2021]. Available from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/06/magazine/iraq-protests-saddam.html>. On the March 1991 uprising in southern Iraq, see for example GOLDSTEIN, E. Endless Torment. The 1991 Uprising in Iraq And Its Aftermath. In *Human Rights Watch*, June 1992 [online] [cit. 10 February 2021]. Available from <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1992/Iraq926.htm>; CLINE, L. E. The Prospects of the Shia Insurgency Movement in Iraq. In *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 2000, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp. 1–26 [online] [cit. 10 February 2021]. Available from <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/view/4311>; TRIPP, Ch. A *History of Iraq*, pp. 246–247.

<sup>12</sup> AL-NADAWI, H. They Came for My Father Nearly 30 Years Ago. It Still Haunts Me. In *The New York Times Magazine*, 6 October 2020 [online] [cit. 10 February 2021]. Available from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/06/magazine/iraq-protests-saddam.html>

<sup>13</sup> AN-NADĀWĪ, Ḥawrā'. *Taḥta samā' Kūbanhāgan* [Under Copenhagen's Sky].

<sup>14</sup> See Hawra al-Nadawi. A Chapter from the Novel ‘Under Copenhagen's Sky’. In *Banipal. Magazine of Modern Arab Literature* [online] [cit. 1 May 2019]. Available from [www.banipal.co.uk/selections/82/258/hawra--al-nadawi/](http://www.banipal.co.uk/selections/82/258/hawra--al-nadawi/); AS-SĀDĪ, Liqā' Mūsā. *Tajalliyātuhunna. Bibliūgrāfiyā ar-riwāya an-nisawīya al-‘irāqīya ma'a dirāsa fī al-maḍāmīn wa al-ashkāl al-fannīya (1953 – 2016)* [Their Manifestations. A Bibliography of Iraqi Novels by Women Writers with a Study in Contents and Artistic Forms], pp. 35–

emphasized that she has already reconciled herself to the fact that she will never be as Iraqi as her friends who were raised in Iraq. She is also aware that she does not share their collective memory. She has only vague memories from the period preceding her departure from Baghdad. Despite that, she has grown up listening to stories concerning the tragic fate of her relatives and other Fayli Kurds.<sup>15</sup>

At the turn of the 20th century, the Fayli Kurds lived in both Ottoman and Persian territories.<sup>16</sup> In the 1920s, when the modern Iraqi state was established, they were faced with the choice of becoming either Iraqi or Iranian citizens. Those who chose the latter option (the so-called “Iranian Dependency” – *at-tabaʿīya al-īrānīya*) and remained in Iraq, were deprived of many rights.<sup>17</sup>

36; AL-NADAWI, H. In *Banipal. Magazine of Modern Arab Literature* [online] [cit. 1 May 2019]. Available from [www.banipal.co.uk/contributors/890/hawra--al-nadawi/](http://www.banipal.co.uk/contributors/890/hawra--al-nadawi/); TARBUSH, S. Interview with Hawra al-Nadawi, the Only Woman on the IPAF Longlist. In *The Tanjara*, 26 November 2011 [online] [cit. 1 May 2019]. Available from <http://thetanjara.blogspot.com/2011/11/interview-with-hawra-al-nadawi-only.html>.

<sup>15</sup> See AL-MANDALĀWĪ, Saʿd. Ḥawrāʾ an-Nadāwī: al-marʾa al-ʿirāqīya tuʿānī wa mā zilnā fī al-marḥala as-sāliba wa lam naṣil ilā aṣ-ṣifr [Ḥawrāʾ an-Nadāwī: the Iraqi Woman Suffers. We are Still at a Level Below Zero]. In *Al-Journal News*, 1 November 2018 [online] [cit. 1 May 2019]. Available from [www.aljournal.com/حوراء-النداوي-المرأة-العراقية-نعاني-و](http://www.aljournal.com/حوراء-النداوي-المرأة-العراقية-نعاني-و). In the most recent interview, an-Nadāwī writes: “But there is something that always pulls me back to Iraq, a single strand of connective tissue that no amount of time or distance can seem to sever.” She also admits: “I will always belong to those who don’t belong – the rebels, the destroyers of tyrants.” See AL-NADAWI, H. They Came for My Father Nearly 30 Years Ago. It Still Haunts Me. In *The New York Times Magazine*, 6 October 2020 [online] [cit. 10 February 2021]. Available from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/06/magazine/iraq-protests-saddam.html>.

<sup>16</sup> For a comprehensive review of earlier periods in the history of the Fayli Kurds, see AL-ʿALAWĪ, Zakī Jaʿfar al-Faylī. *Tārīkh al-Kurd al-Faylīyūn wa āfāq al-mustaqbal. Dirāsa fī al-juḍūr at-tārīkhīya wa al-juḡrāfīya wa marāḥil an-niḍāl* [The History of the Fayli Kurds and Horizons of the Future. A Study in the Historical and Geographical Roots and Stages of the Fight], pp. 145–312.

<sup>17</sup> For more on the Iranian and/or Iraqi citizenship of Fayli Kurds, see KREYENBROEK, P. G., SPERL, S. (ed.). *The Kurds. A Contemporary Overview*, pp. 100–102; JAFAR, M. Kurds Outside Iraqi Kurdistan Region. Faylee Kurds at the Turn of the Century. Challenges, Aspirations, and Opportunities. In *Faylee Kurds Democratic Union* [online] [cit. 5 July 2019]. Available from [www.faylee.org/english/studies/doc4.php](http://www.faylee.org/english/studies/doc4.php); JASSIM, D. F. Fayli Kurds: the Curse of Compound Identity and Scars of Collective Memory. In SALLOUM, S. (ed.). *Minorities in Iraq. Memory, Identity and Challenges*, pp. 117–118 [online] [cit. 5 April 2019]. Available from <http://masaratiraq.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Minorities-in-Iraq.pdf>; ḤABĪB, Kāzīm. Miḥnat al-Akrād al-Faylīya fī al-ʿIrāq [The Plight of the Fayli Kurds in Iraq]. In *Al-Hiwār al-Mutamaddīn* [The Civilised Dialogue], 5 June 2003 [online] [cit. 14 July 2019]. Available from [www.ahewar.org](http://www.ahewar.org).

Throughout the 20th century, the Fayli Kurds of Iraq lived mainly in Baghdad, in towns and villages along the borderlands with Iran, and in the south-eastern part of the country. It is essential to stress that they are followers of Shia Islam, and thus represent a religious minority among the Sunni majority of Kurds in Iraq, who reside predominantly in Iraqi Kurdistan.<sup>18</sup> Because of their ethno-religious affiliation, Fayli Kurds were subjected to persecution at the hands of the Ba'athist regime. Starting in the 1960s and then throughout the 1970s and 1980s, thousands of them were stripped of their Iraqi nationality (those who chose Iraqi citizenship in the 1920s and their offspring), arrested, killed in prison or executed, and buried in mass graves; thousands of them also lost their lives on the front line of the war with Iran in 1980 – 1988; thousands more were deported to the neighbouring Islamic Republic, where many of them remained without Iranian citizenship; and last but not least, thousands lost their movable and immovable properties, which were confiscated without compensation. These and other acts of political oppression against Fayli Kurds remain unhealed wounds in their collective memory.<sup>19</sup>

org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=7932&r=0; AL-<sup>c</sup>ALAWĪ, Zakī Ja'far al-Faylī. *Tārīkh al-Kurd al-Faylīyūn wa āfāq al-mustaqbal. Dirāsa fī al-juḍūr at-tārīkhīya wa al-juḡrāfiya wa marāḥil an-niḍāl* [The History of the Fayli Kurds and Horizons of the Future. A Study in the Historical and Geographical Roots and Stages of the Fight], pp. 493–494; ESKANDER, S. B. Fayli Kurds of Baghdad and the Ba'ath Regime. In JABAR, F. A., DAWOD, H. (ed.). *The Kurds. Nationalism and Politics*, pp. 187–189.

<sup>18</sup> For more on the geographic and demographic distribution of Fayli Kurds in Iraq, see JASSIM, D. F. Fayli Kurds: the Curse of Compound Identity and Scars of Collective Memory. In SALLOUM, S. (ed.). *Minorities in Iraq. Memory, Identity and Challenges*, pp. 114–115 [online] [cit. 5 April 2019]. Available from <http://masaratiraq.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Minorities-in-Iraq.pdf>; AL-<sup>c</sup>ALAWĪ, Zakī Ja'far al-Faylī. *Tārīkh al-Kurd al-Faylīyūn wa āfāq al-mustaqbal. Dirāsa fī al-juḍūr at-tārīkhīya wa al-juḡrāfiya wa marāḥil an-niḍāl* [The History of the Fayli Kurds and Horizons of the Future. A Study in the Historical and Geographical Roots and Stages of the Fight], pp. 91–110.

<sup>19</sup> For more on the persecution of Fayli Kurds in Iraq, see KREYENBROEK, P. G., SPERL, S. (ed.). *The Kurds. A Contemporary Overview*, pp. 47, 100–103; JAFAR, M. Kurds Outside the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. Faylee Kurds at the Turn of the Century. Challenges, Aspirations, and Opportunities. In *Faylee Kurds Democratic Union* [online] [cit. 5 July 2019]. Available from [www.faylee.org/english/studies/doc4.php](http://www.faylee.org/english/studies/doc4.php); JASSIM, D. F. Fayli Kurds: the Curse of Compound Identity and Scars of Collective Memory. In SALLOUM, S. (ed.). *Minorities in Iraq. Memory, Identity and Challenges*, pp. 112–126 [online] [cit. 5 April 2019]. Available from <http://masaratiraq.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Minorities-in-Iraq.pdf>; van BRUINESSEN, M. *Faylis, Kurds and Lurs: Ambiguity on the Frontier of Iran and Iraq. An Overview of the Literature*, pp. 1–15. Presented at the Third International Conference on Faylee Kurds. Brussels, European



Moreover, it should be emphasized that existing studies on representations of Kurds in Iraqi novels written by Arab writers clearly show that these images reflect the ideological attitude of the author towards this ethno-religious group, shaped primarily by Arab-Kurdish political relations both prior to and after the United States-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, but also by either the author's lack of actual contact with members of the Kurdish community or – in some cases – his or her personal encounters with them. The Israeli researcher Ronen Zeidel argues that most Iraqi Arab authors have been “partisans of an Iraqi nationalism (...) that contains all of Iraq's communities” for many decades, and that “writing about the sectarian issue was perceived by them as a (...) serious threat to national cohesion”.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, the Kurds were generally marginalised in these narratives. Zeidel also claims that members of this minority were almost never mentioned in novels written prior to the 1990s, that is, during the period of recurring conflicts between the Ba'athist regime and the Kurdish nationalist movement.<sup>21</sup> After the no-fly zone in Iraqi Kurdistan was established in 1991, Kurdish characters were often depicted by Iraqi Arab writers in a negative manner, for example as traitors, both in state-sponsored novels and in works written by authors who had experienced unfavourable treatment during their escape from Iraq via Kurdistan, as well as in literary texts produced by writers who had experienced the American occupation of Mosul in 2003.<sup>22</sup> Zeidel likewise examines a number of novels whose authors – having been previously Iraqi army deserters, fighters in Kurdish guerrilla units (*Peshmergas*), or individuals looking for shelter in Iraqi Kurdistan – wrote about friendly relations between Arabs and Kurds. In addition, the Israeli academic asserts that some Iraqi

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Parliament, 12 April 2018 [online] [cit. 13 July 2019]. Available from [https://www.academia.edu/36402961/Faylis\\_Kurds\\_and\\_Lurs\\_Ambiguity\\_on\\_the\\_frontier\\_of\\_Iran\\_and\\_Iraq\\_An\\_overview\\_of\\_the\\_literature?sm=b](https://www.academia.edu/36402961/Faylis_Kurds_and_Lurs_Ambiguity_on_the_frontier_of_Iran_and_Iraq_An_overview_of_the_literature?sm=b); ḤABĪB, Kāzīm. Miḥnat al-Akrād al-Fayliya fī al-ʿIrāq [The Plight of the Fayli Kurds in Iraq]. In *Al-Ḥiwār al-Mutamaddin* [The Civilised Dialogue], 5 June 2003 [online] [cit. 14 July 2019]. Available from [www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=7932&r=0](http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=7932&r=0); AL-ʿALAWĪ, Zakī Jaʿfar al-Faylī. *Tārīkh al-Kurd al-Fayliyyūn wa āfāq al-mustaqbal. Dirāsa fī al-juḍūr at-tārīkhīya wa al-juḡrāfiya wa marāḥil an-niḍāl* [The History of the Fayli Kurds and Horizons of the Future. A Study in the Historical and Geographical Roots and Stages of the Fight], pp. 485–506; ESKANDER, S. B. Fayli Kurds of Baghdad and the Ba'ath Regime. In JABAR, F. A., DAWOD, H. (ed.). *The Kurds. Nationalism and Politics*, pp. 189–193.

<sup>20</sup> ZEIDEL, R. The Iraqi Novel and the Kurds. In *Review of Middle East Studies*, Summer 2011, Vol. 45, No. 1, pp. 19–20 [online] [cit. 18 June 2019]. Available from [https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/0DED482B9DAF5D317064BC0D33294350/S2151348100001865a.pdf/iraqi\\_novel\\_and\\_the\\_kurds.pdf](https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/0DED482B9DAF5D317064BC0D33294350/S2151348100001865a.pdf/iraqi_novel_and_the_kurds.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 22–23.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 23–24.

Arab writers did not refer at all to their Kurdish neighbours in descriptions of their mixed Arab-Kurdish hometowns, as if they did not exist. Lastly, Zeidel notes a certain change in fictional works, written both in Iraq and abroad, shortly before the 2003 invasion of that country and in the years immediately following it. In these texts, Kurdish characters, depicted with various personalities and attitudes towards others, were introduced “in order to construct a multi-ethnic Iraqi national community”.<sup>23</sup> Similar conclusions concerning representations of the Kurds in novels produced by Iraqi Arab writers have been drawn in the studies of other researchers.<sup>24</sup>

As for Fayli Kurds, Zeidel remarks that after the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime – which was favourable to Sunni Muslims – this minority was “discovered” in Iraqi novels because its Shia identity was taken into account as a component of a new Iraqi national identity. Therefore, in some post-2003 works

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 27. See also ZEIDEL, R. *Pluralism in the Iraqi Novel after 2003. Literature and the Recovery of National Identity*, pp. 101–118.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. BUṬRUS, Nūrī. *Al-Kūrd fī ar-riwāya al-‘irāqīya* [The Kurds in the Iraqi Novel]. In *Al-Ḥiwār* [The Dialogue], 1 January 2017 [online] [cit. 15 April 2019]. Available from [http://alhiwarmagazine.blogspot.com/2017/01/blog-post\\_24.html](http://alhiwarmagazine.blogspot.com/2017/01/blog-post_24.html). The author of the article notes that in some Iraqi novels written by Arab authors before the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s Kurdish characters appear rarely, while in some fictional works written during the war there is a tone of hostility towards them. With respect to authors of novels written in the 2000s, Buṭrus states that their attitude towards the Kurds is either unfavourable (Kurdish characters are shown as traitors to Iraqi unity and collaborators with the American invaders), indifferent (there is no mention of them), or sympathetic (the image of a peaceful coexistence between Arab and Kurdish characters). A more detailed discussion of the negative and ideologized image of the Kurds in Iraqi Arab novels is given in AL-MARHIJ, Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Hādī, AḤMAD, Hadīl Ḥusām ad-Dīn. *Ṣūrat al-Kūrd as-siyāsīya wa at-tamattul al-aydiūlūjī fī ar-riwāya al-‘arabīya fī al-‘Irāq* [The Political Image of the Kurds and their Ideological Representation in the Arabic Novel in Iraq]. In *Majallat Kullīyat at-Tarbiya li al-Banāt* [The Journal of the College of Education for Women], 2017, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 742–751 [online] [cit. 8 June 2019]. Available from <https://coeduw.uobaghdad.edu.iq/>. The content of the article by Al-Marhij and Aḥmad is incorporated in the first chapter of their study devoted to the representation of the Kurds in the Iraqi novel in the years 2000 – 2015. The second chapter of the study, however, scrutinizes fictional works in which a peaceful coexistence between Arab, Kurds and other Iraqi ethno-religious communities is depicted, concentrating on such issues as: the joint fight of Kurdish and Arab fighters in *Peshmerga* guerrilla forces, close interpersonal relationships between Arab and Kurdish men, even after they suffered state persecution and torture in prison, and interreligious marriages among residents of Iraqi towns. See AL-MARHIJ, Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Hādī, AḤMAD, Hadīl Ḥusām ad-Dīn. *Ṣūrat al-Kūrd fī ar-riwāya al-‘arabīya fī al-‘Irāq (min 2000 ilā 2015)* [The Image of the Kurds in the Arabic Novel in Iraq (from 2000 to 2015)], pp. 113–144.



of fiction, both marginal and more important Fayli Kurdish characters, having been assimilated into Iraqi culture and speaking Arabic with a local accent, appear among other Shia residents in the old neighbourhoods and shanty towns of Baghdad.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Hādī al-Marhij and Hadīl Ḥusām ad-Dīn Aḥmad report in their study that they found only a small number of novels that included protagonists representing this minority. The events in these literary texts are usually set prior to 2003. For this reason, Fayli Kurdish characters are often depicted as young people who have been imprisoned and tortured for their oppositional activities.<sup>26</sup> These narratives also include Fayli Kurdish female characters of different ages who experience state oppression because of the political involvement of their male relatives. In general, the Iraqi researchers conclude that some of these novels written by Arab intellectuals, based principally on their own personal experiences, demonstrate their empathy and solidarity with their Kurdish compatriots, since they present them as friends and neighbours who share the same social space and suffering at the hands of Baʿathist persecutors.<sup>27</sup> In none of these works, however, are fictive representatives of Fayli Kurds placed in the foreground as major protagonists.

By contrast, the novels by Tshurāgī and an-Nadāwī are designed to be insightful portrayals of Fayli Kurds' existence in Iraq and Iran and in exile in the West during the 20th and the early 21st centuries. Each of these narratives centres around the life stories of members of a multi-generational family over the course

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<sup>25</sup> ZEIDEL, R. The Iraqi Novel and the Kurds. In *Review of Middle East Studies*, Summer 2011, Vol. 45, No. 1, pp. 27–28 [online] [cit. 18 June 2019]. Available from [https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/0DED482B9DAF5D317064BC0D33294350/S2151348100001865a.pdf/iraqi\\_novel\\_and\\_the\\_kurds.pdf](https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/0DED482B9DAF5D317064BC0D33294350/S2151348100001865a.pdf/iraqi_novel_and_the_kurds.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> On the tendency among second-generation Fayli Kurdish immigrants in Iraq to sympathize with the Iraqi Communist Party and the Kurdish National movement, see KREYENBROEK, P. G., SPERL, S. (ed.). *The Kurds. A Contemporary Overview*, pp. 102–103; JASSIM, D. F. Fayli Kurds: the Curse of Compound Identity and Scars of Collective Memory. In SALLOUM, S. (ed.). *Minorities in Iraq. Memory, Identity and Challenges*, p. 115 [online] [cit. 5 April 2019]. Available from <http://masaratiraq.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Minorities-in-Iraq.pdf>; ESKANDER, S. B. Fayli Kurds of Baghdad and the Baʿath Regime. In JABAR, F. A., DAWOD, H. (ed.). *The Kurds. Nationalism and Politics*, pp. 193–199.

<sup>27</sup> AL-MARHIJ, Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Hādī, AḤMAD, Hadīl Ḥusām ad-Dīn. *Ṣūrat al-Kūrd fī al-riwāya al-ʿarabīya fī al-ʿIrāq (min 2000 ilā 2015)* [The Image of the Kurds in the Arabic Novel in Iraq (from 2000 to 2015)], pp. 90–105.

of several decades, against the backdrop of historical events.<sup>28</sup> Both *The Wall* and *Qismat* thereby provide a dense fabric of interwoven memories of their protagonists that echo the countless stories of real Fayli Kurds, some of which the authors heard from their relatives.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> In her article, Yasmeen Hanoosh points to the fact that owing to their diasporic experience and awareness of having multiple and complex identities, exiled Iraqi writers have adopted a specific approach to the question of Iraqi national identity and ethno-religious sub-identities in their narratives. In her opinion, these authors share “the idea that marginal Iraqi identities can legitimately narrate themselves or be narrated by an Iraqi Other in fiction”. Their novels carry the message “of pluralistic, shifting belonging, where ethno-religious identities are emotive, socially situational, temporal, compelled to politically mobilize, and historically contextualized”. Iraqi writers living in the diaspora are not interested in ideology, ethnicity and religion as such, but rather in “the lives and environments of the representatives of these sectarian identities”.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, as Hanoosh claims, their works, which are often subversive to the master narrative of Iraqi identity, “operate as sites of negotiation that complicate and unsettle the models of ethno-religious belonging available outside of fiction”. See HANOOSH, Y. In Search of the Iraqi Other: Iraqi Fiction in Diaspora and the Discursive Reenactment of Ethno-Religious Identities. In *Humanities*, 6 October 2019, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 4, 31, 33 [online] [cit. 15 November 2019]. Available from <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/8/4/157>.

<sup>29</sup> In media interviews, an-Nadāwī has revealed that it took her over seven years to write *Qismat*. In addition to her travels in Iran, she visited Baghdad several times in order to gather information and see Kurdish neighbourhoods, which she then depicted in her work of fiction. In the Iraqi capital, she was listening to the stories of displaced Fayli Kurds told by her grandmother. Afterwards, she transformed them into the novel dedicated to her Fayli Kurdish grandfather. See AN-NU‘AYMĪ, Ḥaydar. “Qismat”: ḥikāyat jaddatī al-latī aṣḥāḥat riwāyatan [“Qismat”: the Story of My Grandmother That Became a Novel]. In *Ash-Shabaka al-‘Irāqīya* [The Iraqi Network], 9 September 2018 [online] [cit. 2 May 2019]. Available from [www.magazine.imn.iq/الغلاف/حوراء-النداء-ي-قسمت-حكايات-جدتي-التي/](http://www.magazine.imn.iq/الغلاف/حوراء-النداء-ي-قسمت-حكايات-جدتي-التي/). An-Nadāwī notes that she is not only concerned with preserving her family stories, but also with creating narratives that could help preserve the identities of vanishing communities in her multi-ethnic and multi-religious homeland. What is more, she feels a strong need to tell stories that have not yet been told and document them in the form of a novel. She was determined for this reason to create a fictional work devoted to Fayli Kurds, seeing them as an important component of the Iraqi nation, but about whom very little has been written and whose painful past has been ignored for various reasons. See AL-JANĀNĪ, Jabbār. Al-‘Irāqīya an-Nadāwī: lā a‘tarīf bi ar-riwāya an-nisā’īya [The Iraqi Writer an-Nadāwī: I Do Not Recognize the Feminist Novel]. In *Ar-Riyāḍ*, 20 November 2017 [online] [cit. 4 May 2019]. Available from [www.alriyadh.com/1639336#](http://www.alriyadh.com/1639336#); AL-MASHSHĀṬ, Zaynab. Ḥawrā’ an-Nadāwī: ladayya raḡba shadīda fī sard qīṣaṣ al-māḍī [Ḥawrā’ an-Nadāwī: I Have a Strong Need to Tell Stories of the Past]. In *Aṣ-Ṣabāḥ* [The Morning], 20 April 2019 [online] [cit. 5 May 2019]. Available from <https://alsabaah.iq/7655>.

With this in mind, I consider the works by Tshurāgī and an-Nadāwī to be *fictions of memory*. According to the German scholar Birgit Neumann, this term refers to novels that “(...) present individual and collective contents of memory, representations of interaction between identity and remembering, but also socially suppressed and non-sanctioned experiences, through the use of specific literary devices”.<sup>30</sup> In other words, *fictions of memory* stage the histories of individuals and groups by focusing on their previously marginalised memories. These works shed light on the importance of remembering for identity creation and offer new perspectives on prevailing interpretations of the past. They relate to some elements of the past reality and employ them in the medium of fiction in order to form new versions of memory.<sup>31</sup> In her study dedicated to contemporary Canadian novels, Neumann introduces the term *the rhetoric of remembering and identities*, which denotes “the set of formal aesthetic methods of representation that are used in *fictions of memory*, at their various internal text levels, in the staging of forms, contents and ways of working of memories”.<sup>32</sup> She scrutinizes a number of these methods and assigns them to such categories as narrative mediation, the structure of perspectives, dialogues between characters, intertextuality, plot structures, and literary representations of time and space.<sup>33</sup> Based on constituents of *the rhetoric of remembering and identities*, which she enumerates, the German researcher differentiates four basic forms of Canadian *fictions of memory*. These are: *the autobiographical memory novel*, *the communal memory novel*, *the autobiographical remembering novel* and *the socio-biographical remembering novel*.<sup>34</sup> In the following two sections of this article, I will draw upon Neumann’s typology of manifestations of *fictions of memory*. I will first consider *The Wall* as a literary text that incorporates characteristics of *the autobiographical memory novel*. I will then examine *Qismat* as a work containing a number of distinctive elements of *the communal memory novel*. In

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<sup>30</sup> NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer “Fictions of Memory”*, p. 120; cf. NEUMANN, B. *Literatur, Erinnerung, Identität*. In ERLI, A., NÜNNING A. (ed.). *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft. Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven*, p. 164. All translations from German are mine unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>31</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer “Fictions of Memory”*, pp. 136, 138.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158–206.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 208–212. Neumann underscores that these four forms of *fictions of memory* are “ideal types” of their respective genres. There are, however, many manifestations of them. Readers can encounter, for instance, texts containing only some of the characteristic elements or hybrid texts.

my concluding remarks, I will refer to the reflections of Astrid Erll<sup>35</sup> and other scholars in the field of cultural memory studies on literature as a medium of memory.

### ***The Wall by Laylā Tshurāgī as an Autobiographical Memory Novel***

In characterising *the autobiographical memory novel*, Neumann notes that it is told in a *personal voice* by a homodiegetic narrator who looks back on past experiences from his or her current perspective in order to reconstruct, analyse and join these life events into a meaningful narrative, and thereby to produce an integrated self-identity. The narrator's past experiences are usually recalled chronologically, but they are connected to the present situation in which his or her memories are evoked.<sup>36</sup>

The novel by Tshurāgī, which consists of five chapters, is the first-person narrative of Lārā, a middle-aged woman of Fayli Kurdish heritage who lives in the Netherlands.<sup>37</sup> She begins her story by discussing her ongoing diasporic experiences. The woman describes her preparations for a celebration of New Year's Eve in 2008 with her close relatives. With this wintry holiday atmosphere as a backdrop, she meditates on how their ways of being and thinking differ from those of indigenous Dutch people. At the same time, Lārā ponders how the Iraqi diaspora in the Netherlands has been divided on ethno-religious grounds, with "walls" of misunderstanding being raised between different groups who do not

<sup>35</sup> See ERLL, A. *Literatur als Medium des kollektiven Gedächtnisses*. In ERLL, A., NÜNNING A. (ed.). *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft. Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven*, pp. 258–271; ERLL, A. *Literature, Film, and Mediality of Cultural Memory*. In ERLL, A., NÜNNING A. (ed.). *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, p. 391; ERLL, A. *Memory in Culture*, pp. 144–148; ERLL, A. *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen. Eine Einführung. 3. erweiterte Auflage*, pp. 167–190.

<sup>36</sup> NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer "Fictions of Memory"*, p. 213; NEUMANN, B. *Literatur, Erinnerung, Identität*. In ERLL, A., NÜNNING A. (ed.). *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft. Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven*, pp. 165–166.

<sup>37</sup> The work of fiction may seem to be a typical autobiographical novel because of similarities between the life experiences of the narrator and the author, but it is not, Tshurāgī says. See Fāṭima as-Sardī wa al-adība Laylā Tshurāgī wa duktūr Midḥat al-Jayyār [Fāṭima as-Sardī, the Writer Laylā Tshurāgī, and the Doctor Midḥat al-Jayyār]. In *Al-Qanāt al-Taḳāfīya* [The Cultural Channel], 22 January 2015 [online] [cit. 1 July 2019]. Available from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_9EzLkLSFOY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9EzLkLSFOY).

trust each other and disagree on various matters.<sup>38</sup> The narrator also reflects on the repressive politics towards Fayli Kurds in Iraq that led to the expulsion of thousands of them, including her loved ones, in the early 1980s. Finally, she reveals to the reader how, mostly in winter while sitting by her fireplace, she often recalls listening as a little girl to her grandfather's stories about his childhood in a mountain village near the Iranian city of Īlām.<sup>39</sup>

In the second chapter, Lārā's reflections shift to her present relationships with her husband and three adult children, as well as with her parents and siblings, with whom she is reunited in Europe after a long separation caused by their forced deportation to Iran. She likewise shares her observations about their personalities and behaviours, shaped by their Middle Eastern culture and life experiences,<sup>40</sup> which merge with her memories about both her own and their past in Iraq and Iran. In this manner, the narrator not only depicts the current circumstances in which her recalling of past events takes place, but also shows the workings of her memory. She does so by oscillating between different time frames and associating certain aspects of her diasporic condition with specific memories connected with her former life. In general, however, she places less emphasis on the present context of her remembering than on reconstructing a detailed narrative about her past. Although both of these time frames frequently intersect in the novel, the linear order of the latter is not dissolved.<sup>41</sup>

In her need for "a genealogical anchoring of her identity,"<sup>42</sup> Lārā first recounts her grandfather's experiences while growing up. In the late 1930s, following the deaths of his closest relatives during an epidemic, he embarked as a 16-year-old boy on a journey to the southern Iraqi town of Al-Ḥayy, where his widowed sister was living with her children. Lārā's grandfather initially stays in a Kurdish neighbourhood in the house of a man called Sharzād, who is revered by his community, but later decides to move to Basra to work as a porter in the city

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<sup>38</sup> In a media interview, Tshurāgī clarified that the title of her novel symbolizes the mental walls that separate residents of Middle Eastern countries from each other, and Europeans from Middle Eastern immigrants. This is a consequence of uncompromising attitudes towards people of different ethnicities, cultures and religions. See Al-ʿIrāqīya Laylā Tshurāgī fī maqhā al-maʿrifa [The Iraqi Writer Laylā Tshurāgī in the Knowledge Café]. In *Al-Qanāt at-Taḳāfīya* [The Cultural Channel], 29 April 2019 [online] [cit. 1 July 2019]. Available from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NExq\\_8SNR0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NExq_8SNR0).

<sup>39</sup> TSHURĀĠĪ, Laylā. *Al-Jidār* [The Wall], pp. 5–48.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 117–124, 317–347, 367–375.

<sup>41</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer "Fictions of Memory"*, pp. 148, 200, 213.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 247.

harbour.<sup>43</sup> Lārā then proceeds to narrate her own life. She first recalls memories of her childhood in her grandfather's house in the Kurdish neighbourhood of Al-Ḥayy in the 1960s. Later, she immerses herself in thoughts about her youth and adult years, which she spent with her parents and siblings in a newly-built neighbourhood in Baghdad in the 1970s. While dwelling on these two periods, the woman focuses attention on her being denied access to a public education owing to the fact that her father was stripped of his Iraqi citizenship because of his revolutionary activities in the late 1960s.<sup>44</sup> She also recollects how after Saddam Hussein's presidential election in 1979, when she was already married, she lost all hope of a meaningful change in the situation of Iraqi Kurds. In an effort to improve Lārā's deteriorating mental state, her relatives help her obtain false citizenship papers, which later protects her from being deported with them. The narrator likewise recalls the 1980s, when after her close and distant relatives were expelled from the country, she remained with her husband and his family in the capital during the Iran-Iraq War.<sup>45</sup> When Lārā returns to the past once again, she is engulfed by the chaos that followed the Ba'athist attack on Kuwait in the early 1990s. During the conflict, she goes to Iraqi Kurdistan with her husband and son to meet her father, who was able to return to that part of the country – which had become a no-fly zone – after a ten-year absence. From there, they all travel to Teheran to visit Lārā's other deported relatives. Subsequently, after having learned their sad fate, the heroine decides to emigrate to a place where there would be no injustice, hatred or chauvinism.<sup>46</sup> Lārā's retrospective narrative of the decades before she moved to the Netherlands is built around such organising concepts as “childhood”, “youth” and “adult life”. The process of (re)constructing her individual history can be thus regarded as closed, since her

<sup>43</sup> TSHURĀĠĪ, Laylā. *Al-Jidār* [The Wall], pp. 43–44, 49–116. On the influx of migrant Fayli Kurdish workers to Baghdad and other major Iraqi cities in the 1930s, see: KREYENBROEK, P. G., SPERL, S. (ed.). *The Kurds. A Contemporary Overview*, p. 102.

<sup>44</sup> On the revolutionary activities of Fayli Kurds against the British Mandate authorities in the 1920s, their participation in the 14 July Revolution (1958) against the Hashemite monarchy, and their fight against the Ba'athist coup d'état in February 1963, see ḤABĪB, Kāzim. *Miḥnat al-Akrād al-Faylīya fī al-‘Irāq* [The Plight of the Fayli Kurds in Iraq]. In *Al-Ḥiwār al-Mutamaddin* [The Civilised Dialogue], 5 June 2003 [online] [cit. 14 July 2019]. Available from [www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=7932&r=0](http://www.ahewar.org/debat/show.art.asp?aid=7932&r=0).

<sup>45</sup> TSHURĀĠĪ, Laylā. *Al-Jidār* [The Wall], pp. 125–315.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 348–367. See also AS-SĀ‘DĪ, Liqā’ Mūsā. *Tajallīyātuhunna. Bibliūgrāfiyā ar-riwāya an-nisawīya al-‘irāqīya ma’a dirāsa fī al-maḍāmīn wa al-ashkāl al-fannīya (1953 – 2016)* [Their Manifestations. A Bibliography of Iraqi Novels by Women Writers with a Study in Contents and Artistic Forms], pp. 35–36.



life story takes the form of an *analèpse complète*, to use the term coined by Gérard Genette.<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, Lārā uses her *personal voice* to comprehend her particular fate in extensively and realistically presented temporal and social contexts. She enumerates all the factors that have contributed to the formation of her current compound identity.<sup>48</sup> This is the identity of a mature and well educated woman who resides in a European country, but who still behaves according to social and moral values shaped in Middle Eastern societies that do not allow her to approve of certain phenomena common to secular Western culture.<sup>49</sup> Even though Lārā appreciates the numerous advantages of her voluntary exile, especially the political freedom, she cannot escape the feeling of being a second-class citizen with a migrant background. Most significantly, however, she does not forget her Fayli Kurdish roots:

I was born in Iraq, just like my father and uncles. My family has expanded to include several generations. We have completely assimilated into their world so that we have forgotten our original language. We no longer have a known homeland other than Iraq. With the passing of time, we have adapted to its water, air and everything there. Yet, the politicians who governed the country at that time, with their unreasonableness, aggressive nature and ill-considered decisions, turned us from a minority living in the shadows into a clique of conspirators and spies during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s. Many of my fellow community members were compelled to leave their homes and properties. They were forced out of their houses and tossed outside the boundaries of Iraq like trash. Their only fault was that they were of Kurdish Iranian origin.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer "Fictions of Memory"*, pp. 200, 213, 244, 246; GENETTE, G. *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method*, p. 62.

<sup>48</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer "Fictions of Memory"*, pp. 160–162, 183–184.

<sup>49</sup> See AṬ-ṬĀ'Ī, Ibtihāl Kāzīm Aḥmad, AL-JĀBIRĪ, Fawzīya La'yūs Gāzī. *Al-Huwīya bayna al-markaz wa al-hāmish fī ar-riwāya an-nisawīya al-irāqīya 2003 – 2010* [Identity between the Centre and the Margin in Iraqi Novels by Women Writers 2003 – 2010]. In *Majallat Ūrūk li al-ʿUlūm al-Insānīya* [The "Uruk" Journal of the Human Sciences], 2018, Vol. 1, No. 12, pp. 45–46 [online] [cit. 7 June 2019]. Available from <https://iasj.net/iasj/download/5d20c9faa7ff6a73>.

<sup>50</sup> TSHURĀĠĪ, Laylā. *Al-Jidār* [The Wall], pp. 16–17. All translations from Arabic are mine unless otherwise indicated.

Lārā's experiences of exile thus constitute an essential motive for her being immersed in a memory space located in her first homeland.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the "we perspective" which emerges from the words quoted above clearly indicates how strongly Lārā's individually oriented and progressive story is related to the collective history of her ethno-religious group – to the extent that her *personal voice* at times appears to be a Fayli Kurdish *communal voice*. Her private memories, in turn, seem to be paradigmatic for the collective memory of the Fayli Kurds, as they refer to typical experiences of community members in the 20th and 21st centuries.<sup>52</sup> What enables the reader to see Lārā's individual acts of remembering as being tightly intertwined with those of her fellow group members is, firstly, the representation of her inner world, as exemplified by the above-cited internal monologue, and secondly, her dialogues with other Fayli Kurdish protagonists. Both of these constituents of *the rhetoric of remembering and identities* are employed by the narrator when describing her present life in the Netherlands and her memories from Iraq.

According to Neumann, memories of a homodiegetic narrator in *the autobiographical memory novel* are usually both internally and externally focalized. In the first case, the narrator's past experiences are presented as perceived by him or her at the time of the events recollected, on the level of action. In the second case, the past happenings are viewed by the contemplating narrator from the perspective of his or her present knowledge, that is, from the extradiegetic level on which the act of remembering takes place. In addition, the internal focalization stages *field memories* that re-actualize the narrator's past experiences from the position of their original experiencing. The external focalization, in turn, makes *observed memories* visible from the distance of a narrator looking back at earlier points in his or her life. The former evokes the emotions and ways of perception that accompanied the recalled experiences; it also creates an illusion of authenticity in the re-staged events. The latter, in turn, helps the narrator confront the past in a self-reflexive way.<sup>53</sup> In Tshurāgī's novel, internal focalization prevails, most notably, in the retrospective narrative about Lārā's life in Iraq. While telling her story in internal monologues, the narrator adapts her point of view according to her age at a given period, so that she shares with the reader the *field memories*, emotions and ways of perception of a little girl, then a teenager, and finally an adult woman. Therefore, the little girl living in her grandfather's house observes through a child's eyes her kinfolk, their

<sup>51</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer "Fictions of Memory"*, p. 196.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 166–167.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 172–173, 214–215, 252–253.

mutual relations, and their contacts with other residents of the Fayli Kurdish neighbourhood in the Iraqi town of Al-Ḥayy.

When Lārā retells her grandfather's experiences as a youth, however, she exceeds the limitations of knowledge of the homodiegetic narrating instance. She enjoys the privileges of an omniscient narrator, depicting not only her grandfather's deeds, but also his thoughts and feelings.<sup>54</sup> By using these two different narrative perspectives, Lārā is able to elucidate both her own and her grandfather's identity dilemmas. As previously mentioned, the Iraqi chapter in her grandfather's family history begins in the 1930s, when having returned from Basra, he settles in Al-Ḥayy, where he spends his life working as a merchant. After many years of living in his new homeland within the limited space of his Kurdish neighbourhood, Lārā's grandfather still feels alienated in Iraqi society, wears traditional Kurdish clothing, and speaks Arabic poorly. In spite of the Arab nationalism imposed under Ba'athist rule in the 1960s and 1970s, he remains bound to his Kurdish ethnicity; he fails to understand why some Fayli Kurds choose to affiliate with Arab tribes as a means of survival in this chauvinistic environment.<sup>55</sup> Throughout his life in Iraq, he seeks to pass on to his offspring their Iranian (Lūrī) heritage by telling them stories about his ancestors and nature in his native land.<sup>56</sup>

Other sources of the narrator's memories are those of her significant others, reflected in dialogues between Lārā and her relatives and in conversations she overhears between them. These literary acts of within-family recalling of relevant experiences resemble the social practice of so-called *memory talk*, that is, the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 160, footnote 161.

<sup>55</sup> On changes in the tribal affiliation of some Fayli Kurds during the Ba'ath era, see: JASSIM, D. F. Fayli Kurds: the Curse of Compound Identity and Scars of Collective Memory. In SALLOUM, S. (ed.). *Minorities in Iraq. Memory, Identity and Challenges*, p. 123 [online] [cit. 5 April 2019]. Available from <http://masaratiraq.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Minorities-in-Iraq.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> TSHURĀĠĪ, Laylā. *Al-Jidār* [The Wall], pp. 150, 208. On the distinction between Kurds and Lurs, see van BRUINESSEN, M. *Faylis, Kurds and Lurs: Ambiguity on the Frontier of Iran and Iraq. An Overview of the Literature*, pp. 3–12. Presented at the Third International Conference on Faylee Kurds. Brussels, European Parliament, 12 April 2018 [online] [cit. 13 July 2019]. Available from [https://www.academia.edu/36402961/Faylis\\_Kurds\\_and\\_Lurs\\_Ambiguity\\_on\\_the\\_frontier\\_of\\_Iran\\_and\\_Iraq\\_An\\_overview\\_of\\_the\\_literature?sm=b](https://www.academia.edu/36402961/Faylis_Kurds_and_Lurs_Ambiguity_on_the_frontier_of_Iran_and_Iraq_An_overview_of_the_literature?sm=b); AL-ʿALAWĪ, Zakī Jaʿfar al-Faylī. *Tārīkh al-Kurd al-Faylīyūn wa āfāq al-mustaqbal. Dirāsa fī al-juḍūr at-tārīkhīya wa al-juḡrāfiya wa marāḥil an-niḍāl* [The History of the Fayli Kurds and Horizons of the Future. A Study in the Historical and Geographical Roots and Stages of the Fight], pp. 111–116; ESKANDER, S. B. Fayli Kurds of Baghdad and the Ba'ath Regime. In JABAR, F. A., DAWOD, H. (ed.). *The Kurds. Nationalism and Politics*, pp. 181–183.

communicative reconstruction of the past among members of a particular group.<sup>57</sup> Through these conversations with and between her kin, the narrator learns more about her family's past and the fate of the Fayli Kurdish community. For example, during her travel with her father to Iran in the early 1990s, Lārā hears from him about the living conditions of her relatives in Iranian camps for Iraqi deportees. After joining her kinfolk in Teheran, she listens to, among other stories, her great aunt's account of what happened to her and other Fayli Kurds in the first days following their expulsion from Iraq, and to her cousin's description of various manifestations of their people's social marginalisation within Iranian society.<sup>58</sup> During such meetings, the family members share their collective-episodic memory; by telling each other their shared experiences they also affirm their common identity.<sup>59</sup>

These interdependent individual and collective acts of remembering can likewise be shown in *fictions of memory*, according to Neumann, by means of *the semantics of time*, that is, a set of categories related to literary representations of time. One key category, that of duration, pertains to the relation between described events and their narrative staging. The category of frequency, on the other hand, refers to narrative repetitions of selected topics. Therefore, events that are particularly relevant to individual and collective identity can be depicted in a very detailed manner, approached from several angles, or told many times from different viewpoints.<sup>60</sup> In *The Wall*, the reader deals with such an extensive representation of past events in respect to the mass deportations of Fayli Kurds in the 1980s. The novel contains not only the aforementioned stories of the deportees themselves, but also a precise reconstruction of the events that led to their expulsion, and scenes of incidents experienced by the narrator herself. Lārā remembers, for example, the day when her family learned from the state media about an attack during a peaceful student demonstration against Iran's policy towards Iraq. This incident was used by the Ba'athist regime to launch a mass

<sup>57</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer "Fictions of Memory"*, pp. 56–57, 158, 176.

<sup>58</sup> TSHURĀĠĪ, Laylā. *Al-Jidār* [The Wall], pp. 350–366; On the situation of the Fayli Kurds in the Islamic Republic of Iran, see KREYENBROEK, P. G., SPERL, S. (ed.). *The Kurds. A Contemporary Overview*, pp. 145–149; VERNEY, M.-H. The Fayli Kurds. Expulsion. A Forced March. And the Loss of Nationality. In *Refugees Magazine*, 2004, Vol. 1, No. 134, pp. 11–13 [online] [cit. 15 July 2019]. Available from [www.unhcr.org/publications/refugeemag/40570cbf7/refugees-magazine-issue-134-dreams-fears-euphoria-long-road-home.html](http://www.unhcr.org/publications/refugeemag/40570cbf7/refugees-magazine-issue-134-dreams-fears-euphoria-long-road-home.html).

<sup>59</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer "Fictions of Memory"*, pp. 99, 101–102.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 198–202.

reprisal against Iraq's Fayli Kurds.<sup>61</sup> As the narrator reports, the atmosphere in the capital then grew increasingly hostile, as a result of which her loved ones started to prepare themselves for deportation at any moment. Ultimately, Lārā relates in detail how this expected tragedy actually took place.<sup>62</sup>

### ***Qisimat* by Ḥawrā' an-Nadāwī as a Communal Memory Novel**

What distinguishes *the communal memory novel* is that it shows the formation of the collective memory and identity of a certain social group, often an ethno-religious minority.<sup>63</sup> Group-specific experiences (usually marginalised ones), hierarchies of values and identity concepts are conveyed by means of a *communal voice*. This is commonly a homodiegetic narrator whose experiences become paradigmatic for his or her community's members. More rarely, the narrative is delivered by means of heterodiegetic instances, for example, through the presentation of the inner worlds of several characters and their *field memories*. Hence, by shedding light on the interplay of these memories, *the communal memory novel* creates a common image of their past, particularly of painful events they experienced that cannot be forgotten. In these types of *fictions of memory*,

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<sup>61</sup> For more information on these events, see JASSIM, D. F. Fayli Kurds: the Curse of Compound Identity and Scars of Collective Memory. In SALLOUM, S. (ed.). *Minorities in Iraq. Memory, Identity and Challenges*, p. 119 [online] [cit. 5 April 2019]. Available from <http://masaratiraq.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Minorities-in-Iraq.pdf>; van BRUINESSEN, M. *Faylis, Kurds and Lurs: Ambiguity on the Frontier of Iran and Iraq. An Overview of the Literature*, p. 7. Presented at the Third International Conference on Faylee Kurds. Brussels, European Parliament, 12 April 2018 [online] [cit. 13 July 2019]. Available from [https://www.academia.edu/36402961/Faylis\\_Kurds\\_and\\_Lurs\\_Ambiguity\\_on\\_the\\_frontier\\_of\\_Iran\\_and\\_Iraq\\_An\\_overview\\_of\\_the\\_literature?sm=b](https://www.academia.edu/36402961/Faylis_Kurds_and_Lurs_Ambiguity_on_the_frontier_of_Iran_and_Iraq_An_overview_of_the_literature?sm=b).

<sup>62</sup> TSHURĀĠĪ, Laylā. *Al-Jidār* [The Wall], pp. 291–315.

<sup>63</sup> In her reflections on the concept of *collective identity*, Astrid Erll draws attention to a number of definitions of this term. For Jan Assmann, for instance, it is “the image that a group constructs of itself, and with which members of the group identify themselves”. Her further overview of other concepts and theories sheds light on the fact that *collective identity* is a plural identity, in the sense that each individual who identifies him- or herself with a certain group (usually a nation or ethnicity) belongs at the same time to other “mnemonic collectives” (for example people raised in a specific culture, those who belong to a particular generation or gender), and thus he or she “becomes an intersection of various collective identities”. See ERL, A. *Memory in Culture*, pp. 109–110; ERL, A. *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen. Eine Einführung. 3. erweiterte Auflage*, pp. 105–106. Cf. MAALOUF, A. *In the Name of Identity. Violence and the Need to Belong*, pp. 10–11.

the act of remembering of a narrating instance becomes an attempt to reaffirm one's belonging to a group.<sup>64</sup>

In *Qismat*, heterodiegetic narrative instances serve as a *communal voice*. The literary text, composed of three parts followed by an ending, revolves around a multi-generational Fayli Kurdish family, headed by a man named Mullā Ġulām, that has resided in an old neighbourhood of Baghdad for many years.<sup>65</sup> The first part of the novel is related by an omniscient or extradiegetic narrator who looks down from above at first- and second-generation members of the family, and chronicles both their everyday life and their inner worlds. This part covers the period from 1950 to 1975, which is regarded by the family members as good and peaceful times for their ethno-religious community.<sup>66</sup> In the second part, attention is focused on the period spanning 1980 to 2009, during which they find themselves scattered around the world. This part comprises three chapters, each of which is narrated by a male representative of the third generation. The first of these men, Lu'ay, recounts his experiences as a teenage deportee in Iran in the 1980s. His memories, which are recalled in the form of internal monologues, are intertwined with letters he writes to his cousin Sālār from a Swedish refugee camp in 1993.<sup>67</sup> Such an intermedial reference, i.e. the incorporation of a material medium of memory, offers additional insight into the protagonist's story and makes it more reliable.<sup>68</sup> In the second chapter, Sālār ponders his life and psychological condition, and the fate of those relatives who remained in Iraq throughout the war with Iran. During that period he was drafted into the Iraqi army, while one of his brothers was accidentally killed. Next, Sālār recounts his personal experiences and those of his siblings in the face of the economic sanctions against Iraq in the 1990s. This is when he decides to emigrate. After spending several months in Damascus and being unable to embark on a journey to Europe, Sālār returns to Baghdad since he cannot imagine living somewhere

<sup>64</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer "Fictions of Memory"*, pp. 99, 158–159, 167–168, 186–187, 224–226, 348.

<sup>65</sup> On the old Kurdish neighbourhoods in Baghdad, see AL-‘ALAWĪ, Zakī Ja‘far al-Faylī. *Tārīkh al-Kurd al-Faylīyūn wa āfāq al-mustaqbal. Dirāsa fī al-juḍūr at-tārīkhīya wa al-juḡrāfiya wa marāḥil an-niḍāl* [The History of the Fayli Kurds and Horizons of the Future. A Study in the Historical and Geographical Roots and Stages of the Fight], pp. 442–443; ESKANDER, S. B. Fayli Kurds of Baghdad and the Ba‘ath Regime. In JABAR, F. A., DAWOD, H. (ed.). *The Kurds. Nationalism and Politics*, pp. 184–185.

<sup>66</sup> AN-NADĀWĪ, Hawrā‘. *Qismat* [Qismat], pp. 14–129.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 133–183.

<sup>68</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer "Fictions of Memory"*, p. 192.



else.<sup>69</sup> The third of these men, Lu'ay's younger brother Akram, relates his personal story and the lives of his loved ones in Iranian exile, where he still resides in 2009.<sup>70</sup> In the last part of the novel, the third person voice is once again employed. The omniscient narrator reveals what happened to some of the family members after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, when they reunite in Baghdad in 2004.<sup>71</sup>

The polyphonic construction of an-Nadāwī's work enables the reader to see multiple but at the same time complementary perspectives on the family's common past. In other words, even if the individual memories of certain members differ to some extent, they provide insight into various aspects of their shared experiences.<sup>72</sup> This is particularly evident when comparing the stories told by Lu'ay and Akram. The two brothers perceive their living conditions in the Islamic Republic quite differently. Lu'ay is forced to leave his comfortable life in Baghdad as a teenager. For this reason, he is unable to comprehend why he suddenly has to become an Iranian citizen, since he has never been to Iran before. In the years following their deportation, first while living with his parents and siblings in a refugee camp, then in his father's native mountain village, and finally in the city of Īlām, he continues to long for "the good old days" in Iraq. Moreover, he finds it hard to obey various restrictions enforced by Islamic morality, and lives with a growing sense of uprootedness and uselessness, having been branded by the Iranian inhabitants of Īlām as an Arab. In the early 1990s, after reaching Sweden, Lu'ay gets rid of his Iranian passport and presents himself to the border services as an Iraqi fugitive. He knows that he is more likely to be accepted in Europe as a refugee fleeing Iraq's Ba'athist nationalist regime. Over a decade later, he returns to Baghdad at the request of his father. He observes the city he has missed so much, but what he sees is destruction. This is not the place he has been dreaming about. After his father's sudden death following a bomb attack, Lu'ay leaves Iraq once again. He feels relieved and safe only when he lands in Stockholm. He makes up his mind that from this moment onward he will not delve too deep into the issue of his national identity, as illustrated by the following quotation in the form of a third-person narrative:

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<sup>69</sup> AN-NADĀWĪ, Ḥawrā'. *Qismat* [Qismat], pp. 185–232.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., pp. 233–251.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 255–281.

<sup>72</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer "Fictions of Memory"*, pp. 192, 169, 171, 176, 180–181, 363, 377; NEUMANN, B. *Literatur, Erinnerung, Identität*. In ERLI, A., NÜNNING A. (ed.). *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft. Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven*, p. 167.

He is the only one who knows the map of his branched and strange citizenship. He will go on living without a specific answer to the nagging question he has been asking himself throughout his life: “What do homelands create in us?” His questions will take less sophisticated and more understandable forms.<sup>73</sup>

His brother Akram, on the other hand, does not perceive his existence in Iran as a forced stay. Since he does not remember his childhood in Baghdad, he does not consider his first homeland a place he could miss. He has grown up in both the Iraqi culture inside his home and the surrounding Iranian culture, and thus neither of them is more important for him. As a student and athlete, he lives alone in Teheran. He does not care much about Islamic morality, and takes part in anti-governmental protests. Unlike Lu’ay, he does not even try to contemplate his complex identity.

Their father, Majīd, whose life story is told by both the omniscient narrator and Lu’ay, redefines his individual identity, voluntarily or not, several times in his life. Born in a Kurdish village in Iran, he lives as a poor teenager with his kinsmen in the Iraqi border town of Zarbāfiya. One day in the early 1960s, he sets off to start a new life in Baghdad, where he receives help from his relative, who is married to one of Mullā Ġulām’s daughters. Majīd rents a room in their house and gradually becomes accepted and treated as a member of the family, especially after marrying Mullā Ġulām’s youngest daughter. In subsequent years, he patiently climbs the social ladder. He works hard as a porter in the Shūrja market, then as a small merchant, finally becoming a jewellery store owner and rich businessmen. In the 1970s, he moves with his wife and sons to a villa in the new neighbourhood of Jamīla, inhabited mainly by Christians, though he still lives alongside local Fayli Kurds. As the years go by, Majīd becomes attached to Baghdad. He still speaks the Kurdish language, albeit in a form that sounds different from his Iranian mountain dialect.<sup>74</sup> At the same time, he speaks Arabic fluently, using the dialect of the capital as if he were a native resident. He gives his sons fashionable Arabic names that are difficult for their Kurdish grandmother to pronounce. In his garden, he plants palm trees so that his house would seem more Iraqi. Due to Majīd’s genuine love for his acquired identity, his deportation

<sup>73</sup> AN-NADĀWĪ, Hawrā’. *Qismat* [Qismat], pp. 280–281. See also VALI, A. The Kurds and Their ‘Others’: Fragmented Identity and Fragmented Politics. In JABAR, F. A., DAWOD, H. (ed.). *The Kurds. Nationalism and Politics*, pp. 58–59.

<sup>74</sup> On the various Fayli Kurdish dialects, see: AL-‘ALAWĪ, Zakī Ja‘far al-Faylī. *Tārīkh al-Kurd al-Faylīyūn wa āfāq al-mustaqbal. Dirāsa fī al-juḍūr at-tārīkhīya wa al-juḡrāfiya wa marāḥil an-niḍāl* [The History of the Fayli Kurds and Horizons of the Future. A Study in the Historical and Geographical Roots and Stages of the Fight], pp. 460–461, 473–476.

to the Islamic Republic and loss of all his properties are devastating experiences for him. In Iran, according to his son Lu'ay's narrative, he rebuilds his life from scratch by adapting to the socio-historical conditions in which he finds himself. He obtains Iranian citizenship thanks to his Kurdish relatives and changes the names of his family members to Iranian ones. He stops using Arabic, while his Kurdish speech sounds as if he had not left his native village at an early age. He accumulates significant assets again and becomes the owner of a printing house and photo shop in the city of Īlām. Despite his ability to adapt to his austere life in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Majīd takes the first opportunity to return to Iraq. In 2004, after having spent over twenty years away from Baghdad, he sees the city for which he longed once again and hopes to regain his lost house and properties confiscated by the former regime.<sup>75</sup> Ironically, he becomes just another accidental victim of the sectarian mayhem that has devastated post-2003 Iraq.<sup>76</sup>

Apart from the diverse viewpoints of various family members on their past and individual identities, the reader encounters in *Qismat* both *memory talk* and *collective episodic memory*. This is due to the fact that a number of conversations between the characters concerning their past experiences are staged. What is important here is that the same experiences of mass expulsion are recounted by several relatives. This repetition illustrates how the collective identity of the Fayli Kurds has been formed. It also serves as a literary strategy for making these events more credible, so that the presented version of the past can be socially legitimized.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, in this novel centred exclusively on representatives of the Fayli Kurdish community, only one version of their common past is proposed, regardless of the characters' individual fates. Their particular acts of remembering are interdependent and indicate the existence of their shared memory.<sup>78</sup> That is why, in light of Neumann's typology, an-Nadāwī's work is characterized by a closed structure of perspectives. Furthermore, because the fictional text of *Qismat* features the transmission of group-specific experiences, its plot pattern can be categorized as "consensus oriented". This is how, through

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<sup>75</sup> On the return of confiscated properties to their previous Fayli Kurdish owners, see: JASSIM, D. F. Fayli Kurds: the Curse of Compound Identity and Scars of Collective Memory. In SALLOUM, S. (ed.). *Minorities in Iraq. Memory, Identity and Challenges*, pp. 121–122 [online] [cit. 5 April 2019]. Available from <http://masaratiraq.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Minorities-in-Iraq.pdf>.

<sup>76</sup> AN-NADĀWĪ, Hawrā'. *Qismat* [Qismat], pp. 71–76, 79, 93–95, 102–108, 119–124, 137–140, 166–167, 255, 276–277.

<sup>77</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer "Fictions of Memory"*, pp. 201, 354.

<sup>78</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Literatur, Erinnerung, Identität*. In ERLI, A., NÜNNING A. (ed.). *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft. Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven*, p. 168.

the employment of the aforementioned literary devices, the novel exposes marginalised experiences previously unvoiced by this ethno-religious community.<sup>79</sup>

In *the communal memory novel*, great emphasis is placed on presenting the past, which can be observed in an-Nadāwī's work. With some exceptions, the events depicted in its three parts are organized in a chronological and coherent manner. Likewise in *The Wall*, both the story of the whole family and the stories of its particular members are strongly connected with the contemporary histories of Iraq and Iran. There is also, however, the symbolic link to which the title of *Qismat* refers: meaning "fate" in Arabic and Kurdish, it also alludes to the name of a key character in the novel in terms of both structure and content. The opening chapter of the first part starts with a scene in which the 19-year-old pregnant Qismat commits suicide by throwing first her two babies and then herself into the Tigris River in 1950. Subsequently, the third-person omniscient narrator describes the behaviour and thoughts of her relatives, who do not understand the impulses behind her act, during a three-day funeral ceremony that takes place in their family house in the Baghdad neighbourhood of Bāb ash-Shaykh.<sup>80</sup> The ending, in turn, reveals the events that immediately preceded Qismat's death. It turns out that she has learnt from a clairvoyant<sup>81</sup> that in the next 50 years her Fayli Kurdish community will face a sad fate.<sup>82</sup> Interestingly, in the decades following her desperate act, the young woman's spectre appears in front of her relatives, including those who could not have known her. They see Qismat in their old family house, which is also visited by other ghosts – those of its former Jewish inhabitants.<sup>83</sup> They encounter her in other places in Baghdad, in a camp for Fayli

<sup>79</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer "Fictions of Memory"*, pp. 179–181, 186, 209, 227.

<sup>80</sup> AN-NADĀWĪ, Hawrā'. *Qismat* [Qismat], pp. 13–23.

<sup>81</sup> The character of Burqa, a strange-looking clairvoyant who foretells for Qismat the future of her community and who sees her spirit after her death, also communicates with other ghosts appearing in the Kurdish neighbourhood, and thus introduces an atmosphere of ambiguity in the novel. See: Ibid., pp. 41–46, 82–84, 90–91, 128–129, 214–215, 219–220, 285–290.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., pp. 283–292.

<sup>83</sup> For more on why the Fayli Kurds of Baghdad took over Jewish houses and businesses in the early 1950s, see: KREYENBROEK, P. G., SPERL, S. (ed.). *The Kurds. A Contemporary Overview*, p. 102; JASSIM, D. F. *Fayli Kurds: the Curse of Compound Identity and Scars of Collective Memory*. In SALLOUM, S. (ed.). *Minorities in Iraq. Memory, Identity and Challenges*, p. 115 [online] [cit. 5 April 2019]. Available from <http://masaratiraq.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Minorities-in-Iraq.pdf>; ESKANDER, S. B. *Fayli Kurds of Baghdad and the Ba'ath Regime*. In JABAR, F. A., DAWOD, H. (ed.). *The Kurds. Nationalism and Politics*, p. 185.

Kurdish deportees in Iran and on the streets of Teheran. They talk with each other about her. They feel that she is accompanying them as if she sought to support them.<sup>84</sup> The character of Qismat functions, therefore, as a structuring leitmotiv in the novel that ties together the life stories of other protagonists.<sup>85</sup>

Also providing a mythical atmosphere in the realistic narrative describing the socio-political circumstances in which the family history unfolds are the stories of various ancestors. They are invoked in the inner world of Qismat's father, as reported by the extradiegetic narrator. While pondering his daughter's tragic death, Mullā Ġulām comes to the conclusion that it happened because of a depressing winter. This brings to his mind the living conditions of past generations of Fayli Kurds, who used to spend the winter in villages located in the mountains of Lūristān. The man recalls popular tales explaining why so many of them moved to the former Ottoman lands and settled in Baghdad. Afterwards, he recounts the lives of his grandfather and his brothers, who were involved in a fight with a hostile tribe. Two of them managed to escape to Baghdad, where his father was born in 1875. Mullā Ġulām visited the land of his ancestors, "the land behind the mountains", only once, in the 1930s. Subsequently, he reflects on what it means for him to be a Fayli Kurd living in Iraq. He recollects common stories that clarify why Fayli Kurds who came from Lūristān are followers of Shia Islam in contrast to Sunni Kurds.<sup>86</sup> He also retells stories concerning the community's name.<sup>87</sup> More importantly, Mullā Ġulām passes on to his children everything that

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<sup>84</sup> AN-NADĀWĪ, Ḥawrā'. *Qismat* [Qismat], pp. 37–39, 107, 134–137, 172, 200, 250–251.

<sup>85</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer "Fictions of Memory"*, p. 394.

<sup>86</sup> On the conversion of Fayli Kurds to Shiism, and their religious practices and beliefs, see JASSIM, D. F. *Fayli Kurds: the Curse of Compound Identity and Scars of Collective Memory*. In SALLOUM, S. (ed.). *Minorities in Iraq. Memory, Identity and Challenges*, pp. 116–118 [online] [cit. 5 April 2019]. Available from <http://masaratiraq.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Minorities-in-Iraq.pdf>; AL-ʿALAWĪ, Zakī Jaʿfar al-Faylī. *Tārīkh al-Kurd al-Faylīyūn wa āfāq al-mustaqbal. Dirāsa fī al-juḍūr at-tārīkhīya wa al-juḡrāfiya wa marāḥil an-niḍāl* [The History of the Fayli Kurds and Horizons of the Future. A Study in the Historical and Geographical Roots and Stages of the Fight], pp. 393–412, 443–444, 447–456; ESKANDER, S. B. *Fayli Kurds of Baghdad and the Ba'ath Regime*. In JABAR, F. A., DAWOD, H. (ed.). *The Kurds. Nationalism and Politics*, pp. 183–184.

<sup>87</sup> On the community's name, see JASSIM, D. F. *Fayli Kurds: the Curse of Compound Identity and Scars of Collective Memory*. In SALLOUM, S. (ed.). *Minorities in Iraq. Memory, Identity and Challenges*, pp. 112–114 [online] [cit. 5 April 2019]. Available from <http://masaratiraq.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Minorities-in-Iraq.pdf>; AL-ʿALAWĪ, Zakī Jaʿfar al-Faylī. *Tārīkh al-Kurd al-Faylīyūn wa āfāq al-mustaqbal. Dirāsa*

he knows about the history and culture of the Fayli Kurds.<sup>88</sup> In this way, by narrating stories circulating among members of his ethno-religious group and those related to his own genealogy, Qismat's father participates – like Lārā's grandfather in *The Wall* – in constructing and transmitting the collective memory of the Fayli Kurds. Some of these founding stories can be viewed as myths that convey values and norms accepted by the community. They thus co-create its identity along with other factors, such as the specific dialect spoken by its members. With respect to the novel overall, it can be said that the fusion of selected facts about the community's past with imaginary and mythic elements is intended to shape a narrative texture that responds to the current needs of the ethno-religious group, which is striving to establish its identity.<sup>89</sup>

### Concluding remarks

With reference to studies by Birgit Neumann and other researchers in cultural memory, one can conclude that Laylā Tshurāgī and Ḥawrā' an-Nadāwī feel morally obliged to remember what happened to their Fayli Kurdish community in the past.<sup>90</sup> With a sense of social responsibility, these diasporic Iraqi women writers create their narratives based, among other things, on their own experiences (Tshurāgī) and memories shared with them by those who witnessed certain events that have been memorable for their ethno-religious group (an-Nadāwī's grandmother's tales). Using their novels as media of memory, the authors present the life histories of imagined representatives of their community “in order to give voice to hitherto marginalized memories” both in Iraq and Iran. In this fashion, they seek to make their versions of history and memory visible, and thereby to enable their minority's counter-memory to “challenge the hegemonic memory culture”.<sup>91</sup> To put it differently, in *The Wall* and *Qismat*, a

*fī al-juḍūr at-tārīkhīya wa al-juḡrāfiya wa marāḥil an-niḍāl* [The History of the Fayli Kurds and Horizons of the Future. A Study in the Historical and Geographical Roots and Stages of the Fight], pp. 116–124.

<sup>88</sup> AN-NADĀWĪ, Ḥawrā'. *Qismat* [Qismat], pp. 24–32.

<sup>89</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer “Fictions of Memory”*, pp. 103–104, 354–357.

<sup>90</sup> See NEUMANN, B. What Makes Literature Valuable: Fictions of Meta-Memory and the Ethics of Remembering. In ERLI, A., GRABES H., NÜNNING, A. (ed.). *Ethics in Culture: The Dissemination of Values Through Literature and Other Media*, p. 137.

<sup>91</sup> See NEUMANN, B. Literatur, Erinnerung, Identität. In ERLI, A., NÜNNING A. (ed.). *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft. Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven*, pp. 339–340. See also NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer “Fictions of Memory”*, pp.



marginalised Fayli Kurdish identity narrates itself and tells its own version of modern Iraqi (and Iranian) history, which has long silenced this community.<sup>92</sup> Through a plethora of literary voices representing Fayli Kurds of different generations, genders, material status, level of education and life experiences, the reader learns this alternative version of history from multiple perspectives. Additionally, he or she is confronted with the “wounded memory” of this minority.

*The Wall* and *Qismat* can be considered *fictions of memory*. The former work shares numerous similarities with *the autobiographical memory novel*, since it is told “by a reminiscing narrator (...) from the present point of view” who “constitutes his or her own identity in the dialogue with his or her own past”.<sup>93</sup> The latter may be regarded as possessing characteristics corresponding to those distinctive of *the communal memory novel*. It “re-activates the past from the perspective of the members of a marginalized group and their experiences”.<sup>94</sup> Each of these novels delivers insight into various memories of several protagonists belonging to three generations of a Fayli Kurdish family.<sup>95</sup> While observing their “individual acts of memory” staged in internal monologues and the process of transferring “a typical intergenerational memory” through their conversations and storytelling, the reader perceives the workings of their collective memory.<sup>96</sup> That is to say, the literary characters in the works by Tshurāgī and an-Nadāwī become “individual carriers” of their Fayli Kurdish collective memory.<sup>97</sup> “It is only through individual acts of remembering that

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112–113, 133–136; RIGNEY, A. The Dynamics of Remembrance: Text between Monumentality and Morphing. In ERLL, A., NÜNNING, A. (ed.). *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, pp. 348, 351.

<sup>92</sup> See HANOOSH, Y. In Search of the Iraqi Other: Iraqi Fiction in Diaspora and the Discursive Reenactment of Ethno-Religious Identities. In *Humanities*, 6 October 2019, Vol. 8, No. 4, p. 11 [online] [cit. 15 November 2019]. Available from <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/8/4/157>.

<sup>93</sup> NEUMANN, B. Literatur, Erinnerung, Identität. In ERLL, A., NÜNNING A. (ed.). *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft. Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven*, pp. 335, 336.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., pp. 339–340. See also NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer “Fictions of Memory”*, p. 405.

<sup>95</sup> See NEUMANN, B. Literatur, Erinnerung, Identität. In ERLL, A., NÜNNING A. (ed.). *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft. Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven*, p. 338.

<sup>96</sup> See ERLL, A. *Memory in Culture*, pp. 16–17, 120; ERLL, A. *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen. Eine Einführung. 3. erweiterte Auflage*, p. 14.

<sup>97</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer “Fictions of Memory”*, pp. 96–97.

collective memory is performed, and can be observed,” as Astrid Erll explains in addressing family memory through the prism of Maurice Halbwachs’s concept of *cadres sociaux*.<sup>98</sup>

In their narratives, these exiled Iraqi authors devote significant attention to the deportations of fellow members of their ethno-religious group to Iran in the 1980s. These tragic occurrences, which affected them individually and collectively, can be seen as Fayli Kurdish *sites of memory* (*lieux de mémoire*)<sup>99</sup> or *impact events*.<sup>100</sup> Therefore, the two literary texts, along with scientific studies, press articles,<sup>101</sup> memoirs and the testimonies of individuals forcibly expelled to Iran as well as those who stayed in Iraq,<sup>102</sup> participate in the *remediation* of these events, which cannot be erased from the collective memory of Fayli Kurds.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>98</sup> ERLI, A. Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies. In *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, May–June 2011, Vol. 42, No. 3, p. 305 [online] [cit. 25 July 2019]. Available from [https://www.jstor.org/stable/41604447?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/41604447?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents).

<sup>99</sup> See ERLI, A. Literature, Film, and Mediality of Cultural Memory. In ERLI, A., NÜNNING, A. (ed.). *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, pp. 391–394; ERLI, A. *Memory in Culture*, pp. 22–27; ERLI, A. *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen. Eine Einführung. 3. erweiterte Auflage*, pp. 20–24; RIGNEY, A. The Dynamics of Remembrance: Text between Monumentality and Morphing. In ERLI, A., NÜNNING, A. (ed.). *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, pp. 345–346.

<sup>100</sup> According to Anne Fuchs, as cited by Aleida Assmann, *impact events* are “moments of rupture that challenge the psychic and cultural continuity of a group or nation”. They are characterised by a “devastating charge of violence that destroys not only human lives and material goods, but also shatters the symbolic frameworks,” and consequently “produce a collective trauma”. See ASSMANN, A. Impact and Resonance. Towards a Theory of Emotions in Cultural Memory. In STORDALEN, T., NAGUIB, S.-A. *The Formative Past and the Formation of the Future. Collective Remembering and Identity Formation*, p. 53.

<sup>101</sup> See VERNEY, M.-H. The Fayli Kurds. Expulsion. A Forced March. And the Loss of Nationality. In *Refugees Magazine*, 2004, Vol. 1, No. 134, pp. 11–13 [online] [cit. 15 July 2019]. Available from [www.unhcr.org/publications/refugeemag/40570cbf7/refugees-magazine-issue-134-dreams-fears-euphoria-long-road-home.html](http://www.unhcr.org/publications/refugeemag/40570cbf7/refugees-magazine-issue-134-dreams-fears-euphoria-long-road-home.html); TAN, V. Feili Kurds in Iran Seek Way Out of Identity Impasse. In *UNCHR. The UN Refugee Agency*, 28 May 2008, [online] [cit. 15 July 2019]. Available from [www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2008/5/483d60872/feili-kurds-iran-seek-way-identity-impasse.html](http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2008/5/483d60872/feili-kurds-iran-seek-way-identity-impasse.html).

<sup>102</sup> See MALAKĪ, ‘Abd al-Amīr. *Al-Ayyām al-‘aṣabīya. Shahādāt ḥayya li ‘awā’il, afrād wa aḥzāb* [The Nervous Days. Living Testimonies of Families, Individuals and Parties], pp. 18–33, 40–57.

<sup>103</sup> As stated by Astrid Erll, *remediation* refers to “multiple representations of memorable events in different media for long periods of time”. See ERLI, A. Literature, Film, and

Furthermore, the novels under discussion feature characteristic components of the “traditional Fayli Kurdish identity”, as they include not only the stories of ancestors who once lived in mountainous villages in Iran, told by Lārā’s grandfather and Mullā Ġulām, but also a wealth of information about the origin of the minority’s name and the dialect spoken by its members.<sup>104</sup> At the same time, these fictional works show both the complexity of the collective Fayli Kurdish identity vis-à-vis Iraqi or Iranian national identity, and the diversity of the individual compound identities of exemplary representatives of this ethno-religious minority, in light of the political, historical and social circumstances that have determined their collective and individual fates. There is no doubt that the characters of Lārā and her grandfather in *The Wall* and the characters of Majīd and his son Lu’ay in *Qismat* all define themselves as having their own ethno-religious, that is, Fayli Kurdish, identity. Being a Fayli Kurd is the only acceptable identity for Lārā’s grandfather, a representative of the first generation of Fayli Kurdish immigrants in Iraq. He remains “culturally pure” even several decades after his arrival in the country and does not consider himself a member of the Iraqi community of memory. His granddaughter Lārā, on the other hand, a “culturally mixed” representative of the third generation of Fayli Kurds living in Iraq,<sup>105</sup> identifies herself with her Iraqiness – to the point that she cannot bear being deprived of the right to a public education due to her ethno-religious affiliation. Eventually, she chooses to be a first-generation Middle Eastern immigrant in the Netherlands. Even though she benefits from her new citizenship, she is unable to fully integrate with the country’s secular Western culture because of her Middle Eastern cultural identity.<sup>106</sup> As for Majīd, he feels no regret about leaving his Iranian citizenship behind and embracing his new Iraqi identity. He suffers, however, when he loses the latter and is forced to accept the former. He manages to accommodate himself to being a Fayli Kurd living in Iran once again, until he gets a chance to move back to Iraq. His Baghdad-born son Lu’ay, in turn, rejects his new Iranian identity, first as a teenager and then as an adult, and ultimately prefers to become an Iraqi refugee in Sweden. Yet, after having experienced a major disappointment during a visit to Iraq, he loses his emotional

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Mediality of Cultural Memory. In ERLL, A., NÜNNING, A. (ed.). *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, pp. 392, 394.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. ERLL, A. *Memory in Culture*, p. 147.

<sup>105</sup> See ERLL, A. Generation in Literary History: Three Constellations of Generationality, Genealogy, and Memory. In *New Literary History*, Summer 2014, Vol. 45, No. 3, p. 401 [online] [cit. 30 July 2019]. Available from [https://www.jstor.org/stable/24542733?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/24542733?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents).

<sup>106</sup> See NEUMANN, B. *Erinnerung – Identität – Narration. Gattungstypologie und Funktionen kanadischer “Fictions of Memory”*, p. 96.

attachment to his first homeland. He realizes he should not perceive his individual identity as static or dependent on his state or national belonging, but rather as dynamic and changing according to how his life story changes.<sup>107</sup> It seems that all the aforementioned literary characters, whose ethno-religious identities are combined with other identities, are often overwhelmed by a feeling that they are not in the right place – they are either persecuted, discriminated against, not fully integrated, or treated as complete strangers. In relation to Amin Maalouf's famous essay on deadly identities, one can thus argue that each of them "is a meeting ground for many different allegiances, and sometimes these loyalties conflict with one another and confront the person who harbours them with difficult choices."<sup>108</sup> One can also say that their compound identities, except for that of Lārā's grandfather, evolve throughout their lifetimes because a number of social, political and cultural factors do not allow them "to accept these identities tranquilly."<sup>109</sup>

Last but not least, it should be mentioned that the fictional works by Tshurāgī and an-Nadāwī portray family relations in the Fayli Kurdish, that is, patriarchal Muslim, community and the everyday encounters of its members with other Iraqis (and Iranians) living in their neighbourhood. The novels likewise record a number of socio-cultural changes that take place within this ethno-religious group throughout the period considered. They illustrate, for example, the migration of Fayli Kurds from villages and small towns to cities and from old neighbourhoods of the capital to modern districts, due to their improving material living conditions in Iraq from the 1950s to the 1970s. Moreover, *The Wall* and *Qismat* outline a shift from illiteracy being predominant among members of the first generation, and present among the second generation, to literacy being widespread among members of the third generation, but only among those who were not stripped of their Iraqi citizenship, as a consequence of Iraqi national educational policy in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>110</sup> Hence, by showing both the constant and variable political, historical, social and cultural factors that have impacted Fayli Kurds, especially in modern Iraq, the works discussed provide specific literary anthropological insights into their personal and communal life. After all, according to Luṭfīya ad-Dulaymī, a well-known Iraqi writer, each novel can be perceived as a kind of collective memory of a particular human

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., pp. 43–44.

<sup>108</sup> MAALOUF, A. *In the Name of Identity. Violence and the Need to Belong*, p. 4.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., pp. 3, 23.

<sup>110</sup> See ESKANDER, S. B. Fayli Kurds of Baghdad and the Ba'ath Regime. In JABAR, F. A., DAWOD, H. (ed.). *The Kurds. Nationalism and Politics*, p. 186.

community, since it serves as a repository of stories in which its unique socio-anthropological characteristics are preserved.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> See AD-DULAYMĪ, Luṭfiya. Introduction. In MATZ, J. *Taṭawwur ar-riwāya al-ḥadīṭa* [The Development of the Modern Novel], p. 8.

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