

26. The Frontiers of Collective Memory in Works of Refik Halid Karay¹

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to show that the economic, political, social and cultural traumas created by the historical turning points that the Ottoman Empire witnessed in the last period determined the memories of late Ottoman and early Republican writers. The article focuses on collective memory in the works of exiled author Refik Halid Karay who lived between 1888 and 1965. His memory was built with traumas, exiles, wars, economic and cultural transformations which form his dissident stance. He primarily uses his memory to show his stance in his novels and articles. His witness provides a framework to construct a memory of the era. Refik Halid, even in romance and adventure novels, persistently makes reference to critical moments of the historical change. The historic events witnessed by the author pervade the fictional narrative. These events shed light on wars, illnesses, shifts in population, the emergence of new social classes due to economic disparities, and socio-cultural transformations. The research question of this article is what the main source of Refik Halid Karay's novels is. In all his works of fiction and non-fiction, it is seen that the most important source of his literature is memory. This memory, however, is drawn not within individual but within collective boundaries.

Keywords: Refik Halid Karay, memory, novel, exile, Turkish literature

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Refik Halid Karay'ın Eserlerinde Kolektif Hafızanın Sınırları³

Öz

Bu makalenin amacı, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son döneminde tanık olduğu tarihsel dönüm noktalarının yarattığı ekonomik, siyasi, toplumsal ve kültürel travmaların geç Osmanlı ve erken Cumhuriyet dönemi yazarlarının belleklerini belirlediğini göstermektir. Bu makale, 1888-1965 yılları arasında yaşamış olan sürgün yazar Refik Halid Karay'ın eserlerindeki kolektif hafızaya odaklanır. Travmalar, sürgünler, savaşlar, ekonomik ve kültürel dönüşümlerle oluşan Karay'ın hafızası, onun muhalif pozisyonunu şekillendirir. Özellikle romanlarında ve fıkralarında bu pozisyonu göstermek için yararlandığı birincil kaynak hafızasıdır. Onun tanıklığı, dönemin hafızasını inşa etmek için bir çerçeve sunar. Refik Halid, aşk ve macera romanlarında bile tarihsel dönüşümlerin kritik anlarına daima atıfta bulunur. Yazarın tanıklık ettiği tarihsel olaylar, kurgusal anlatılara nüfuz eder. Bu olaylar savaşlara, hastalıklara, nüfus değişimlerine, ekonomik eşitsizliklere bağlı olarak yeni toplumsal sınıfların ortaya çıkışına ve sosyo-kültürel dönüşümlere ışık tutmaktadır. Bu makalenin araştırma sorusu bir geç Osmanlı ve erken Cumhuriyet dönemi yazarı olarak Refik Halid Karay'ın eserlerini besleyen en önemli kaynağın ne olduğudur. Kurmaca ve kurmacadışı tüm eserlerinde onun edebiyatının en önemli kaynağının hafıza olduğu görülür. Ancak bu bellek bireysel değil kolektif sınırlar içinde çizilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Refik Halit Karay, hafıza, roman, sürgün, Türk edebiyatı

Introduction

The aim of this article is to discuss the collective memory in the literary production of Refik Halid, one of the most prolific writers of late Ottoman and early Republican Turkey. The discussion focuses on how collective memory is represented in his works, specifically in his novels. This article examines Refik Halid's fiction and non-fiction works simultaneously and argues that the sharp distinction between narrator and author is sometimes blurred. In his late Ottoman and early Republican works, the distinction between narrator and author becomes blurred. The author's testimonies can be voiced by the narrator in fictional texts. Thus, the clarity of the narrator/author distinction becomes blurred. Refik Halid, an author who repeatedly stresses his identity as a member of a generation which lived through social transformation, wars and exiles, was born in 1888 and died in 1965. Is his memory individual or how individual can it be? Can we define the boundaries of the individuality? How effective was this memory on his literary production? This study attempts to seek answers to these questions.

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To start with, it should be acknowledged that memory is a concept that relates to many disciplines. A number of fields including psychology, sociology, philosophy, history, literature, neuroscience, fine arts, architecture, and photography reproduce memory. Therefore, memory is defined in numerous ways in the social sciences. Memory is so broadly defined and classified that it seems almost impossible to confine it to a specific field. So, the concept of memory remains an ongoing process, continuously evolving and transforming in its theories. This dynamism prompts numerous studies across various disciplines exploring the facets of memory.⁴

While psychology focuses more deeply on the personal dimension of memory, sociology is more interested in its collective dimension. At times, the lines blur between individual and collective memory, intertwining so deeply that drawing clear distinctions between them becomes nearly impossible. The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century is one of the periods in which this distinction becomes completely unreliable, not just for the Ottoman Empire but for the whole world. Two big memory explosions witnessed by the West had such a devastating but also intellectually provoking impact for the Ottomans, as it did for millions of people around the whole world.⁵

Maurice Halbwachs, the pioneer of the concept of collective memory, says that it is impossible to speak of an individual memory alone.⁶ Although this is a much-debated theory when it comes to social traumas and breaking points, most memoirs consist very few individualities or has no individuality. Wars, social transformations, rebellion, social traumas completely surround the individual's memory with society, and even enslave it.

During the late Ottoman and early republican period, radical changes left lasting traces in authors' memory. By all means, the memories belonged to a wide geography that included Anatolian, Balkan and Arab lands.⁷ These changes were the result of wars, ravages, migrations, diseases, deaths, victories and new beginnings. So, the authors have written their testimonies in memoirs, newspapers, stories, novels, letters that make up their personal archives. What these books have in common is that all memories are presented in collective frameworks.

An Author of Collective Memory: Refik Halid

In Refik Halid's novel *Nilgün*,⁸ the storyteller says: "I am ashamed of the strength of my mind." The strength have led to the birth of the corpus belonging to Refik Halid. Refik Halid's narratives have

⁴ For instance: Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Paul Ricoeur, *Memory-History-Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey- David Pellauer, (USA: The University of Chicago Press, 2004); Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of The French Past*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), Douwe Draaisma, *Metaphors of Memory: A History of Ideas About The Mind*, trans. Paul Vincent, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁵ David W. Blight, for the Western world, divides this explosion of memory roughly into what happened in the 1890s-1920s and what happened after the Second World War. See: David W. Blight, "The Memory Boom: Why and Why Now?", *Memory in Mind and Culture*, ed. Pascal Boyer and James V. Wertsch, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 238-251.

⁶ As it is known, Halbwachs' theory is basically based on the views of Emile Durkheim. See: Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter and Vida Yazdi Ditter, (Harper Colophon Books, 1980); *On Collective Memory*, ed. Lewis A. Coser, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁷ For instance: Philipp Wirtz, *Depicting The Late Ottoman Empire in Turkish Autobiographies*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2017); Selim Deringil, *The Ottoman Twilight In The Arab Lands- Turkish Memoirs and Testimonies of the Great War*, (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2019).

⁸ Refik Halid Karay, *Nilgün* [in 3 volumes] (İstanbul: İnkılap Yayınları, 2017). This novel is a trilogy. The first was published under the name of the *Türk Prensesi Nilgün* [Turkish Princess Nilgun], the second under the name of the *Mapa Melikesi Nilgün* [Princess of Mapa: Nilgun], and the third under the name of the *Nilgün'ün Sonu* [End of Nilgun.] This novel becomes very popular and causes Nilgün to be the name of many girls born in Turkey during the years it was published.

statements such as: “I remember well, I remember very well, I never forget.” These statements seem to suggest intimate memories of an autobiographical memory.⁹ However, every story told after these statements belongs to collective memory. The “transition theory” developed by Norman R. Brown name this situation as “living-in-history.” The symptoms of living in history is simply defined as the shaping of people's autobiographical memories by the historical events they experience. Looking at the autobiographical memories of the people living in Bosnia-Herzegovina, people who witnessed the siege of Sarajevo, the Germans who experienced the Second World War, the Beirut people who witnessed the Lebanese Civil War, we can clearly see the impact of living in history. (Uzer, 2018, p.58-59) If an ethnographic study had been conducted with those who witnessed the late Ottoman and early republican period, it seems that the symptoms of “living in history” would have been manifested clearly. As a matter of fact, when we look at memoirs, diaries, letters and literary works, public events such as the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, the March 31st Incident, the Balkan Wars, the First World War, the occupation of Istanbul, the armistice period and the War of Independence are used as references, not events that can be considered private. Refik Halid and his contemporaries' literary creations abound with depictions of social figures, events, and fictional narratives. Refik Halid witnessed many political and social turning points throughout his life. There are two periods of exile in his dissident life. He was sentenced to exile by both the CUP [Committee of Union and Progress] and the Republican regime. The CUP government sent him to exile in Sinop (1913) among those accused of the murder of Mahmud Şevket Pasha. His exile continued in Çorum (1916), Ankara (1917) and then Bilecik (1917-1918). The Republican regime, on the other hand, demanded the exile of 150 people [150likler] whom it listed as those who opposed the War of Independence. One of the names on the list was Refik Halid. Karay, who had left the country in 1922 before this list was prepared, would spend the second exile period of his life in Beirut and would not return home until the law was passed in 1938. All these experiences created a great resistance in his memory and this resistance shaped his literary activity. Therefore, it is possible to encounter a cultural and historical anthology when looking at the late Ottoman and early republican literature written by Refik Halid and his contemporaries. Crafting a memory table based on the authors' remembrance practices unveils the boundaries of collective memory more distinctly.

1)What does he remember?	*wars *regimes/governments *turning points *daily life
2) When does he remember?	*the times when he associates his episodic memory with social events *the times when he makes comparison and irony
3)Where does he remember?	*in memory places *in exile
4)Why does he remember?	* to criticise *because of his traumas *to share experiences as a “story-teller”
5) How does he remember?	*by means of his own perspective *by means of his journalism

⁹ I use the concepts “autobiographical”, “episodic” and “individual memory” are interchangeably.

The first point I would like to discuss regarding the table above is how Refik Halid uses memory and historicity in his novel. Memory is the founding structure in the works of Refik Halid.¹⁰ After WWI, as in the whole world, during the late Ottoman period, historical events has captured memory. Philipp Wirtz, in his book *Depicting The Late Ottoman Empire in Turkish Autobiographies*, explores the portrayal of the late Ottoman period through Turkish autobiographies, detailing the phenomenon. Wirtz (2017) referring to Foucault's *What is an Author?* (1969) emphasises that, whether autobiographical or not, a text always conveys more historical and social code than the opinion the authors. (p. 14-15) From the point of view of historical and social codes, Refik Halid's memoirs have less emotional intensity, vividness and individual themes. This tendency, combined with historical traumas and wars, makes Refik Halid's narratives memory-driven texts, always needing others/ a group/ society/ history to remember. Dorrit Cohn (2008) emphasizes that autobiographical narratives and monologues are connected to chronology however memory narratives are not connected to chronology but to connotation. (p.196) This difference explains the occasional unconventional nature of Refik Halid's storytelling. For instance, the two rituals of collective memory are Ramadan and Qurban. Under normal circumstances, how do people remember these religious events? Memories such as pocket money given to children, visits to relatives, worships and rituals, neighbourhood relationships, distributing meat would be the scenes anyone remembers. However, the author talking about Ramadan, remembers the scarcity of sugar during in the WWI and he does not describe his feelings and any other personal issues. he says: "I have two bad and painful memories of Qurban: one of them is the earthquake and the second is the Balkan War."¹¹ (Karay, 2016a, p.396) Because on the day of the Qurban, Bulgarian troops started to march forward towards Istanbul via Çatalca. This news spread in the community and anxiety increased. The author writes that they heard heavy gun fires from Erenköy on the Anatolian side of Istanbul. In addition, the author mentions that the families who died of typhus and Spanish flu during the WWI. In the armistice period the people spent the holidays visiting the graves. Refik Halid states that he remembers these holidays as quite depressive and dark. (Karay, 2016a, p.397) In addition to religious rituals, he remember national days, every July he certainly remembers the day the Second Constitutional Monarchy was declared. [10th of July National Feast (23th of July in Gregorian Calender)]. When he saw someone chopping wood in the street, he remembers Cemil Pasha, who banned chopping wood in the street during the Balkan War. Seeing the bakeries, he describes the White Russians who migrated to Istanbul during the Armistice Period. The narrator hears about the eruption of volcanic Mount Batur in Indonesia in his novel *Mapa Melikesi Nilgün* and this explosion reminds him of the gunpowder cannons of the Mahmudiye frigate. (Karay, 2017b, p.612) In *Bugünün Saraylısı* [Courtier of

¹⁰ For example, *Delî [Mad]*, the play about amnesia, is one of the most symbolic works between borders of the Ottoman Empire and the Republican regime. Maruf Bey loses his memory during the Second Constitutional period and when he starts to remember again, the Republican regime is already established. The author describes the shock of Maruf Bey, who was unable to witness any of the historical turning points that took place between 1908 and 1930, ironically. It is a common story: Atatürk enjoys reading the play [*Delî*] and he comments about the play: "It does not satirize revolutions, but rather clarifies them." However, Atatürk seems to misconceive the play. As Christine Philliou points out, the play exposes Pandora's box for the Kemalist paradigm, because the play impressively describes the impact of social changes created by the Kemalist regime. And that effect is not said to be positive. See: Christine Philliou, "Mad' About Kemalism: An Early Republican Satire", in *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 36 (2010). Philliou also analyzes this argument in more detail with the concept of "dissident/muhalefet" in her book *A Part Against Turkey*. She questions the reasons for the treatment of Refik Halid as a "dissident" in national historiography. According to Philliou, Refik Halid's opposition, which can change according to the historical context, is very important in terms of three main points: 1-The relationship between Ottoman liberalism and the constitutionalism of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), 2-The issue of sharp rupture and continuity in the transition from the Ottoman Empire to Turkey, 3-The politics of memory regarding the Ottoman past in the Republic of Turkey. See: Christine Philliou, *A Past Against Turkey*, (California: University of California Press, 2021), 5. This book was also translated into Turkish: Christine Philliou, *Türkiye: Tarihe Muhalef Bir Geçmiş*, trans. Dâra Elhüseyni, (Ankara: Fol Yayınları, 2022).

¹¹ Üstelik Kurban Bayramlarından kötü ve azaplı iki hâtram vardır: Biri bir zelzele, ikincisi Balkan Harbi. Şiddetli bir zelzele tam kuşluk zamanı, padişah Dolmabahçe Sarayı'nda saçak öptürürken, bizler evlerde kurban dağıtırken vuku bulmuştu; dam ve tavan başımıza çöküyor sanmış, büyük korku geçirmiştik" Refik Halid Karay, "Bir Zamanın Kurban Bayramlarından Hatırladıklarım", *Cihangir Dalkavuşu Tarih*, 396.

Today], novel's character Ata remembers the Menşur ceremonies, which represent a kind of rank of the Ottoman era, while gazing at the asphalt square from the balcony. (Karay, 1944, p.75) In *Türk Prensesi Nilgün*, Italian forces coming to conquer Ethiopia connotes Yemen. (Karay, 2017b, p.88) All these examples strengthen the claim that the memories revealed in Refik Halid's works are not individual but collective.

Looking at Refik Halid's novels, memoirs and historical articles, it can be said that these genres are intertwined. Some of his newspaper articles were even incorporated into the novels without any changes.¹² At this point, we can take advantage of the Sérgio Campos Matos's (2015) question: How the past is represented? What could be the common ground in history, literature and memoirs? (p.432) History, memory and literature represent the past in various ways. Although the ways of representation are different, it is difficult to distinguish between the boundaries of history, memory and literature when it comes to the past. Refik Halid's works does not describe all historical events, but the historical events he witnessed from his own point of view. So, the author replicates the events by reconstructing his memory of the events creating a plot and constructing stories and novels.

Refik Halid's novels are like a pendulum between fiction and memory. This pendulum moves from memory to fiction, and vice versa. This momentum provides dynamic process in his novels. These transitions between memory and fiction sometimes get too sharp and undermine the structure of his novels. In transitions, the narrator and the author often intertwined. The battles, breaking points, transformations, and daily life in Refik Halid's memory are revealed through various digressions from the main point because the narrator and the author appear as the same person. Journalists played a prominent role in shaping the literature of this period. This ambiguity made it difficult to delineate fiction, newspaper articles, memoirs, and the distinct roles of storyteller and author. As a result, narratives remained tightly bound to reality, mirroring the dual objectives of both literature and journalism during this era.

Another point that needs to be underlined is that Refik Halid's novels resemble a kind of an almanac. The authors of that period used dates in their novels to be realistic. The following sentences from Refik Halid's (2017c) novels indicate that the given dates are generally in line with the political and historical calendar: "At that time, I was only four years old. Because the date of the event is 1918; my date of birth is 1914. The first and last years of the WWI! Anyway, let's look at today, Tuesday the 7th of May, 1949." (p.233) The narrator does not use these dates by chance. The date of birth of the character Nabil marks the beginning of the WWI. Another novel *Dört Yapraklı Yonca* [Four-Leaf Clover] begins with the vows of friendship of four young girls like soldiers vow, as they learn about the national sovereignty and children's day on April 23rd. (Karay, 2009b, p.7) The day on which four friends raise a toast to celebrate the "Four-Leaf Clover Society" was May 29, 1943. (Karay, 2009b, p.19) It is clear that all of mentioned dates were not chosen randomly. Dates that have a special meaning in Turkey's collective memory have been selected: 29th of May: conquest of Istanbul, 23 April: National Sovereignty and Children's Day. An examination of the dates above reveals the political events of both the new and old regime- Republican and Ottoman Era- in the same novel. [Dört Yapraklı Yonca] Refik Halid can be considered as holding the stick in the middle because Kemalist regime drew a sharp line between the new regime and the Ottoman past of the country. When this novel was written (1957), the Democratic Party came in power,

¹² For these intertwined examples, see: Hazal Bozyer, *Refik Halid Karay'ın Eserlerinde Toplumsal Belleğin İzleri*, (İstanbul: İstanbul 29 Mayıs University, unpublished PhD thesis, 2020), 115-124.

and the boundaries between the new and the old became flexible. The author may have wanted to take advantage of this flexibility.

Occupation of Istanbul: A Collective Trauma

The Armistice Period [1918-1923] is a transition period in which a great number of political and social transformations left lasting traces in collective memory. After the Armistice of Mudros was signed, the CUP [Committee of Union and Progress] leaders left the country. This has created an authority gap in Istanbul. The Palace, the Liberals, the Entente States and the Unionist groups wanted to take advantage of this authority gap. (Zürcher, 2003, p. 133-134) Domestic policy was very problematic, the British occupied Istanbul in March 1920. In particular, the de facto occupation of Istanbul caused a great tension in society, which turned into a trauma in collective memory.¹³ On the one hand, there was the pacified Istanbul government and on the other hand there were the supporters of the national independence war trying to resist the occupation. This period also covers the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republican regime.

A broader perspective on the literature whose narrative time spans the period between 1918 and 1923 reveals that these works are not only fictional, but also documentary. Even the titles of these works can give us a clue. For instance, Refik Halid's *İstanbul'un İç Yüzü* (1920) [A Facet of Istanbul], Halide Edip's *Ateşten Gömlek* (1923) [The Shirt of Flame (1924)],¹⁴ Ercüment Ekrem Talu's *Kan ve İman* (1925) [Blood and Faith], Selahaddin Enis's *Cehennem Yolcuları* (1926) [The Passengers of Hell], Yakup Kadri's *Sodom ve Gomore* (1928) [Sodom and Gomorrah], Agah Sırrı Levend's *Acılar* (1928) [Misery], Mehmed Rauf's *Halas* (1929) [Salvation], Esad Mahmut Karakurt's *Allahısmaıradık* (1936) [Goodbye],¹⁵ Mükerrerem Kamil Su's *Dinmez Ağrı* (1937) [Inconsolable Pain], Şükufe Nihal'in *Yalnız Dönüyorum* (1938) [I am Coming Back Alone],¹⁶ Midhat Cemal's *Üç İstanbul* (1938) [Three Istanbul], Yusuf Ziya Ortaç's *Göç* (1943) [Migration], Kemal Tahir's *Esir Şehrin İnsanları* (1956) [People from the Captive City] and *Yorgun Savaşçı* (1965) [The Weary Warrior],¹⁷ Attila İlhan's *Kurtlar Sofrası* (1963) [A Feast for Wolves],¹⁸ Hasan İzzettin Dinamo's *Kutsal İsyan* (8 Cilt- 1966-1967) [The Sacred Uprising- in eight volumes],¹⁹ Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar's *Sahnenin Dışındakiler* (1973) [Those Outside The Scene],²⁰ Ayla Kutlu's *Bir Göçmen Kuştı O* (1985) [He Was A Migratory Bird] etc. Words like pain, migration, fire, blood, rebellion in the names of these novels are the signs of the collective trauma of the period. The primary requirement for writing testimony of that era is to remember that testimony first, then to recreate it in the mind. As a result testimonies of the authors created novels. As Erol Köroğlu (2019) points out

¹³ Especially the newspaper articles and memoirs of the period are very efficient in showing the reflections of this trauma in society. See: Refik Halid Karay, *Minelbab İlelmihrab*, İstanbul: İnkılap Yayınları, 2015; Ernest Hemingway, *İşgal İstanbulu ve İki Dünya Savaşından Mektuplar*, trans. M. Ali Kayabal, İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1970; Hakkı Süha Gezgin, *İşgal Günlerinde İstanbul*, ed. Nuri Sağlam, İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2019; Charles King, *Midnight at the Pera Palace: The Birth of Modern Istanbul*, (W. W. Norton & Company, Year: 2014).

¹⁴ Talat Sait Halman, *A Millennium Of Turkish Literature-A Concise History*, ed. Jayne L. Warner, (New York: Syracuse University, 2011), 140.

¹⁵ See: Senem Timuroğlu Bozkurt, *Esat Mahmut Karakurt'un Roman(s)larında Erkek Kahramanlar*, Bilkent University, MA Thesis, (Ankara: 2006), vi.

¹⁶ See: Elif Mahir Metinsoy, *Poor Ottoman Turkish Women During World War I: Women's Experiences and Politics in Everyday Life 1914-1923*, Published PhD Thesis, Galatasaray University, (İstanbul: 2012).

¹⁷ See: Şehnaz Tahir Gürçağlar, *The Politics and Poetics of Translation in Turkey 1923-1960*, (Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2008), 248.

¹⁸ Halman, *A Millennium Of Turkish Literature-A Concise History*, 121.

¹⁹ Halman, *A Millennium Of Turkish Literature-A Concise History*, 121.

²⁰ See: Erdağ Gökna, "Ottoman Past, Turkish Future: Ambivalence in Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's Novel "Outside the Scene" (Sahnenin Dışındakiler)", *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, v. 102, nu. 2/3, Spring Summer 2003: 647- 661.

novels dealing with the WWI, the Armistice and the Early Republican period are important sources for understanding how wars last in historical and collective memory. (p. 52)

The consequences of the WWI were really hard for the people of Late Ottoman Era. The years from 1918 to 1923 are not just a time period for this generation. A fragmented geography, tens of thousands of people dying from wars and diseases, the search for identity alongside extreme poverty, political transformations, social reactions and a new regime left lasting traces in the collective memory of the people of the late Ottoman period. So these traces directly influenced the content of the literary production. Rapidly changing structure of Istanbul during the armistice period becomes the subject of Refik Halid's articles and novels. He wrote an article for *Alemdar* newspaper ten days before the occupation of Istanbul: "An Advice". This article was printed with some censorship of the press. Although the author did not use the name Mustafa Kemal, it was clear that he criticised him.²¹ In his articles he criticizes political positions, while in his novels he focuses more on changes in social life. In explaining the rapidly changing structure there is a common tendency to write about how White Russians affected the daily life in Istanbul. As in a number of Armistice period novels, Refik Halid remembers the occupation of Istanbul and the White Russians. Zafer Toprak states that Istanbul had a mobile population structure during this period due to the invasions: After the Bolshevik Revolution, the number of aristocratic Russian rich people from Tsarist Russia was estimated to be 200,000. With the arrival of the Russians to Istanbul, changes in the entertainment, fashion and food sectors started. Wealthy Russian women had their hair cut short because of lice they got during the escape from Russia. Among the women of Istanbul, this model of short hair became fashionable and was referred to as "Rusbaşı" [Russian Head] Russian women brought their aesthetic tastes with them and affected Muslim women. (Toprak, 1994, p.19-23) Indeed, feradje was outdated because of the Russian effect. There were women still wearing feradje in the city but it had undergone a serious transformation among Muslim women. The veil was gone. The women of Istanbul began to wrap their heads in cheesecloth like Russian women. The visibility of women in the public sphere increased. So, the Armistice period turned into a preparatory phase for the Republican period. (Toprak, 1994, 21.) According to Refik Halid (2016a), this transformation in women's clothing is a metamorphosis as he describes this metamorphosis in detail in his book *Üç Nesil Üç Hayat* [Three Generations - Three Lives]. (p. 113-114) In addition to changes in fashion, the places of entertainment, bars, restaurants and cabarets were opened in Beyoğlu, carrying the entertainment concepts of the Russians to Istanbul.

So how does the author remember these changes in his novels? In a positive way or a negative way? Reminiscing happily or in pain? In the novel *Yezid's Daughter* [Yezidin Kızı],²² a foxtrot called "Konstantinopol" is played for the narrator as a gesture during the entertainment. However, this foxtrot does not please the narrator, on the contrary, it upsets him. This song, in which the soldiers of the occupation army dance in the Russian bars of Istanbul, reminds him of the sufferings of the occupation. (Karay,2016b, p.76) In the novel *Turkish Princess Nilgün*, inspired by an Ottoman princess, the character Nilgün sings the following folk song: "Hediye, girl your name is Hediye, I bought nuts and

²¹ See: Refik Halid, [nicknamed Aydede], "Bir Nasihat", *Alemdar*, 6 Mart 1920.

²² This novel -excluding its content- has itself been part of the collective memory. On July 16, 1938, the amnesty decree for [Yüzellilikler] one hundred fifty people (dissenting to the war of independence) who had been sent into exile came into force. Refik Halid was also part of this group and spent the years between 1922-1938 in exile in Syria. Even talking about this group was dangerous because Kemalist regime was anxious about the issue. The state has sent notices to newspapers not to publish about the group. But *Tan*, a newspaper, seems to have ignored it. Because *Tan* announced that *Yezid's Daughter* would be published. Advertising posters with a photo of Refik Halid were hung on the streets of Istanbul. Afterwards, the top parts of his photographs were painted red. This is a clear indication that the state mechanism has not reconciled with Refik Halid and others like him despite the law. See: Tuncay Birkan, *Dünya ile Devlet Arasında Türk Muharriri 1930-1960*, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2019), 112-120.

peanuts for darling to eat!” [Hediye’dir, kız senin adın Hediye/ Fındık fıstık aldım yâre ye diye!] Although it is a joyful folk song, the memories it recalls are painful because the retired civil servants receiving no regular salary and having financial difficulties used to sing this folk song while selling paste during the armistice period. Refik Halid used the folk song in fiction as an expression of collective pain. Civil servants were affected most by the war inflation. They were drawn as beggars in newspaper caricatures because they were in the lowest income class. (Toprak, 2003, p.153) There was a contrasting image in Istanbul. On the one hand there was this image of poverty, on the other hand there was entertainment, prostitution and gambling. Refik Halid (2016a) said, “When I look at my memories, I understand that the biggest gambling epidemic took place during the armistice time of 1918, the invasion of foreigners!” (p. 493)

One of the novels in which the author describes Istanbul in Armistice Period is *The Gang* [Çete]. This novel was intended to be “pure” propaganda of national awakenings. Although Refik Halid said that novels with thesis were insincere, this novel was written for the nation-state argument.

During such a troubled period, he was a teacher in Istanbul and saw the day 16 March 1920. After The Ministry of Education issued an order to appoint him as a French teacher at Adana High School, he got his travelling expenses and walked on the side street towards the bridge. He came across with the major Recep in front of the Printing House of Servet-i Fünun. Recep’s face, which was always pink and vivid, was white. This whiteness, according to Nezih, looked terrible, wild, and dark. (Karay, 2009a, p. 55)

Why does Nezih teacher, who comes across Major Recep, see that the life on Recep’s face has disappeared? The answer lies behind the date inside the passage: March 16, 1920. That is the day Istanbul fell under occupation of the Entente forces. This novel offers a radical solution to desperation: struggle. A teacher called Nezih, who has a quiet nature, turns into a warrior: Kıran Bey [destructive man]. There’s a name symbolization here. The teacher’s name Nezih, represents a decent and passive stance. But when he turns into a gang leader, his name changes to Kıran which means destructive. So, the author stresses that the victory will only be achieved through struggle and fight. And this teacher fights by forming a gang to get Hatay back to Anatolian lands. Another reference points that social transformation is remembered in the novels is through food culture. In his novel *The Gang*, narrator remembers the period of Occupation while drinking brewed tea from Moscow samovar: “During the armistice, refugees flocking to Istanbul in military capes would walk and sell tea on our streets; their melancholic voices are still in my ear.” (Karay, 2009a, p.174) During the Armistice, the milk pudding culture in Istanbul is replaced by cakes and doughnuts. There were transformations in food culture as well.

Conclusion

The period stretching from the end of the late Ottoman Period and to the foundation of the Republic was surely very painful. This pain is also reflected onto the structure of literary productions. Not only Refik Halid, but also many other authors writing during this period have produced memoirs, fiction and newspaper articles in a collective framework. The authors who used this collective framework in their literary works may have produced such memory consciously or unconsciously. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, all of the authors who convey their experiences of war, politics and exile are the “storytellers” according to Walter Benjamin. These “storytellers” describe their experiences by taking advantage of “Erinnerung” [memory] and history. They also avoid using the psychological analysis and attribute particular importance to experience.²³ As a storyteller Refik Halid dominantly used the

²³ See: Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller”, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 83-109.

collective memory in his literary productions. In accordance with his view of the official historiography, he had the symbolic power to manipulate an audience with his novels appealing to not only educated upper classes but also masses, including school-aged children. Even though the plot of events in his novels may seem to revolve around love and adventure, the real story is about the turning points.

Last but not least, literature has been positioned within the realm opened by testimony and experience, playing a crucial role in transmitting collective memory. This study demonstrates that the memoirs of Refik Halid, a dissident journalist exiled by both the CUP and the Republican regime, provided a rich source for his novels. The author leveraged the power of literature to remember the turning points of the era. While doing so, he didn't neglect irony and occasionally utilized political manipulations. Nevertheless, it can be said that regardless, the fundamental element shaping Refik Halid Karay's literature is memory itself. The author effectively utilizes the power of remembrance, and the boundaries that create this power are collective, not individual. The collective memory stands among the most significant sources that nourished Refik Halid Karay as a late Ottoman and early Republican author.

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