

TRACING THE ARMENIAN DESCENDANTS AND SELF-IDENTITY: AN ANALYSIS OF *CAN THESE BONES LIVE?*

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this study demonstrated how Armenian Massacres as crime fiction developed in response to finding their identity by tracing the ethnic criminal or heritage against their descendants. Besides, by looking at this genocide against the Armenian racial, I found it increasingly difficult to ignore the link between self-identity and the race criminalization conducted by the authority

Methodology: In this study, the writer implemented New Historicism theory by looking at the historical background, and combined with Horney Psychoanalysis of Personality, through the activities conducted by the characters. Then, through analyzing the plot and the whole story, the writer found that self-awareness of those characters could be seen in different forms and cultures. Based on those theories that people who know themselves will know what they think, feel, and believe; they will be able to take responsibility for themselves and be able to determine their values by reflecting their personality

Main Findings: Self-identity and Armenian descendants could be portrayed significantly, and they were very appropriate with the identity of the characters shown in the texts. Here, the writer also found that a novelist like [Tom Frist \(2015\)](#) used the backdrop of massacres to write about the inner lives of Turkish criminals. He focused directly on the narrative dilemmas posed by American Armenian. His work attempted to uncouple race from crime, and this writer showed us how massacres fiction became a necessary identity form for American Armenian who lived as migration and diaspora.

Applications of this study: So, the study of Armenian descendants was not only useful for a literary critic but also presented the history and ethnic cleansing in Turkey. And through this analysis, we learned more about the bitter experiences faced by deportees as shown in the setting places and the author's perspective.

Novelty/Originality of this study: Finally, I believed that tracing the Armenian descendants and self-identity was fascinating by identifying the characters shown in the novel.

Keywords: *Armenian Descendants, Self-identity, Tracing, Genocide, Cultures, Historical Roots.*

INTRODUCTION

Before explaining further, the writer would like to convey about the opening of the main character in this study. Peter Johnson, as an international journalist and a novelist, was twenty-nine years old. He went to Turkey precisely in 2014 to look for his ancestors who were of Armenian descent, as well as victims of massacres and deportations due to ethnic riots in 1915. He used a graphic memoir from his grandmother and to be the guide's great-grandfather. Peter worked closely with his beautiful and Muslim cousin, Ashti, a wealthy woman, both of whom tracked and found out the process of deporting their ancestors through Turkey and Syria. They finally lived in America. On their way to any villages, they learned so much about their family history and the area they explored. They involved with the rescue of Armenian-Syrian Christians from the rebels' hands in Syria at the time of the war. With his experience, Peter realized that the ability of his ancestors to do good or evil reflected in him. This book described the fate of five generations of Armenian families after being deported. This tense story is provocative and broad-minded in conveying strings of words and sentences that are so piercing and arouse the emotional turmoil of the reader.

According to [Kévorkian \(2017\)](#), the mass violence committed by the Young Turk regime against the Ottoman Armenian population has sometimes hinted at improvisation. The works published in recent years showed the destruction of Armenians-Syrians which organized with far more care than one might have imagined, including the logistics of eliminating the corpses. As we see, the Young Turk authorities made every effort to enforce their directives on officials or paramilitaries reluctant to carry out these menial tasks or negligent in performing them. Weather and domestic or wild animals also played their part, as they brought to light a multitude of corpses sometimes buried several months earlier. The location of the massacres largely conditioned the method used to eliminate from the public view the bodies of the victims. The ideological dimension should not be downplayed, as the priority for the Young Turks was to conceal all traces of their crimes as quickly as possible (p. 89). Conversely, [Jarman and Hamilton \(2009\)](#) said that the engagement with the Armenian government as part of the legal review process has been extensive, through two phases of dialogue that took place between 2004 and 2008 (p.225).

The first phase of the genocide began from April to September 1915 and consisted of forced deportation (the 'death marches') of the Armenian and Syrian populations. From the Ottoman Empire, in particular from six eastern provinces, where the majority had their historical roots, as stated in the following:

“...the chief turned his horse toward mother and Margaret, knocking Mother to the ground with his knee and grabbing Margarit up in front of him on the horse’s neck and galloped off with her up the road as she screamed” (p.26).

The above action mostly conducted by gendarmes. Sometimes, the Turkish guard chosen a young woman for satisfying their lust and forced her into his tent and fascinated her. This type of situation portrayed almost on each page of the novel and other documentation as stated by [Krok-schoen, et al. \(2016\)](#) that one might also highlight a well-documented case of 2,833 infants from the Bayburt district, who had passed the age limit accepted for ‘adoption’. They drowned in the Euphrates at the level of the Kemah gorge (p.10). Another evidence concerning this massacre a memorial was built in Zor in the 1980s, including a genocide memorial church and victims’ remains. [Derderian-Aghajanian \(2009\)](#) admitted that victims of genocide may still live outside their home country but they retain their identity. The Armenian Church, as the center of its community and identity, has saved Armenian history and culture. Therefore, the priests must be responsible for directing the youth groups where they teach Armenian language and history (p.34). There gather, every year on April 24, Armenians from all over the world, local authorities, heads of Bedouin tribes, and descendants of the Arabized deportees of the Khabour valley.

To study deeply about this genocide or massacres, the writer would imply the New Criticism ([Maza, 2004](#)) because it was a literary way of thinking that emerged in the 1920s and challenged the world of literary criticism in the late 1930s through the 1960s. Beginning in 1941, the work of New Critics by [John Crowe Ransom \(1979\)](#) introduced this movement by citing the essence of his book. The effect continues today and knew as the “old New Criticism,” because they published “New Criticism” but still disagree on other matters. Some oppose the name, therefore to raise some of the fundamental considerations supported by most critics and experts, including their students, must be acknowledged. It was surprising that some English teachers have worked on this method of New Criticism; even they have never heard the term. And in many classrooms emerged sternly, even in a proliferation of critical ideas, New Criticism ([Sharma, et al., 2014](#)) is often used only in question because the principle is so pervasive that it seems so natural and clear - and persists, easy and not articulated (p.37).

Further, the Self-identity concept would be side by side with the above criticism because a person’s identity, in a culture, is the core and focus of attention in humanities, cognitive abilities, psychology, and psychoanalysis. Likewise, in psychodynamics, the complexity of one’s self-experience will multiply and reveal the social attitudes of the individual, as explained in various layers of person schematization ([Horowitz, 2012](#)). Such schemes can only express through self-concepts that are contradictory or may be separate. This paper participates in discussing theories related to research methods, with an emphasis on qualitative analysis of one’s work (p.2). Jacqueline reasoned [Garrick \(1997\)](#) for Horney; the need to actualize one’s self-image ideally to attract love with an open feeling does not lead to a complex inner world filled with false pride, rigorous self-evaluation, tyrannical necessity, and self-hatred.

So, based on the above explanation, the writer decided and interested in looking further and analyzed this work to find out if self-identity and Armenian descendants still exist or have been disappeared in Turkey.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The writer began this short literature review on tracing the Armenian descendants and self-identity by working through Armenian articles he found in some credible articles. When the writer read about the studies of the genocides of the Armenians carried out by the authority of Turkey have been written mostly and studied by world experts as in the following historical accounts:

[Kévorkian \(2017\)](#) admitted the first phase of the genocide, from April to September 1915, consisted of the forced deportation (the ‘death marches’) of the Armenian and Syrian populations from the Ottoman Empire, in particular from six eastern provinces, where the majority had their historical roots. These are wild, mountainous regions, at average altitudes of 2,000 meters; the enclosed valleys – especially those of the Tigris and the Euphrates, but also the Murat River – were used as traps, with their entries and exits controlled by the butchers of the regime’s ‘Special Organization’. The males, constituting the principal target of the Central Committee of Itihad ve Terakki (Committee of Union and Progress), were systematically executed and tossed into the turbulent waters of the Tigris and the Euphrates (p.89). However, [Galip\(2016\)](#) declared that the number of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire declined from two million in 1915 to less than 400,000 after the First World War, where Armenians were officially and popularly accused of supporting Russia (p.460)

Then, [Maksudyan \(2016\)](#), [Morrissey \(2013\)](#), and [Kurt \(2018\)](#) also confirmed that the study to investigate the genocide in Turkey from the mid-19th century onwards, especially during the First World War, children were made into the nationalist, group and religious agitation. And also, the multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual structure of the Ottoman Empire by dividing the nation and making it difficult for the Ottomans to fight for. From street crime to youth organizations, with the theme of the campaign “saving children” through opening orphanages, Ottoman children from various community identities embody and produce internal political crises and competition as envoys to achieve political targets. Based on the research, records of the Ottoman police, Turkish-language newspapers, school books, youth organization papers and memoirs focused on the politicization, socialization of Ottoman children, youth based on ethnicity, religion, and community in a transparent way (p.139). The leading site of a series of massacres of Armenians between 1894 and 1897 happened in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire ([Akçam, 2011](#)).

Regarding the Armenian genocide, [Payne \(2012\)](#) and [Gocek\(2015\)](#) believed and analyzed the study done by Armin T. Wegner. He was a humanitarian writer and activist who witnessed the massacres and forced relocation of Armenian deportees while he stationed in Ottoman Turkey during the First World War. This essay analyses his efforts as an intermediary of reconciliation between Armenians and Germans within emerging conduits of civil society in Germany between 1919 and 1921. A look at the degree of apparent success, proximity to explicit political agendas, articulation and mobilization of narratives of suffering, and institutional sanction of his work is instructive for more general considerations about the role of intermediaries in acts of reconciliation in civil society. The essay traced some of Wegner's activities within civil society as well as the narrative and rhetorical contours of the interpretive framework. These activities were set and set-up, in the brief period of 1919-1921. Presenting himself as a mediator of reconciliation, Wegner explored ways of convincing his German and international audiences to look at images and listen to stories of the forced deportation of the Armenians. His work faced the difficult task of navigating the heterogeneous, geopolitical identity by Germans and Armenians. The normative claims of international humanitarian activism with which Wegner seems most strongly identify. Despite Wegner's commitment to international humanitarianism and experiments with forms of narrative empathy, his attempts to mediate reconciliation has impeded by political circumstances. His rhetorical associations for Armenian suffering with the legitimization for independence were the Armenian nation-state (p.25).

[Feierstein\(2014\)](#) and [Jarman and Hamilton \(2009\)](#) also declared that reorganizing genocide acts specifically on existing social relations. Where, the disappearance of those who embody specific ways of relating to others would not be enough to prevent similar relationships in the future if it were not for the simultaneous use of denouncers/informers to provoke mistrust among friends and neighbors, thereby destroying grassroots solidarity as well as political opposition. Under reorganizing genocide, murder is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. The real aim is to "reorganize" society by breaking down "relations of reciprocity" among its members—a theme that developed at length in the next chapter—and replacing them with new forms of political, economic, ideological, and cultural power (p.48).

While, based upon research, the typical response to genocide concerning tracing the Armenian descendants ([Peifer, 2008](#); [Osipian, 2013](#)) explored how and when genocide prevention becomes a problem in American politics, how genocide is defined by the United Nations, and how scholars and activists work to spread understanding to the public about the term. From definitions to evaluations, conceptual frameworks are also socialized to find out warning signs and stages of genocide as a form of murder. After defining the term and introducing the conceptual framework, it is then focused on continuing to reframe the understanding of interventions on "protection responsibility" internationally. Finally, discussing the issue of how America, being bound by commitments with Iraq, Afghanistan, and other places, also made a beneficial contribution to success in peace enforcement operations by establishing a rhetorical commitment to preventing the occurrence of genocide (p.94).

Due to the facts, [Furlanetto \(2017\)](#) and [Aslan, et al. \(2014\)](#) revolved with the existence of space, both real and abstract, which presents the mechanism of oppression and displacement carried out forcibly by the state, and building a foundation for cultural strengthening. A clear difference shows the difference between Turkish literature for international readers and Turkish American literature. It shaped as a dimension of the diaspora. The first part of the study featured Istanbul in the book *The Bastard of Istanbul* by [Shafak \(2006\)](#), *The Black Book* by [Pamuk \(1990\)](#), and *The New Life* by [Pamuk \(1994\)](#). These two writers described the city and set as a regulated with dichotomous ideology: imitation and origin, Americanization and authenticity, integration, and segregation. Each of these abstract concepts, using the term by [Mills \(2005, p. 384\)](#), "emplaced" and it is logic so that the city itself appears as a dual entity in which the universe opposes side by side without meeting (p.49).

The next research discovered that much knowledge about the refugee and asylum policies was concentrated in the period after the Second World War ([Schacher, 2013](#)). However, some work briefly said that the 1917 immigration law was excluded from literacy tests and avoided religious persecution. One scholar was convinced that this initial provision was 'life and death', bearing in mind the increasingly limited quota laws of 1921 and 1924 and ensuring there was no place for refugees ([Saunders & Avagyan, 2010](#)). Other scholars classify this literacy exemption as part of the liberal asylum tradition, which has been carried out in America as a defense against deportees ([Sandberg, 2018](#)). But there has not been much research on what was happening to the population and should be beneficial with the exemption of literacy tests - Armenian immigrants - to find out how binary reality and expectations were with protection ([Schacher, 2013](#)).

Another research discovered that by becoming a member of the European Union (EU), Turkey had experienced winding democratization starting in the 2000s. The main question of this process was whether it could handle internal diversity, reconcile due to tension, and heal prolonged pain. There needed to be a rethinking of the basic concepts of nationality and ownership, citizenship, and rights, whether related to the state, authority, or religion. She viewed the negotiation and outreach as indispensable to be Armenians in Istanbul, having to fight to get a place and live side by side within Turkey ([Kasbarian, 2016](#)).

[Gunn, et al. \(2015\)](#) and [Osipian \(2013\)](#) said that in various societies, specific segments or layers of the distant past considered as pillars or origins of the social order. In Europe today, the past - and especially the distant past - is seen not only as a reality that has passed but also as a period of the origin of the charter and the privileges of groups or individuals to obtain 'present' status. Then, people who use the past depend on certain assumptions about the causal chains that fabricate the reality of the past with the results seen or obtained today. This is not a personal reason but

comes from the dominant public discourse in society - indeed they must produce notes about, or images, from the past that can be understood by the community. This condition is especially necessary when the writing or drawing used as an argument in making policy. The case discussed in this essay, historical references must be understood by the king, his advisers in the palace, and nobility representatives in the world (p.27).

According to [Butt \(2017\)](#), in the first decade and a half of the twentieth century, Ottoman actions on Armenian society changed with challenges to the Government. The Armenian community does not have the separatist “moment” as it is today. Voting, restoring the existence of an Armenian state and nationalism is an immediate phenomenon: far greater autonomy, and including citizenship. As we will see, the Ottoman response to the restoration of the Armenian community has begun. After overthrowing the sultan and taking power in 1908, the Young Turk Movement agreed peacefully with Armenia, pushing for administrative reform. However, once World War I broke out, and Turkey joined the Central Powers, the Armenians determined genocide in large numbers. Seven years have passed; the same regime passed the same ties and used different strategies through “negotiations and concessions” and “collective oppression” (p.125).

The final essay, written by [Alwani \(2013\)](#) began a brief basic knowledge of Islam, followed by a summary of women’s involvement in it. Here, she invited back to the initial spirit and reduction of women’s contribution to the religious sciences. She suggested that the right methodology must base on the Qur’an and Sunna as one of the tools in reaffirming knowledge about women and shaping religious discourse. She then devoted special attention to Aisha to improve the misogynist attitude spread by people at that time regarding the role of women in society. By defending the methodological argument of Aisha as a model by involving hadith holistically in conveying the message and purpose of the Qur’an, she stressed its contemporary role by including women in the tradition of interpreting and developing the science of religion (p.46).

Concerning the above reviews, however, my study was mostly different from those experts because I focused primarily on literary work or the study concerned on a novel entitled *Can These Bones Live?* So, it was very different from what has been studied and thoroughly by other writers, although there are many similarities when discussing matters related to the genocide that has happened because almost all writers refer to the historical background and the Armenians in Turkey.

METHODOLOGY

In analyzing this text, the writer implemented the theory of New Historicism ([Kaes, 2016](#); [Lennox, 2015](#); [Fluck, 2013](#)) and Self-Identity ([van den Daele, 1981](#); [Gunn, et al., 2015](#); [Gitelson, 2014](#)), so that it is easy to trace out the identity of character’s ancestors. The term new historicism was first used by Stephen Greenblatt in an introduction to the edition of the journal *Genre* in 1982, to offer a new perspective in renaissance studies, emphasizing the relationship of literary texts with the various social, economic, and political forces that surround them. New historicism contains two things, namely (1) understanding literature through history and (2) knowing the culture, history, and thinking through literature. Therefore, new historicism does not distinguish literary texts from non-literature, such as the view of old history (history as a background for literary works) or new criticism (autonomous literature or history). New historicism applies the work method of inter text by reading several texts in parallel (parallel reading) because all texts are products of the times and are interconnected. The application of new historicism method liked reading literature “in a series of archives.” New historicism defines literature in terms of relations with non-literary texts because arguments about the meaning of literary texts are often easily broken down by looking at history. History was like a sharp knife of analysis because it usually provides a solid basis for developing statements concerning meaning. New historicism places literary texts within the framework of non-literary texts ([Hickling, 2008](#)).

Then self-identity, [Reiss \(1992\)](#) said that the problems of self-leading to disturbances are, however, best explored through narrative analysis, which can also show how issues can be resolved. The narrative summary can be preceded by progressive steps by reducing the complexity of information through repetitive patterns. Next, [Ziolkowski \(1998\)](#) specified views about self and others were identified by paying attention or explaining parts of the transcript. So, the writer could take a novel and paraphrased it in such a format so that he could clarify critical descriptions that were good from him, others, or from “us.” This causes repetition and then summarized. At work, formatting in summarizing was very necessary. After the content was identified, the narrative analysis variables related to the coherence of self-identity have a new assessment that involves a stage of disputes and contradictions between self-schemes whose existence was relatively devoid of supra ordinate attitudes which could smooth attitudes because they contained discussions.

Self-organizing values could be carried out with self-criticism schemes, and these activities were usually in theatre performances and their minds as if they were in the form of “us” gods, spirits, or pluralities as in “my people” ([Shweder, 1991](#)). All types of social schemes were used in reflecting and evaluating themselves intuitively so that attitudes that blended and were applied to self-state could strengthen or weaken the awareness of one’s identity (p.7).

RESULTS

The result of this study showed that the Armenians continued to maintain their ethnic and religious identity ([Fittante, 2015](#); [Chessick, 1994](#); [Reiss, 1992](#)) and were granted exclusive rights in the form of autonomous territories from the

Ottoman Turks. Many of the Armenian men recruited into the Ottoman army. The existence of Armenians who embraced Christianity since the first century in the highlands of the Eastern Anatolian Mountain has been for centuries. The Encyclopaedia Britannica noted that they shared the area with Kurds who also inhabited the area. But the life of the Armenians under the Ottomans is not very good. As a minority group with Assyrians, Greeks, and Jews, they sometimes get discriminatory treatment. For example, from 1894 to 1896 when Sultan Abdul Hamid II's troops massacred around 100,000 to 200,000 Armenians known as the Hamid Massacre. The action was carried out in a campaign to uphold Pan-Islamism to maintain the country's unity. The same thing also experienced by Zulaikha as quoted below:

"While he was waiting, Zulaikha explained to me that her uncle was convinced secularist and a firm supporter of the Syrian Government. He had little patience with religion" (p.311).

Through this finding, the writer would like to say that the authority of the Republic of Turkey as the successor to the Ottoman Turks which was declared since October 29, 1923, has repeatedly denied the occurrence of this genocide against the ethnic Armenians. Even so, it turns out that quite several Turkish experts and historians do not deny it. Related to the death toll that reached hundreds of thousands or even millions of people, Turkey's explanation explained the death rate occurred due to civil war, disease outbreaks, and famine. Such conditions, for Turkey, are a sufficient cause of death, including those experienced by Armenians, and not genocide.

The reason Turkey is not just trusted because there are many testimonies that the genocide against ethnic Armenians did indeed occur. There are at least 29 countries in the world who believe that the genocide of Armenians in Turkey does exist. In the middle ages, the area was ruled by the successors of the Armenian dynasty. Armenian political independence ended when a wave of invasion and migration of Turkish-speaking people began in the 11th century.

The establishment of the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century and territory of Eastern Anatolia included in the caliphate. At the beginning of the 20th century, around 2.5 million Armenians were living under the Ottoman Caliphate. Most concentrated in the six Eastern Anatolian provinces. Many Armenians also live outside the eastern border whose territory is under the rule of the Russian Empire.

The Armenian massacre is one form of genocide carried out by Turk's army against them as a minority group. The Ottoman army was impressive and "steady" on the battlefield ([Mazza, 2016](#)). However, they suffer from malnutrition, fatigue, extreme weather, and despair that lead to the widespread dissemination of concepts (through self-mutilation) and/or desertion and surrender (p.2). The action was done only because of differences in religion and identity among them. Thus, a large-scale murder and expulsion were starting in 1915. Generally, they were evacuated to Syria and Iraq as areas near and bordering Turkey. However, during the trip and deportation, many ethnic Armenia was brutally murdered. Men are their primary target, even including children and women. This proved by the existence of historic documents that tell and record the behavior of the atrocities of the Turkish army against ethnic Armenians. Not only that, but other evidence can also see in the museums that still exist in Ankara, or as explained in the following quote:

"When we came to the pictures on the wall of some of the ancient Armenian town in Anatolia where the deportees once live and to the map of deportation route that they were forced to take south to the desert around Deir Ez Zor" (p.279).

Wegner with the publication of his "Open Letter to the President of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson, on the Expulsion of the Armenian People into the Desert" in the Berliner Tageblatt on February 23, 1919, achieved fame and notoriety both at home and abroad as an activist for Armenian relief and national independence. His appeal to Wilson makes clear that his ambition is "to the right a wrong that no other people suffered like the Armenians. Then, declaring that "no group of people has ever suffered injustice to the extent the Armenians have", he casts responsibility and atonement simultaneously as "a question of Christianity" and a "question of humanity in its entirety" (p. 28).

It is important to note that the historical origins of the Armenian genocide are strongly contested. This view is generally forwarded by Western historians, who argue that the position and performance of the Ottomans in the war were firmly related to the policies adopted in deporting hundreds of thousands of Armenian with such a tense and frightening situation through very steep roads, without any protection from crime or disease outbreaks, resulting in the death of millions of people. Armenians, as stated below:

"Since they were male, they were the first on the list to be killed. If their mothers disguised them as young girls, they risked being selected for rape or kidnapping and then quickly killed when the deception was discovered (p.27)".

This type of action referred to as retributive genocide that aims to punish a minority that challenges a dominant group. [Derderian-Aghajanian \(2009\)](#) stated that a minority is not necessarily a numerical minority. It may be any group that is socially subordinate in the balance of power (p.41). [Balakian \(2013\)](#) added that "Discrimination still occurs, though, not just against Syriac and Armenians, but against all Christians. Three Protestant Christians in Malatya were recently tied up, tortured, and killed by fanatics who accused them of trying to convert Muslims to their faith (p.242).

DISCUSSION

This discussion began by introducing Peter John, who has chosen to start his story in the early evening of Monday, March 31, 2014, in Boston, Massachusetts. Then, when he arrived at Logan Airport signed a rental contract for a small

economical car and headed towards the condominium of his host, Aram, and Susan Petrofina, who lived in the nearby town of Watertown. The story he most desired to tell not about his own but his life up until now has not been that interesting. Instead, it was about his ancestors on his mother's side of the family, Garabed and Talitha Terzian.

Six months before starting his journey, he wrote to his distant Turkish cousin Dilovan Kaya and his daughter, Ashti, and told them of his plans to retrace the 1915 deportation route in South-eastern Turkey of their ancestors Karine and Margarit Terzian. Among the stories conveyed about the deportation were about a guard soldier who cared to his mother, Karine, by inviting them to escape from the detention camp if they wanted to survive. The soldier not only protected but also urged them to convert to Islam, and he was willing to marry Karine's daughter, as described in the following passage:

"Altay was quiet for a moment and then looked sadly at her. "Then there is no other way; I will not force, as our Prophet has said there is no compulsion in religion. Neither, do I wish to bring further shame on me or you, "Insha Allah, May God's will be done" (p.34).

Altay, as a guard of the deported Armenian group, was very concerned about Karine's mother's family, and he was earnest about protecting them. He even had time slept Karine's daughter because she wanted to marry her as a wife. But unfortunately, their relationship only continued during the deportation period not forever because Karine's daughter migrated to America. Here what is described is natural because of an emergency or a state of war, all things happen cannot be predicted so that people interpret it negatively, even though the intention is positive, such as like [Maksudyan's \(2016\)](#) statement that "the streets also became a central stage for adult nationalists who initiated a rivalry of their own over hundreds of unattended children on the streets, whose national belonging was in dispute. Non-Muslim communities were constantly on a knife-edge with the threat of losing their underage members to "Muslim kidnappers." The following accounts from 1917 provided the basic tropes for such fights over orphaned and destitute children" (p.148). Local Turks and Kurds went among the deportees taking whomever they wanted. Many were picked up by Muslim state officials and military personnel. Oral histories underline that beautiful girls were abducted and children and women were treated as if they were animals for auction.

Before going further, the writer wanted to convey the synopsis of *Can These Bones Live?* The main character here was Peter Johnson, a young American of Turkish-Armenian descent and international novelist who wished to travel to Turkey in 2014 looking back on the traces of the history of his ancestors who were the perpetrators and victims of the massacres and deportations which occurred in 1915. With a frank memoir from his great-grandmother as a reference, Peter collaborated with his beautiful Muslim cousin, Ashti, a wealthy woman, to retrace their ancestor's deportation journey through Turkey and Syria. They survived on the American continent during the trip and learned a great deal about the history of their ancestors. And the region and became a piece of evidence for them in drawing Armenian and Syrian Christians from the Syrian rebellion which killed during the war. Based on that experience, Peter realized that the abilities of his ancestors, either good or bad, were still reflected in himself.

In connection to the above explanation, a humanitarian writer, Armin T. Wegner, and activist who witnessed the massacres and forced relocation of Armenian deportees while he was stationed in Ottoman Turkey during the First World War was also told about the same history, as described in the following:

Self-Identity of Armenian in Imaginary Spaces

The study of cultural dichotomies is central to both Turkish and Turkish American literature characterizes as negotiating the binary opposition of religion versus state. This novel, however, and the literary traditions it is inscribed in, take different directions. If on the one hand, Tom strives to overcome the dualism of religiosity and secularism, or East and West, on the other hand, Turkish American literature focuses on demolishing the binary opposition between Turkey and the United States in particular. Not only does Turkish American literature renegotiate the significance of America in the construction of today's Turkey, but it also does so by presenting the Turkish and the American sensitivities as affine and intermingled. However, to find out the identity of this character, we must be able to look at their performance, statement, and culture, for example, as stated by Asthi while laughing in the following quotation:

"I am a Muslim because I was raised as a Muslim. I believe in Allah, and I believe that Muhammad was Allah's Prophet. I believe in prayer, and I believe in almsgiving and other righteous signs of personal commitment to Allah" (p.110).

It seemed to me that Asthi is the sub-character in this novel tried to protect her identity culturally and mostly different from Peter, however, he also recognized that Peter's highly mobile biography and Westernized upbringing have contributed to the international character of his literary production. The same thing also occurred on Peter as the main character who was born into a Westernized, graduated from American- University, lived extensively in the United States, and resided there forever.

The same thing happened to Zulaikha, where she was forced to marry Mukhtar Safar as an ISIS figure. But Zulaikha rejected him because he has his boyfriend, Hakob. Indeed, they were different "Christian vs. Muslim", but Zulaikha was willing to convert into Christianity for the sake of his love and his future because they would continue their study at the Medical Faculty in America. The process of conversion clearly stated below:

“I want to be a Christian because I believe that it is true what the Bible says about Jesus. She claimed to be one with Allah, and His miracles and resurrection proved that” (p.315).

After converted into Christian, the wedding ceremony started following with some traditional items to make sure this was indeed an Armenian marriage included Christian tradition and not Islamic way.

Tracing the Armenian Church

Through this traveling, Peter was not only come to visit his home town but also wanted to see the trace of some old and orthodox churches either still existed or had been demolished by the authority. Why like this because Turkey is not an Islamic state, but a secular state and many historic sites for Christians residing in Turkey today. The country that we know as Turkey is now a vibrant cultural region as a result of the domination of various nations that once ruled this area. From the Hittites, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Ottomans all left their mark on what was once known as Asia Minor. Before the arrival of the Ottomans, Asia Minor was one of the largest provinces in the Ancient Roman Empire. Asia Minor residents at that time were mostly Greeks and Romans who had settled in this place long before the Turks came and controlled this place. The Romans under the leadership of their emperors-built cities and streets in Asia Minor and provided a way for the spread of Christianity, such as stated by Peter in the following:

“In the early year of Christianity, this whole area was the site of vibrant Syriac Christian schools, hospitals, churches, and monasteries” (p.241).

Based on the above statement, it was clear that he’s coming home to finding a trace of Christian churches and monasteries. When you read Acts in the New Testament, you will realize that most of the events that occurred in this book took place in Asia Minor, aka Turkey. The book containing the travel records of the apostles was set in Roman cities which were also pockets of the Jewish diaspora.

Today the Turkish Government reopens St. Stephen’s Church in Istanbul, after seven years of restoration. The opening of the iconic church is a sign of harmony in Western relations. Bulgarian Orthodox Church in Balat, a historic Istanbul neighborhood on the edge of the Golden Horn which is traditionally home to Christians and Jews. The church that was built in 1898 was partly destroyed after being engulfed in flames. Made of cast iron, the iconic decoration of this building makes the synagogue “The Iron Church”. Turkey’s Religious Affairs Agency Denounced as if removing the accusation of his Government not enough to try to protect the rights of minority groups. “Istanbul shows to the whole world, this city is a place where various religions and cultures coexist peacefully,” the state is part of an effort to maintain freedom of worship for all people, regardless of religion or ethnicity. Anyone is free to practice their faith in Turkey,” all of Europe and the Balkans will see tolerance in Turkey. “Today is a symbolism of Europe”. The form of this symbolism could interpret as cited in the following:

“When I realized that it was here where Bakur would leave us, I softly called out his name, and he came over to me...” Bakur” I said I don’t know whether this encounter with you is of Allah or by chance, but it has made me see my great-grandfather Altay and my Turkish heritage in an entirely different light” (p.324).

It proved that the word encounter doubted by Peter, their meeting was confusing as if it was occurring by chance, not by God's decision. This confusion meant that the man was grey.

As we know, the construction of the church ([Morrissey, 2013](#)) began in the 4th century AD and completed in the 6th century. In 325 CE, Antioch has declared a pilgrimage center in the first Christendom council. When the excavation finished, here will be a place where pilgrims come and worship comfortably. The Christian community is working to unlock tourism potential here. For example, as stated below:

“Hakob said that “Our family had roots there for many generations, and father owned a small rug weaving business. We always went to the Armenian Orthodox Church, although there was a large Armenian Catholic church in Ar-Raqab as well” (p.245).

The Armenians continued to maintain their ethnic and religious identity and were granted exclusive rights in the form of autonomous territories from the Ottoman Turks. Many of the Armenian men recruited into the Ottoman army. The existence of Armenians who embraced Christianity since the first century in the highlands of the Eastern Anatolian Mountain has been for centuries. The Encyclopaedia Britannica noted that they shared the area with Kurds who also inhabited the area. But the life of the Armenians under the Ottomans is not very good. As a minority group with Assyrians, Greeks, and Jews, they sometimes get discriminatory treatment. For example, from 1894 to 1896 when Sultan Abdul Hamid II’s troops massacred around 100,000 to 200,000 Armenians known as the Hamid Massacre. The action was carried out in a campaign to uphold Pan-Islamism to maintain the country’s unity. The same thing also experienced by Zulaikha as quoted below:

“While he was waiting, Zulaikha explained to me that her uncle was convinced secularist and a firm supporter of the Syrian Government. He had little patience with religion” (p. 311).

To end this discussion, the writer would like to say that the authority of the Republic of Turkey as the successor to the Ottoman Turks which was declared since October 29, 1923, has repeatedly denied the occurrence of this genocide

against the ethnic Armenians. Even so, it turns out that quite several Turkish experts and historians do not deny it. Related to the death toll that reached hundreds of thousands or even millions of people, Turkey's explanation declared the death rate occurred due to civil war, disease outbreaks, and famine. Such conditions, for Turkey, are a sufficient cause of death, including those experienced by Armenians, and not genocide.

The reason Turkey is not just trusted because there are many testimonies that the genocide against ethnic Armenians did indeed occur. There are at least 29 countries in the world who believe that the genocide of Armenians in Turkey does exist. In the middle ages, the area was ruled by the successors of the Armenian dynasty. Armenian political independence ended when a wave of invasion and migration of Turkish-speaking people began in the 11th century.

The establishment of the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century and territory of Eastern Anatolia included in the caliphate. At the beginning of the 20th century, around 2.5 million Armenians were living under the Ottoman Caliphate. Most concentrated in the six Eastern Anatolian provinces. Many Armenians also live outside the eastern border whose territory is under the rule of the Russian Empire.

CONCLUSION

Through this novel, the route traced by Peter Johnson in Turkey and Syria started from Elazig (Harput) and ended in Ar-Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor. It was conducted to find out the family tree of Peter and Asthi Kaya beginning from the first generation until the fifth generation. Even these two characters have a very close connection or descendants. However, their identity was different because Peter grew up as a westerner and Asthi has grown up as a Turkish (Christian and Muslim).

So, this literary work could help us to look at the time in which they set in realist texts in particular and provided imaginative representations of specific historical moments such as their journey begins, memories of massacres, Armenian Museum and Library, Bosphorus University, Lake Hazar, Road from Diyarbakir to Mardin, events like a soldier pointed a rifle, held for ransom and shaking as they emerge from the church, periods 1915, 1991, 2013, and ISIS. However, these fictional texts are subordinate to the historical records.

Here the author of the book tried to direct our attention as if there was the guard or protector of the oppressed, especially woman, and also Christian showed its power to save Zulaikha who's purposed to marry the Christian man by continuing their study in America. Culturally, conscious or unconscious, the west portrayed that Islam, in this case, ISIS prohibited a woman to be educated and followed the man's instruction in many aspects of life, including became the fourth wife.

The above statement and explanation proved that the west (as the guard) still supported the Armenian to return to Turkey as their grandparent's home town to defend their identity and descendants because they were Christian. The same thing was said by [Mardiganian \(1918\)](#) the most well-known Armenian woman in America whose "deportations were written extensively in books and used as films to show and earn money for an organization known as America Near East Relief" (p.57). Besides, there was also an organization called YWCA and involved in the social field by employing Armenian women in Turkey. Then, they made an exception to their policy which was not suitable for 'weak girls' through housing and migration services. A worker explained without counseling about Armenian women who had been taken by Turks. They would remain morally tarnished, lacking enthusiasm during lives' and 'full of challenges in achieving their future hopes'. Considering the high price compared to the salary they get, 'they so stained with blemishes and sins' by entering the prostitution world (p.64).

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

The most obvious limitation of the study focused on only one novel entitled *Can These Bones Live?* Therefore, a firm conclusion about the Armenian massacres explored based on the texts in the story. The interpretation made by using the concept of New Historicism and identity to prove statements by varied authors. This study was especially important for literary critic by looking at the characters behaviors that were not static but was a developmental process that changes over time.

The study was limited to portray some character's behavior, as shown in the novel, and interpreted everything conducted by them consciously or unconsciously. Turkey is a very secular country; most of the genocides happened in the author setting up. Consideration of these characters's behavior might have revealed exciting findings, as explained in the above result and discussion.

The present study has mainly relied on not only new historicism and identity but also on the descriptive qualitative methodology of data collection and was therefore restrictive. Therefore, more of the qualitative method of data collection should be undertaken in the future to show broader aspects and ideas to the present study.

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