

The Quest For Identity And The State of Belonging In The Stories Of William Saroyan Who Is Of Bitlis Origin

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Abstract

William Saroyan was a Fresno-born first child of an Armenian Immigrant family that had migrated from Bitlis to the USA in 1905. Saroyan never breaks off the ties with his roots and his hometown Bitlis (a city located in the east of Turkey) despite the fact that his birthplace is the USA. He blends the feelings of homesickness, exile, longing and agony through his world-famous novelist, narrator and dramatist identity. *The Human Comedy, My Heart's in the Highlands, My Name is Aram, Cowards are Brave, From the USA to Bitlis, Poor People, I Love My Mother, Seventy Thousand Assyrians* comprise his nearly sixty literal production that have been translated into many languages. At the age of early thirty-five, he was awarded with "Pulitzer Prize" that is regarded as the Nobel Prize of the USA. During this period in literal world, William Saroyan was mentioned with his coining the term "Saroyanesque" which reflects his authentic narration style. The aspect that heightened him to the best short-story author of the USA level was his authentic phraseology that is far from ornament, word play, and that is earnest and has a plain expression. The sense of belonging, his dependence to Anatolia, specifically his father's hometown Bitlis, constitutes the core of his literal productions on theme basis. In this study; the drama of an Armenian family migrated from Bitlis to the USA due to the feeling of insecurity felt against the once oppressive political and social conditions, William Saroyan's authorship adventure in the USA and his agonised life in foreign lands and the sense of belonging which reflects to his stories within the aspects of human-space and the quest for identity have been searched.

Keywords: William Saroyan, narration, Bitlis, quest for identity, sense of belonging

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1. Introduction

Identity is the name of historical, ethnical, social and cultural reality about individual's personality, and is the expression of subjective totality and consistency. At some point it is the answer of the question 'who am I? Developed concordantly, the quest for identity is a kind of activity that is created by the sense of belonging in human mind. This feeling develops on different basis bywhich individual that quest for identity determines between himself/herself and the outer environment. Because, identity is shaped according to individual's biological and psychological differences, gender, age, job and social statute, value judgement, beliefs and ideals, relics and the legacy of ancestry. It is shaped with what the individual feels and regards within his life as a total in addition to the historical legacy such as language, religion, art and civilization². Every individual, family and group has an identity repertory in coordination with his or her cultural and social values.³ In this respect, the quest for identity makes sense for the individual as one of the main aspects of development⁴

The definition of 'the quest for identity' or 'the sense of belonging' are the two core terms that need to be explained or defined if one likes to understand better the characteristics of ethnic origin of William Saroyan. In fact, these terms are also important for enlightening the backstage of the reason that why the author's family had migrated from Bitlis to the USA before the Second Constitutionalist Period.⁵ A scientist can not be assumed to be in partiality such as ethnicity, language, religion, politics and ideology or has a likewise obsession about the topic he/she handles. While blaming others with impunity, it is not an ethical approach at least in relation to a scientific subject examination to make a literal figure whose job and occupation is only art and literature to face the same destiny just because of his/her belongingness.

² Selçuk Budak, *Dictionary of psychology*, the term "identity", Bilim ve Sanat Yay., Ankara 2000, s. 451.

³ Nuri Bilgin, *İnsan İlişkileri ve Kimlik*, Sistem Yay., İstanbul 1996, s. 192-200.

⁴ Selçuk Budak, *age*, s. 451.

⁵ Dünyada "Ermeni Kırımı", "Ermeni Soy Kırımı", "Ermeni Kıt'alı", "Ermeni Kıyımı" gibi adlarla zikredilen bu büyük toplumsal felaket, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun İttihat ve Terakki iktidarı döneminde ve I. Dünya Savaşı sırasında Ermeni tebaasına karşı sürgün yoluyla gerçekleştirilen bir etnik temizlik⁵ iddiasıyla uzun yıllar uluslararası gündemdeki yerini korumuştur. Ancak Türkiye'de itibar gören tezlerde, tehcir sırasında ve sonrasında birçok Ermeninin öldüğü kabul edilmekle birlikte, ölümlerin sebebinin sistemli bir devlet politikası olmadığı öne sürülür. "Savaş koşulları, hastalıklar, iklim, bölgedeki çete ve aşiretlerin saldırıları ve Ermenilerin zorunlu göçünü kolaylaştıracak imkânların bulunmaması ve Ermenilerin isyan başlatarak birçok Müslüman Osmanlı tebaasını öldürdüğü" de savunulmaktadır.⁵ Bu nedenle Türkiye'de soykırım karşıtı tezi savunanlar, "Ermeni Soykırım İddiaları" veya "Sözde Ermeni Soykırımı" ifadelerini kullanırlar.

Thus, in an evaluation of the 1915 events that led his family to migrate from Bitlis to the USA, William Saroyan uttered the followings about the massacre while declaring that he did not take place in the Armenian diaspora: “A Turk suffers as much as an Ermenian does. Nonsense, but I was not aware of it then. I did not know those, who are called Turks are inclined to shift their way to a more difficult pathway, are harmless poor sweet people. My grandmother did not, and still does not know either that to hate a Turk is equal to hate an Armenian who is made from the same mold.. I am aware of this but what is it worth?”⁶ These sentences show the worldwide famous author who looked for his cultural belongings in beloved Anatolia both stayed out of political issues and mirror his humanistic worldview. In this article we searched to find out how the aforementioned events (which caused Sorayan’s parents to migrate to the USA burdened with the feeling of being deracinated from the familiar soils) affected the author’s life. We also traced the author’s quest for the sense of belonging, the longing for his hometown during all his life in America, and his struggling with the feeling of alienation, which is observable in his, works especially his stories.

2. William Saroyan (1908-1981): An Author After the Immigration from Bitlis to the USA

William Saroyan’s family migrated from Bitlis to the USA three years before his birth after the political and social turmoils occurred in the East and Sotheast Anatolia Region in of Turkey. William Saroyan was born on August 31, 1908 in Fresno, California. In this term, half of the cognate of his family including Saroyans from the USA lived in California. When his Presbyterian priest father died, he was three years old. Being left an orphan at this age, Saroyan, along with his sister and brother was placed in an orphanage. Although they rejuined with their mother experiencing five years there, they never got rid of their calamity of desolation and loneliness. It was not easy for their mother to experience the unbearable foreign agony in a cultural and physical geography that was foreign to her. Their family’s life turned into a drama when poverty was added. Saroyan, who expected his future by studying at the town where he held onlife despite the cruelest life condition, broke off himself from educational institutions that he sometimes attended when he reached the age of fifteen. He had to find a job and work to support his family.

⁶Bu sözler, William Saroyan’ın, “Yetmiş Bin Süryani” adlı öykü kitabının arka kapağına alıntılanmış ifadelerinde yer almaktadır.

At the same time, he had the ducility to set a target that was ahead of his age, however. Being aware of his ethnic belonging and getting his ethical and cultural identity, Saroyan settled the matter of self-confidence. Thus, according to Ericson, if a teenager individual solves identity problem in an early and unhesitating way, the individual can fulfill the deficiency about self-confidence relatively. The achievement that can be observed in the individual's life also develops in relation to this sense of confidence: "The sense of high-ego is in the condition of precipitating for self-confidence and success. Those people who have the sense of high-ego are much more motivated for achievement. They can better overcome every kind of hardship. They are constant and keep their belief about their success alive. Those with the sense of high-ego give their all for a lasting success."⁷ Thus, in William Saroyan, who never gave up struggling, the way of a higher achievement for the ideal of becoming an author, turned into an ungovernable passion day by day. On one hand, he worked in many hard jobs to make a living; on the other hand, he undertook writing stories. His hope that faded in studying turned green for his ideal to become an author. His first story "*The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*" was accepted by *Story Magazine*. Seen valuable for printing, when Saroyan was twenty-five, this story in fact paved the way for him to become an important author. After a short time(1939), climbing up the celebrity ladder, Saroyan won the Pulitzer Prize that enjoys esteem in the USA for his play "*The Time of Your Life*". Getting credit and arousing interest with his art, the author did not accept the mentioned prize on the grounds that his works did not contain much difference from his other works.

His aim is to have an authentic creativity in the art of narration and make the difference between the arts societies embedded in this field observable. His artistic ability is suitable for achieving this. Saroyan trailed a few good audience by publishing stories one after another in a short time by achieving a purpose of being an author. Saroyan placed his family, his hometown Bitlis, and his firm stand against alienation in the center of his books' themes. He created a distinctive style in prose. A style that was as fluent as speaking and full of the joys of a spring turned into a brand labelled with his name. It has been called "Saruyanesque" in the literal world where his fame has gone beyond the borders of the USA. The sense of self-identity that improved in his personality contributed much to him.

⁷Duane P. Schultz ve Sydney E Schultz, *Modern Psikoloji Tarihi*, (Çev. Yasemin Aslay), İstanbul 2001, s. 385.

This sense, at first, associated him with his past and brought him in preserving his rights especially freedom. The more Saroyan perceived his characteristics and he recognised his differences from his environment, the more he understood the importance of his authenticity. Thus, being aware of his identity, Saroyan united ethnic, social and cultural identities in his life and art, and he aimed at improving universal value within this scope.

2.1. Saroyan's Approach to Art, Literature, and His World-View

Saroyan's intellect of literature is based on sociological and psychological analysis. Although he is seen within nationalist and socialist sphere, it can be easily perceived that his decision is the station of universal human values and human dimension. As an artist, Saroyan hates the apprehension of imitating someone or following someone. In this sense, he does not have the obsession of order relating to literal genre. The factor he minds in his writing is not form, but content. In his "**I, in the World**", he says that he comes to stage in front of the audience with his ethical origin, cultural and artistic aspect confirms this by stating that "I endeavor to transfer myself as I am in my works. And I much as I can my world, too. Firstly, I want to be honest and perfect in my style."⁸ The sense of belonging is the most basic right and liberty that a person feels. Moreover, the reality of identity and the sense of belonging serve a worldview to a person. The individual is motivated in this view which matures in time to set plans for his/her future; to question and embrace his/her belongingness; to take part in favour of those who have minimum communal; to eat, drink, wear, have a relation, believe, worship; to become himself/herself. In fact, the desire to live with their identity that they have experienced or just become aware of is a stable common characteristic for humans. Likewise, they want to reflect their ethnical and cultural identity and sensibility about their identity while speaking, writing, drawing and creating literal and art works.⁹ The individual should never be judged just because of these innocent and natural rights in no circumstances and time.

It is the short story that William Saroyan can express himself well, and thus he drives more importance to it among other prose genres.

⁸ William Saroyan, *Yetmiş Bin Süryani*, II. Bask., (Çev: Ohannes Kılıçdağı-Aziz Gökdemir), Aras Yay., İstanbul, 2010, s.162.

⁹ Bkz: Yümni Sezen, *Çağdaşlaşma Yabancılaşma ve Kimlik*, İstanbul 2002, s.41-49.

In short story, he takes essential strength from his social-realistic literal style and his clear sight that sheds light on dramatic life of common people from the society.¹⁰ It is difficult to find ornated interpretation and Word games in the stories because he is successful in using a vivid and plain language. In his stories, he narrates only human; human's love, hope, like, longing, misery, poverty, missing and the passion for hometown. Nearly all of the short stories he collected in his famous *Seventy Thousand Assyrians* book are based on these themes. He includes parts from his worldview in the short story "I the World" from this book. He indicates that he places humans in the center of his philosophy by saying: "I am only dealing with humans ... I try to turn humans back to natural beauty and grace. I want to turn humans back to their essence."¹¹ As a work of perception and mentality putting human in the center, his works' source of information is totally the author's worldview. The most basic power that shaped his worldview is his father, Manak. All of his stories bear traces from his father. "I am sitting in the presence of my father who left this world many years ago ... it is like looking at a mirror because I see myself there."¹² His aforementioned father, "a respectable person, teacher, a landlord in Bitlis when he went to the USA, he was an immigrant who looked for his portion in difficult situations; but, at the same time he was an artist contributing the world literature with his poems and stories. It is understood that this materially poor but intellectually rich father affected his son with the works he left behind.

The short story is the mirror of William Saroyan's philosophy. The main source shapes the basis of his philosophy is his father Manak's worldview. The father figure in all of his stories is in the condition of being main factor that he in a way associates with himself. Saroyan, like his father, was against the technology. Although he perceived the machinery as a heap of junk, he worshippingly liked his typewriter, which was the means of living and thus the most beloved thing he had. It exists as an attention-grabbing dilemma in his life. Having the desire to live the wished life to his heart's content, the author considered appropriate to sell the only technological thing he had. Thus, he would not sacrifice his desire and request for the sake of anything. He believed that quickly developing civilisation, changing and life-grabbing scientific and technological element violates human psyche. He thought that excessive ambition to make money, non-satisfaction is a headache for humans.

¹⁰ Bu bilgiler, William Saroyan'ın *Ödekler Cesurdur* adlı öykü kitabının önsöz bölümünden alınmıştır.

¹¹ William Saroyan, *Yetmiş Bin Süryani*, s.158-159.

¹² William Saroyan, *Yetmiş Bin Süryani*, II. Bask., Aras Yay., İstanbul, 2010, s.164.

For him, a physical desire like extensive possession is also the source of violence. Saroyan, in this sense, gives intermediary explanation about what he has avoided and what he has given importance to throughout his life. "I do not value violence and I bitterly hate those who approach it. I assume a living man's hurting his little finger is scarier and more catastrophic than his natural death. Demiciding people collectively in wars pushes to a misery at the borders of madness. I get angry and find no way out. My only weapon is language and although I know that language is more powerful than a machine gun, I get desperate because I cannot demolish the idea of destruction propagandists awaken in human and my own."¹³ Saroyan, who wants to be himself in his stories that are full of love, desire, despair and enthusiasm, chooses accordingly characters who are at peace with themselves. For him, a man whose soul has been taken from himself cannot be made a part of idle crowds. Freewill is the best value for human. To use this value is a humanistic right. Those people who use this right have an actual merit. His uttering about the subject is of opinion: "To shoal is suitable for animals ... throughout my life I have laughed at rules, I have made fun of tradition, formalism and artificialness. How can rules be established over such a marvelous creation like humans?... I preserve my personality. If being I deter publishing of my writings, I am willing. I do not believe in fame, it is a sort of lie."¹⁴ William Saroyan's perspective on life and his worldview are reflected in his works by indicating his sense of art in accordance to his personality and temperament.

William Saroyan, who squeezed over sixty books of novels, stories, memoirs, stage plays and poems in his misery knitted life that passed abroad, reflects sections from his beloved hometown that he did not ignore and forget in all of his works. The ideal of dedication to roots, belongingness and ancestors; ownage of this country and values dominate in his works. On this basis, loneliness, poverty, being abroad and misery constitute the themes that often shape his stories. The best means to reveal and express these senses in the author's novels and stories are the protagonists he created. The thematic factors, which are directly comprehended with his life temperament, are fictionalized in the life adventure of protagonists whom the author chose and picked up from lower classes of the society. The flat characters in the short stories that reflect a reality with the events and persons are the people that have different drama and are from the poor segment of the society.

¹³ William Saroyan, *Yetmiş Bin Süryani*, s.158.

¹⁴ William Saroyan, *Yetmiş Bin Süryani*, s.158-163

The characters in the stories are passionate, honest and industrious persons who are homesick, keep on fighting the poverty and get tired while using their mind to survive but definitely have an ambition or desperation. The author signs his sensations and considerations, emotions and dreams, aspiration, desires and misery gently sometimes with a dominant point of view and sometimes with an author-narrator point of view. There are the quest for identity and the sense of belongingness at the bottom of them all. In this regard, generally Anatolia, the place he keeps bearing the hope of rejoining with, and specifically Bitlis, his father's hometown, become prominent as the most mentioned values in the stories.

2.2. The Relation between Story and Space

There appears a radical relation between William Saroyan's stories and space, which he treats as a thematic factor. Stories bear the traces of Anatolia, where his parents were born and grown up, and his actual hometown, Bitlis, which he found the opportunity to visit many times during his life. These works that the author wrote with the sense of affection and loyalty reflect cultural values and belongingness that the author was destitute of throughout his life. This is the value he kept in both his mind and the deepest part of his psyche.

The homesickness sensed in his stories is the wish to live together with the people who culturally share common values with him. This, in a way, is the effort to know and understand himself. Because those people who are not aware of who and what they are, those who are ignorant of their cultural and historical existence, are doomed to play the roles written by the dominant. In time, they have to surrender with their will to the coterie whose hegemony they have gone through. Because they have to consider what the coterie thinks about them in an inferior complex manner. Thus, he who is not himself cannot avoid metamorphosing, becoming someone else. Whoever does not respect himself about belonging and whoever does not embrace his identity in all respects emulates foreign cultures and identities by becoming imitators; thus, he is annihilated in the vortex of concern that he feels for flows around him.¹⁵ For the individual, the way out of this problem is to live in the social environment he belongs to and as a result, to feel the sense of reliance and satisfaction.

¹⁵ Sadık Tural, *Kültürel Kimlik Üzerine Düşünceler*, KTB Yayınları, Ankara 1988, s.65-68.

There are patriotism and consciousness lying at the basis of the aforesaid sense. The sensibility in Saroyan necessitates national service. The sense of being not beneficial to his country and nation has a wearing effect on him. Known as "The Greatest Poet", it has been Abdulhamit who expresses the foresaid sense in the best effective way. The idea "your life and death become prisoner to shamefulfulness / If you have not contributed to the country of the nation." expresses embarassment that the patriot feel because of their deficient service. The saying expresses the fact that if an individual or a society lack of serving his/their country, they are at a loss both in life and death. In fact, social health depends on this. By saying "Homeland worths health, it is understood when it is lost."¹⁶ Süleyman Nazif shares the same idea. The term "homeland" in Saroyan's stories is the place where individual belongs to; his ancestors lived on if not himself; he feels his connection with its history, custom and memoir; thus, it is a piece of land where he naturally long for living on. He, hence, through his protagonists hints that "homeland" is just place where he can live freely and independently, and he does not desire to live on a place deprived of these characteristics.

A nation's life in a comfortable, joyful and reliable way in the world is the reason for existence of the homeland. Homeland is the assurance of the individual or a society's freely experiencing their language, religion and culture; rearing and educating their children in their mother tongue as they wish. Thus, the poet of homeland and freedom, Namık Kemal's saying, "a person loves his homeland because his freedom, his rights and benefits exist owing to the homeland."¹⁷ tells this, too. The sense of patriotism in individual and society is an inborn characteristic. The term "homeland" is an essential value that basically invokes respectability in human's mind. It is a bitter sense an individual remains separate from it. The sense of responsibility felt for it is an ethical idea.

¹⁶ Bilal Eren, *Güzel Sözler Antolojisi*, Cihan Yay., İstanbul 2009, s.306.

¹⁷ Kemal Erol, "Namık Kemal'in Siyasi Düşünceleri ve Devlet İdeali", *Doğumunun 170. Yılında Uluslararası Namık Kemal Sempozyumu*, I. Cilt, Tekirdağ, 20-22 Aralık 2010, s. 405.

It is important to remember a verse by Great Master Abdülhak Hamid, who experienced the misery of being abroad and the sense of patriotism in his life adventure: "If there isn't patriotism in his mind,/Do not mind him but blush,/ Get angry! Even dogs are patriot./ What an unpatriotic person loves, I wonder?"¹⁸ According to the verse, the ones who lack the feeling of patriotism have nothing to be proud of.

The idea of loyalty and the sense of being dutiful for the fatherland is one of the most important criterion of patriotism among the individuals and societies. In this sense, the story "Madness in the Family" from Saroyan's *Coward are Brave* reflects the author's most advanced sentiment and consideration.. In the story, the author promotes Bitlis and Anatolia against the USA that he does not feel he belongs to. There is nothing that the family feels in their possession in Fresno, California. Minorities are faced with forgetting their mother tongue and they cannot claim any right. The only community whose existence is not perceived as a problem in a foreign land is the one that do not protest. Every kind of maltreating including being denigrated is a part of life for asylum seekers and migrants. Because; there is a formal authoritative approach at stake that makes it dominant. It is an America-centred approach, in other words, "Americanism". This term is Americans' ethnocentric and cultural prejudiced collective approach. It is an ego image Americans have developed to Show the universality and superiority of their values and world-view. This idea also demonstrates an approach under the domination of the USA."¹⁹ It is the result of assimilation policy to exclude the ones who are not of the dominant culture. In literature, it is "ethnocentrism", in other words, cultural fanaticism that pushes the society into separation, it is also nourished with social, historical, cultural and traditional factors; it regards an absolute outer an inner group segregation.²⁰

The injustice that was deemed proper for Başmıyan family in the context of cultural fanaticism takes William Saroyan to a past time journey. His "Madness in the Family" story treats his father, Manak whom he introduces as "an important wise man", and the other members of his family.

¹⁸ Abdülhak Hamid Tarhan, *Bütün Şiirleri 4*, Dergâh Yay., 2001, 163.

¹⁹ Vittorio Lanternari, "Ethnocentrism and Ideology", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Volume 3, Number 1, January 1980, s.66

²⁰ David Pearl, "Ethnocentrism and The Self Concept", *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 40, pp. 137-147, 1954, s.138)

He focuses on their position in his father's hometown, Bitlis, as a response to their life in the USA that comes and goes between existence and extinction.

There is distinction between "country" and "motherland" in William Saroyan's world. In his life, motherland is belongingness that is looked for longingly, and is more emotional than country. Thus, motherland is the place where the person feels himself belonging to it, where he feeds with its memoir, speaks his mother tongue, and where he can express himself easily. On the other hand, country is a term that requires him to serve to what he sees himself responsible for; that equips him with many responsibilities as a part of citizenship. Although William Saroyan emphasizes "motherland" in his stories, it seems that his perception of responsibility, in fact, is closer to the term of country, and he longs for in this context.

William Saroyan expresses what he understands from the term country that develops dependently in his "Madness in the Family" story. There is homesickness in every line of this story. Saroyan first narrates the changes that took place in his family members after their migration to the USA. The first deficiency the family senses is the lack of country. Therefore, the quest for a country gets a seat in their family life. Leaving their country behind, they came to the USA but their deads were in Bitlis. For them, to accept the USA as their country was only possible via their deads' lying in the graves of the USA. As Başmıyan family whom Saroyan belongs to considered it impossible, they were faced to a new kind of madness. That is why the family wished one of them would die and they would bury him/her in the USA.

It was possible through this way for Başmıyan family to consider the USA as their country. The author expresses his emotions about the topic through the protagonist of the tale, Vartan: "On one hand, we are in Fresno; on the other hand, we are nowhere. How can we belong to anywhere unless the death catches one of us and we bury him and know he is here?" (p 13) demonstrate that whatever people's religion and race are, the colour and the reason for people's tears are the same; the miseries that stem from patriotism are so the same. Even if a man moves to another country because of either this or that, his village and country never cease to be his as long as he does not intend to leave. Because the place where mind and body are present is sometimes not the same one. One stays at foreign land and the other at homeland. That is why he usually says "One day I will come back here again."

That Saroyan's family's coming to the USA to settle does not prevent them from not forgetting their country they carry in their hearts. The USA could only be "the country of residence" not "actual country" for them. When he comes home every evening, It is striking that the protagonist of the short story Vartan asks his wife and mother every evening when he arrives at home: "hasn't anybody died yet?" someone, someone that will end this thrillfull loneliness, our being scattered aimlessly, this emptiness and ruthlessness." Because the explanation of patriotism in the story is loyalty to the land and motherland; it is men's glorifying their historical and cultural values. Unless a man decides to leave his country where he was born and brought up, and where his ancestors' graves are present, it is difficult for him to embrace a new land. There is not an individual, a family, a group of people or a nation that denies his/their national identity or has/have banned the term of country for himself/themselves That is why the author, Saroyan, attributes holiness to the land of country, and he maintains his love and longing for his history even though he did not experience.

John, a protagonist of writer's another story *My Heart's in the Highlands*, takes place of Vartan, the protagonist of "Madness in Family" in *Cowards are Brave*²¹ Both protagonists' common misery is the emptiness that was created by being away from their country. A misery that is being lived in this context is observed in author's "The Poor and Burning Arab" book. Uncle Hosrov and The Burning Arab, the homesich protagonists of the story, are sorrowful immigrants who can share their common miseries without speaking. They do not need to speak to share their loneliness and destitution they have away from homeland. Those people who share the same destiny can understand each other by complaining about their troubles through their glances. The real name of the brave character who is called The Burning Arab by the people around because of his sufferings is Halil. The misery has interpenetrated into his body inasmuch as it has shaken his soul. He is portrayed in the story with " He is not bigger than an eight-year-old child physically. But he has a statuesque moustache. He seems to be in his sixties. However, despite his huge moustache, he suggests a child in heart more than a man to the others."(p 16) This poor man whose childish eyes are full of memoirs has nothing to do but struggle with the memoirs of the beloved people he left behind many years ago, maybe his hometown, mother, father, brothers, his horse and many more.

²¹ William Saroyan, *Ödlekler Cesurdur*, I. Bask., Aras Yay., İstanbul, 2001.

These utterings that portray the misery of The Burning Arab are in fact the embodiment of his destined psychology through his voice "he didn't know even a Word of English. A little Turkish, few words from Kurdish and a little Armenian...while he was speaking his voice sounded as if it was coming from his hometown he left far away not inside his body. He was talking as if he regretted being obliged to speak. It seemed like an agonizing effort of a person who tried to explain an unexplainable, it seemed as if each of his utterance added more to his present sorrow."(p17)After his destiny coincides with The Burning Arab, Uncle Hasrov suffers from another facing another face of the world after he migrated to the USA, and he understands what homesick is. He cannot internalize even his nephew because his nephew was born in the USA. For him, those people who are condemned to live far from their countries are heartsick and miserable like themselves. Because the lives of expats in foreign land are as troubled as their deaths. Six thousand miles far away from their homeland, they die as a lonely orphan. But they want to turn to their homeland back and die there. Whereas, they want to see their children, speak with them, fulfill their longing, feel their breath.(p24) Migrants who are victims foreign land like this one are narrated in a small shop in a poor street in this context in the author's another story, "Poor People".

While fictionalizing his stories, William Saroyan takes a social community to the center who are aware of their belonging, have the consciousness about the identity, and who are homesick. These are those who have migrated to the USA and one alone with sufferings especially adaptation problem. Nearly all of them seem to be there to tell the author's life adventure in the story. While narrating this theme, William Saroyan parts from his life and especially takes advantage from child characters. It is different to endure the misery as an immigrant in a foreign country, and it is different to be assimilated and alienated there. The author chooses to protect his essence despite everything. Because of that, he harshly criticises those who consider themselves American in spite of being Armenians, and those who forget or do not embrace the place they came from. He complains about Armenians that forgot their language after they had come to the USA. He is afflicted with the discrimination between White and black there. He talks about coloured people's being despised, German's being insulted and the injustice that deemed proper to Scottish. It is being tried to dominate a treatment that change different belongingness. Whereas, the role of the sense of belongingness is huge in shaping social relations.

Because an individual wants to establish his/her future by living in the society which he/ she belongs to. Thus, he chooses people whom he can rely on from the society that resembles to him, thinks and lives like him. It is considered a very natural situation for the sake of togetherness of living creatures including humans. But the idea of domination that may create a cultural fanaticism brings about a danger of ethnocentrism in the event of surging from the line of rights and justice. The term "ethnocentrism" is perceived as a person's taking his culture into the center and evaluating the other cultures within the context of his culture²² as William Graham Sumner defines (1906): "There is a need for peace, order, law, management, industry ...etc for the ones in the group. The relation of the group with the outer groups or with the ones out of the group depends on war and loot while loyalty and self-sacrifice are at the forefront against the group, the sense of hate comes into prominence against the ones out of the group. In ethnocentrism, inner group is the center of everything and anything that has been given meaning related to the outer group depends on the interpretation of the inner group."²³

Excessive lack of confidence that stems from ethnic difference in separate parts of society may trigger an ethnic conflict. To prevent this, contrary to ethnocentric consideration, a healthy society that has the consciousness to respect the human rights and universal values. Because the strength and power of the social fabric depends on the health of every cell it harbours. It is going to strengthen the social fabric better to embrace everybody as they are without attempting to change any reality, and give it the opportunity to live in equal terms. This approach, in fact, harbours a humanistic world-view. Thus, it is observed that the scene seen in nearly all of his stories takes nourishment from and is shaped by human rights and universal human values. The source of occurring misery is immigrants' living far from their countries, the families they belong to and other culture. This is the main reason for constituting his drama into themes of his stories. His "Havagim Saroyan" story is a text that narrates Saroyan family's migration to the USA and his childhood. In the story, Havagim is a character that represents the author's father in connection with homesickness. The author serves from his childhood and his father's life adventure through this character. Havagim, in the story, is a lonely person far away from his homeland. He had to leave his hometown, Bitlis, to go for work in the USA.

²² Enver Özkalp ve diğerleri, *Davranış Bilimlerine Giriş*, Anadolu Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1. Baskı, Eskişehir, Temmuz, 2002, s.69.

²³ Vittorio Lanternari, "Ethnocentrism and Ideology", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Volume 3, Number 1, January 1980, s.54.

But he always thinks about his hometown and his family. One of the vital sections from the author's family past reflects through the following sentences: "It was 1917, fifty years ago, it was this month again, July. You were alone in the vineyard, your wife and two sons were in Bitlis. If they weren't killed or they didn't die of hunger and thirst from the long way from Bitlis, where maybe many passed nearby or far away and died, to the desert. You did not take news from them or from someone that had seen them even if they were alive. Maybe your children were alive but did not know who they were. They were too young to remember. Probably they were taken to an orphanage and given new names."(p26)

In William Saroyan's another story, the events in school experienced by an Armenian child who assumes himself an American is narrated from the point of another child. Born in the USA, the Armenian child assumes himself American. But, in fact, he is an Armenian. He just realises this fact when his teacher starts underestimating Armenians. Although their names are Vartan, Dikran and Hayk, they are called Walk, Dick and Ike in school. Maybe they will not die here but they became American. They still continue to survive even though their names are changed but their mother tongue is not as lucky as their names. The number of people who know their mother tongue is few among them. There is nothing that they can appropriate as national culture for themselves. Thus, the term "ethnocentrism" is the result of an approach that seeks an upper identity dominating ethnic or cultural group as the center of everything.

Different cultures, languages, religions and behaviors that are not approved and granted by the hegemonic society underlie the foresaid ethnical discrimination. William Saroyan's most important text which narrates people who suffer from these problem is his "Wherever you go, Homeland is in your Scream" text. How Armenian descendent immigrants in the USA feel themselves here is narrated through the utterings of one of the protagonists in the story: "There is only one class of Armenian in America, Fresno and the world, it is living Armenians. Upper, middle and low, these are nonsense. We have got two classes: the living and the dead. If Americans hate us because of our being in the living class, it means hate is too heavy for us to carry. There are two things left: We will either kill ourselves or forget this hate."²⁴ It's, in fact, this humiliating point of view inclined toward them that reminds them their country, homeland, and hurt them with an unbearable pain.

²⁴ William Saroyan, *Yetmiş Bin Süryani*, s.85.

Psychoanalyst E. Ericson mention human identity consists of four main factors: economic instrument, political approach, socio-cultural construction and spiritual values. These are effective and important factors in human psychology that ensure individual's adaptation to the society and ensures individual's being motivated in his/her relations.²⁵ The case in which one of them is allowed to gain functionality naturally prevents individual's foresaid adaptation with social environment.

Many poems have been written on homesickness. From these poems "To The River Euphrates" and "To Lake Van", written in 1933 in San Francisco/California, harbor longing and missing. Especially "To Lake Van" poem sings pleasantly the ill-fatedness of the author:

Lake Van, O inland sea my father saw
With stinging eyes and steadfast
blurring stare, Our hearts unite in race's filial prayer. (...)

O lake and symbol of our grief, they spell
With growing strength denies all easy rest.

He from his spirit's soil took lasting leave,
From heavens that his legend had
sustained, And though he left and died, there he remained
In his young ghost, above
thy cool grieve, Lament and weep in mists and pouring rains,
O Lake and pool of all
your mortal pains.²⁶

In this poem, there is an unforgettable and blessed country that is spoken about commemorated longingly with river, lake, mountain, sea and all its geography. The author, after all, says that he will not, he cannot forget this sacred asset by uttering "If I forget, goddam me. If I forget, I am cursed forever."²⁷ in the end of the story.

Conclusion

Mentioned as "Saroyanesque" in the literal world, William Saroyan, who was considered worthy on the base of superior ability for the "Pulitzer" which is accepted as the USA's "Nobel", was a famous author for his typical phrasing.

²⁵ E.H. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth, On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence*, London 1993, s. 265-267.

²⁶ William Saroyan, *Yetmiş Bin Süryani*, s.43.

²⁷ William Saroyan, *Yetmiş Bin Süryani*, s.93.

He has a different identity in many respects among his contemporaneous notable authors. These factors that take part much more on the basis of point of interest and wording attract attention. The first is the author's most remarkable point of interest that constitutes the world of common people. They are the people and their life many of whom consist of immigrants who are completely homeless, idle, off the beaten track, doomed in to a loneliness, and forgotten whom every author cannot see or does not want to see in the USA. In William Saroyan's stories, this is the intensity field that draws interest. The second is the author's quest for belonging, country and freedom. Homesickness, longing for home and patriotism become prominent here. William Saroyan constructs many of his stories on the memoirs that belongs to Bitlis, father's country. Short story is the genre, which he can express himself well, and thus, he focuses his attention on it. "Snake", "I, in the World", *Seventy Thousand Assyrians* that is the title of one of his books are some of them.

William Saroyan, in the art of short story, takes essential strength from socialist-realist literal intellect and clear-sightedness that draws attention to the dramatic lives of common grounds in the society. Observed to be under the effect of sometimes romanticism, sometimes realism, the author wrote his stories that a rich cadre of characters carry out in a socialist perspective. All of the thematic factors that are handled come out through the events that take place around the lives of these individuals. The cadre of individuals most of which consists of children are responsible for expressing the problems the author experienced in his childhood, and transferring his longing and missing. Some of the characters he created are determined people, who succeeded to do what they want in the hardest situation without losing guts despite being poor. In short, the persons in Saroyan's stories appear while often complaining about homesickness, sometimes waiting for his doom in the deadbed because of not having a country, sometimes falling in love crazy or struggling with moneylessness in the circle of poverty. The author highlights homesickness, patriotism, nostalgia in nearly all of his stories; he mentions about lack of land and poverty that are the basic common problems for all people by putting racial superiority aside. The persons the author created in his stories are completely homeless people who fall in love, fight for their love and live in poverty. These are infatuated with love; they are so honorable that they cannot think of stealing even if they die of hunger and so smart that they can live like a rich man owing to their mind.

In short, Saroyan instills in his stories human typecasting effectively that may confront us in our daily life. When we read his stories, his characters come to life like familiar people we can come across at this or that corner.

In William Saroyan's stories, spiritual values are at the forefront, not material gains. The most essential right for human is a person's living freely in a place he thinks he belongs to without being forced for changing. This is the main thesis his stories are based on.

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