

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Research Background

Bosnian War (Bosnian Genocide) from 1992 until 1995 was the worst massacre occurred since the Holocaust in the World War II. In 1992, Serbia set out to “ethnically cleanse” Bosnian territory by regularly eliminated all Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks). Serbian together with Bosnian Serbs ethnic attacked Bosniaks with former Yugoslavian military equipment, and then surrounded Sarajevo as the capital city of BiH. In consequence, many Bosniaks were driven into concentration camps, where Bosniaks women and girls were raped and other civilians were tortured, starved and murdered (Lampe, 2019). This conquest made 70% of the territories in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), wherein the closest Republic from Serbia, was ethnically cleansed from Bosniaks and Croats civilians (Flögel, Lauc, and Goreta, 2010).

The Serbian army first traced of the boundary along the valley of Drina, whereabouts plenty of towns with Muslim majority. In the first weeks of April, Serb military force that was backed up by regular units of the JNA (Yugoslav People's Army) struck into districts such as Zvornik, Višegrad, Bratunac, Srebrenica, and Foca, and then attacked, exiled, murdered, terrorized, and expelled the poor defenses of the Muslim populations. Subsequently, millions of Bosnian Muslims were displaced and forced in immigrating to other safer country as refugee (Nation, 2003, p. 160, 189, 203). In fact, one of the safest powerful countries that Bosniak refugees chose to settle in was United States. In 1992, after

the Bosnian War started, there was a wave of Bosnian refugees to United States that had primarily been Muslim. From the year of 1991 to 1994, around 11,500 Bosnian immigrated, and within the U.S. Census records listing Bosnians as a separate category, 337 Bosnian refugees were granted permanent residence (Miller, 2000). However, despite their fortunes in escaping from Bosnian War, these Bosnian refugees still gained some significant issues in the United States:

First, many of these Bosnian refugees who had endured genocide, torture, atrocities, and forced displacement would experience suffered prolonged, multiple, and repeated trauma (Weine et al., 1995). The word trauma itself is basically derived from the Ancient Greek term that has the meaning as “wound” and “damage” (Vachon, Bessette, and Goyette, 2016). It was first designated as PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder) for the official disease status in the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and stated as the disease that was evoked by the event that would caused distress in most people with the significant symptoms (Brett, Spitzer, and Williams, 1988). In general, trauma is believed in describing reactions toward extreme events across space and time, as well as to handle their treatments (Craps, 2013, p.20). However, this trauma that embedded in these Bosnian refugees was interconnected with their violent history, rooted culture and ethnicity. For that reason, the trauma of these Bosnian refugees could be represented and investigated properly by Gabriele Schwab postcolonial trauma concept of *haunting legacies*.

Schwab (2010, p.1) states that haunting legacies is the things that hard to recount or even to remember; an unrelenting grip on memory yet unspeakable. It concerned with what happens to psychic life in the wake of unbearable violence and focuses on irresolvable, impossible, or refused mourning of losses that occurred under catastrophic circumstances (Schwab, 2010, p.3). Furthermore, since the damages of violent histories can hibernate in the unconscious, only to be transmitted to the next generation like an undetected disease (Schwab, 2010, p.3), haunting legacies in the first generation refugees will inherit to the second or the third generations as *transgenerational trauma*. Though, in contrast with haunting legacies, the transgenerational trauma triggers the children of traumatized parental generations to search for everything they can find in order to patch the memories they had never lived. They will become avid readers of silences and hidden memories, which are marked on a face that is frozen in grief, forced smiles, unreasonable rages or depressions along with searching for past photographs, letters, or stories (Schwab, 2010, p.14). Hence, the first and the second generations (next generation) of Bosnian refugees from Bosnian War would inherently embed their haunting legacies in the United States.

Second, the Bosnian refugees must start over their lives by learning a new language, new customs, and new skills in order to assimilate with the majority culture in the United States, which was overwhelming, since their immigration was not necessarily by choice (Miller, 2000). These Bosnian refugees might face problems or crises in acculturating their cultural identities. Hall (1994) states that cultural identity is a process of *becoming* as well as *being*; it belongs to the future

as much as to the past. This cultural identity is the continuous 'play' of the culture, power, as well as history, and only from this sense of cultural identity, the comprehension of the traumatic character of 'the colonial experience' can be understood. In addition, Chen (2014) states that cultural identity is the 'sense of belonging' to certain cultural groups including ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, and religion, in which developed and preserved through the process of sharing legacy, traditions, language, aesthetics, norms and rituals matters. Meanwhile, a cultural crisis is experienced as a state of indecision or uncertainty regarding two or more significant alternatives, which may affect the destiny of the individual. Moreover, a cultural crisis may be regarded as a state of unstable or passing condition (Bidney, 1946). Therefore, the cultural identity crises in Bosnian refugees are their unstable condition in being uncertain about their senses of belonging to certain cultural groups; whether they were their rooted cultures or the American customs.

This issue of cultural identity crisis in these Bosnian refugees could be examined by Bhabha's postcolonial concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity. Bhabha (1994, p.86) defines mimicry as the complex strategy of one in reforming correspondingly as the other culture that visualized power. It shows something so distant that differs from what might be called as itself behind, and it triggers one to camouflage (Lacan, 1774, as cited in Bhabha, 1984). Extensively, the mimicry is developed around ambivalence (Bhabha, 1994, p.88). Bhabha (1994, p.36) portrays ambivalence as the continual self turmoil of subjects that want one thing and want its opposite, and it is asserted when the context cannot be

mimetically read off from the content. While for the process in assimilating both of the cultural identities from the origin and the 'ideal' culture, in 1994, Bhabha coins the term of hybridity (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 2007, p.108). Hybridity is the creation from assimilation of the weak culture (minority) into the powerful culture, which indirectly imposing their cultural traits (Bhabha, 1994, p.4). As a result, a new culture is located in between for the sign of a new identity (Bhabha, 1994, p.1). The term hybridity likewise, which relies on a metaphor from biology, is commonly used in much broader ways to refer in any kind of cultural mixing or mingling between East and West (Singh, 2009).

That being the case, mimicry occurred in these Bosnian refugees as they were caught between the two different cultures and wanted to be accepted in the majority population, by acting, speaking, or even thinking like the people from the ideal culture; the American. Since it occurred around ambivalence, these refugees might portray their inconsistency in trying to mimic the American culture while still couldn't be separated from their original Bosnian cultures that had ingrained for years. Subsequently, these refugees might or might not gain their hybridity in creating new identity by mixing and accepting both of the Bosnian and American cultural identities depended on their ambivalent processes. In addition, by complementing Bhabha's postcolonial concepts and defining the contrast characteristics of the ideal American and the Bosnian native cultures, Edward Said (1978) introduces orientalism.

Orientalism portrays about the distinction of the "orient" which associated with the East culture that dominated and restructured by the "occident" which



associated with the West culture (Said, 1978, p.2-3). Since the “occident” is assumed to be more rational, developed, humane, superior, while the “orient” is odd, underdeveloped, inferior, and unchanging (Kaul, 2000, in Sawant, 2017), this orientalism would be closely tied to the first issue faced by Muslim Bosnian refugees (haunting legacies), as it contributes in explaining the genocide of millions Bosnian Muslims in BiH. Said (1978, p.59-60) argues that Islam is defined as the “orient” from the West perspective, which emerged from the long lasting trauma of the "Ottoman peril" that endangered the European Christian civilization in the medieval times. Furthermore, this long lasting trauma of the Ottoman became the basis term of Islamophobia (Meer, 2014), which means as an act of hatred, discrimination, and close-minded prejudice towards Islam and Muslims (Council on American-Islamic Relation, 2010). Seeing that, Bosniaks (Muslim Bosnian) were considered as the “orient” from their religious identity, along with the fact that they are the remaining parts of the former Ottoman Empire.

Owing to that fact, these Bosnian refugees had to face the last substantial issue in United States, which was their inferiority as Muslim. Though America was a free country, these Bosnian refugees would still gain the Islamophobia acts that similar to what they faced in Bosnian War. In particular, Islamophobia in the US reached the peak after the 9/11 terrorist attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center, New York, which resulted of more than 500 hate crimes occurred against Muslim in the United States (FBI Uniform Crime Reporting, 2011). These acts were mostly generated by the media coverage that often framed Muslim as

the perpetrator in every terrorist attacks, which then influenced the majority American citizens to perceive Muslims as violent and threat to their surrounding that resulted in negative impact on Muslim liberties in the United States (Powell, 2011). In sum, these Bosnian refugees from generation to generation had to face their issues of haunting legacies, problems in cultural identity, as well as the strong Islamophobia in the United States.

These three significant issues of Bosnian refugee generations can be found in Carrie Arcos' 2018 novel entitled *We Are All That's Left*. This young adult novel, which is rated 4.3 of 5 in *Goodreads*, portrays the story of Zara, the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation American-born and her mother, Nadja, the 1<sup>st</sup> generation Muslim Bosnian refugee that immigrated to United States and tells in alternate chapters between Zara's present day in Rhode Island, and Nadja's adolescent life during the 1990s in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In details, *We Are All That's Left* depicted Nadja's inferiority during the Bosnian War, which interconnected with her unconscious traumatic symptoms of haunting legacies and cultural identity crisis, from when she survived in Sarajevo until she settled her lives in the States. It also depicted her daughter, Zara, who could not understand how in reaching beyond their cultural differences and connecting to her closed-off mother who refused to speak about her past. However, their strained relation had changed soon since both Nadja and Zara encountered bombing in a local farmers market, which was claimed by *ISIS*. In the aftermath, Zara was left in a traumatized and injured condition, while Nadja was left in a coma. Without the opportunity to get to know

her mother, Zara was left with questions about her mother's past, her cultural identity crisis, and her own path forward.

The author of the novel, Carrie Arcos, is a National Book Award Finalist for Young People's Literature from her novel *Out of Reach* in 2012. Arcos comes from Albany, New York, and currently resides with her husband and her three children in Los Angeles. In the fall of 1995 until the fall of 1996, she was working in AmeriCorps and helping large numbers of Bosnian refugees to get resettled and had a sudden realization of how terrific the Bosnian War (Arcos, n.d). Nadja was inspired by the story from one of Bosnian women refugees that Arcos knew, yet she got the personal stories of Bosnians through her research by seeing a lot of movies, reading books especially journalistic accounts and first-person accounts, and getting a lot of information from YouTube as well as going to Bosnia herself to observe the real situation (Comerford, 2018).

Previously, there were some studies that discuss the similar issues of trauma from violent history, inferiority, and cultural identity. The first study was conducted in 2019 by Siti Nuraishah Ahmad entitled "Identities in Exile: Remembering Identities, Re-membering the Nation in Laksmi Pamuntjak's *Amba*". This study found the modes of internal exile, which triggered by the 1965's Indonesian violent suppression, as portrayed in three characters in *Amba*. It also analyzed how exile interfered and delayed identity formation across different generations of Indonesians by using the work of scholars on Indonesian exile narratives (Hill, Hearman), concepts of transgenerational trauma (Schwab) and postmemory (Hirsch).



The second study was conducted by Jalal Mostafae in 2016 with the title of “Investigating Identity, Ambivalence, Hybridity: A Bhabhaian Reading of J. M. Coetzee’s *Foe and Disgrace*”. This study examined the ambivalence and the notion of hybridity, which indicated that the practices of colonial authority was intermingling other texts and discourses. Furthermore, it resulted in a hybridization that facilitated colonial domination by using Homi K. Bhabha conceptions.

Other study that discusses about the similar issues was conducted by Sokfa F. John in 2018 entitled “Genocide, Oppression, Ambivalence: Online Narratives of Identity and Religion in Postcolonial Nigeria”. This study used orientalism by Edward Said to analyze the content of online forum with two dominant narratives on the forum. In the first, users represented Southern Kaduna Christians as the repressed and the one experienced genocide, and in the second, forum users explicated the ambivalence from the repulsion and admiration in the ways they constructed the privileges, identity, and religion of Hausa-Fulani Muslims that was viewed as the oppressor.

In contrast with the previous studies, the writer determines to analyze the processes and reasons of haunting legacies in the first and second generation Muslim Bosnian refugees of the Bosnian War and their cultural identity crisis in young adult novel *We Are All That’s Left* by Carrie Arcos. This study applies Gabriele Schwab postcolonial trauma concept of haunting legacies in order to examine Nadja’s trauma symptoms and the impacts towards Zara, along with Homi K. Bhabha postcolonial concepts mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity in

elaborating the cultural identity crisis in Nadja and Zara. Meanwhile, Edward Said's orientalism is applied in order to analyze Nadja's Muslim inferiority and the opposite way of seeing the Bosnian and American cultures.

## **1.2 Research Question**

How haunting legacies and cultural identity crisis are revealed in Carrie Arcos' *We Are All That's Left*?

## **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The study aims to investigate how haunting legacies and cultural identity crisis are revealed in Carrie Arcos' *We Are All That's Left*.

## **1.4 Scope of the study**

This study focuses on examining how haunting legacies and cultural identity crisis of the two main characters (the first and the second generation) in the novel Carrie Arcos' *We Are All That's Left* are revealed through the narrations and dialogues. By deploying Schwab's haunting legacies, Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity as well as Said's orientalism, this study analyze the processes and the reasons of the two main characters' haunting legacies and cultural identity crises

## **1.5 Significance of the study**

The results of this study are expected to give deeper understanding about postcolonial trauma concept by Schwab, postcolonial concepts by Homi K. Bhabha and orientalism theory by Edward Said. Furthermore, this study gives contribution of knowledge as a reference for other researchers who want to conduct similar research about trauma from violent history and cultural identity.