


TO THE CITY THAT HOLDS MY HOME

Capstone Project by Kaline Tchamitchian
Department of English and Communications
American University of Armenia
May 2022





أهلا بكم في سوريا Welcome to Syria

OUTLINE

- Abstract & Keywords
- To The City That Holds My Home
- Literature Review & Research Question
- Methodology
- To The City That Holds My Home: Story series and Illustrations
- Epilogue
- Reference

ABSTRACT

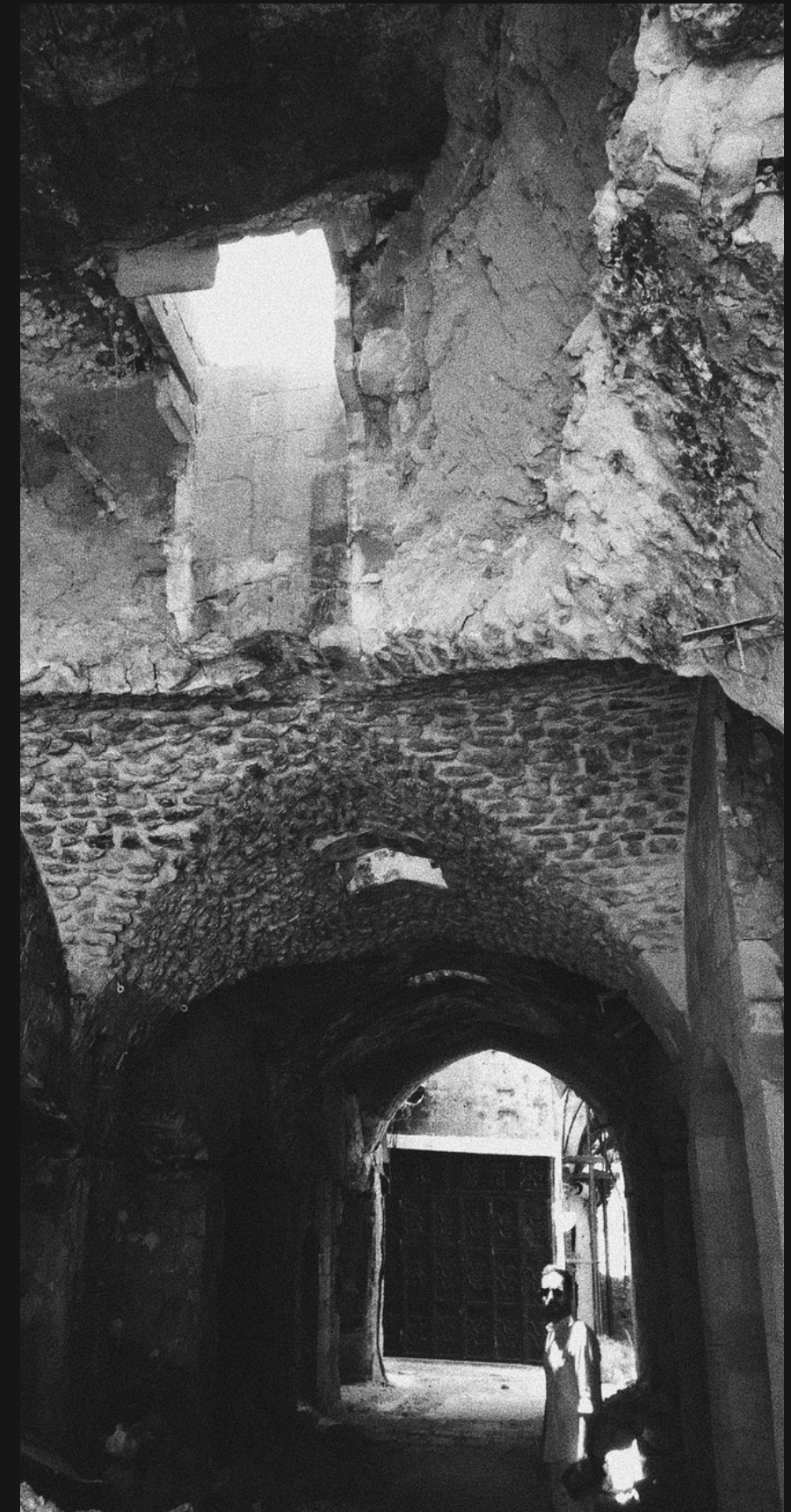
This year marks the tenth year of leaving my home behind due to war.

Over the years, I realized that once you leave home, you will understand its value and meaning. I found myself revisiting the memories of my home, Aleppo, asking questions about my identity, home, and belonging. I was eager to find ways to tell and show my story.

With these vivid memories and my narrative in mind, each story is a chapter from my life with a title and graphic illustration.

KEYWORDS

Syria, Aleppo, home and belonging, identity, displacement and war trauma






INTRODUCTION

Imagine losing everything, family, friends, job, a place you call home... That is the aftermath of war. It is hard to measure its effect on people or understand how to react to its impact, especially when one is at the age of forming and shaping identity. This capstone is a self-study focusing on the influence of the Syrian war on teenagerhood and understanding its influence through my personal experience.

My capstone project aims to shed light on the story of an eleven-year-old girl who left her home without saying goodbye and was forced to find a new home.

Although the main focus and research revolve around the Syrian community and war, war trauma and identity issues can be applied to anyone going through the same situation.

LITERATURE REVIEW & RESEARCH QUESTION

A black and white photograph of a city skyline at dusk or dawn. The sky is a gradient of light to dark. In the foreground, the silhouettes of buildings and structures are visible. A prominent feature is a tall, slender minaret with a dome and a crescent moon on top, positioned slightly to the left of the center. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

When living in a country under attack, all one thinks is, "I do not want to die," but a part of us dies when we leave the place we love most.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Self-Study and re-telling vulnerable stories
- Memory and storytelling
- Identity crisis after the war
- Smell through identity and memory
- Teenagehood and identity formation during war
- War trauma and psychological scar

RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary aim: Understanding how one can navigate through a war memory and reflect on its effects as the years go on and we age. From a young age, we build attachment and a sense of belonging around our home, home is closely tied to identity formation.

The Secondary aim: Understanding of identity shifts as it is exposed to new society, culture, lifestyle, and beliefs because there is a conflicting barrier between what is familiar and what is strange and new. After understanding the formation of identity, the secondary question is how does war impacts identity.



METHODOLOGY

This capstone project is dedicated to my eleven-year-old self and the journey she had to go through to get where she is now.

SELF-STUDY

Self-study meant diving into a difficult my past war memory that occurred a decade ago and becoming vulnerable. Vulnerability is what connects us, humans. Tapping into memory and storytelling is also untangling identity and its formation because stories tell how people lived their lives, social status, belonging, and what gives their experience meaning and value. Stories mattered because not only did they deserve a place to be told and heard, but they also preserved history.

MEMORY WORK: UNPACKING THE PAST JUST LIKE UNPACKING ANOTHER ONE OF MY SUITCASES

It all started with a cup of coffee with my mum. Working with past memories has been one of my biggest challenges, it is similar to peeling an orange to get to the juicy part where things can get sour and sweet. The scary part of going back is realizing how much you have changed over time and realizing you are no longer the same

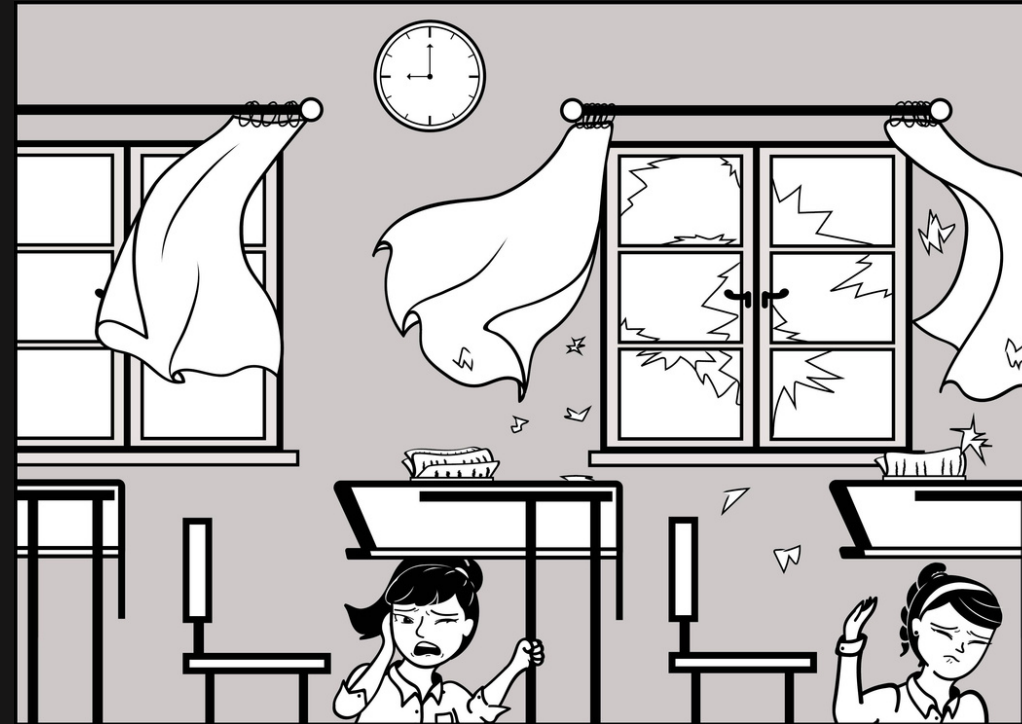
TO THE CITY THAT HOLDS MY HOME

Story series and Illustrations

**TRUE MATURITY IS REFOUNDING
WHAT YOU LOST WHEN YOU
GREW UP, WHICH IN MY CASE
WAS MY CHILDHOOD.**



Every person is a child at home
كل شخص طفل في منزله



8:59
٨:٥٩



Goodbye without closure
وداع من دون خاتمة



Scrub, scrub, scrub
تنظيف، تنظيف، تنظيف



To the city I love most, but also hurt me the most
إلى المدينة التي أحببتها كثيراً لكنها اذنتني كثيراً



"You made it home, sweetheart"
"لقد وصلتني إلى منزلك عزيزتي"



Illustration artist: Vana Hampartsoumian

TAPPING INTO MEMORY AND STORYTELLING IS UNTANGLING IDENTITY AND ITS FORMATION BECAUSE STORIES TELL HOW PEOPLE LIVED THEIR LIVES, SOCIAL STATUS, BELONGING, AND WHAT GIVES THEIR EXPERIENCE MEANING AND VALUE.

**home can be a city,
home can be people,
home is what makes
breathing easier.**