

HAGOP BARISH

A Genocide Survivor's Life Story

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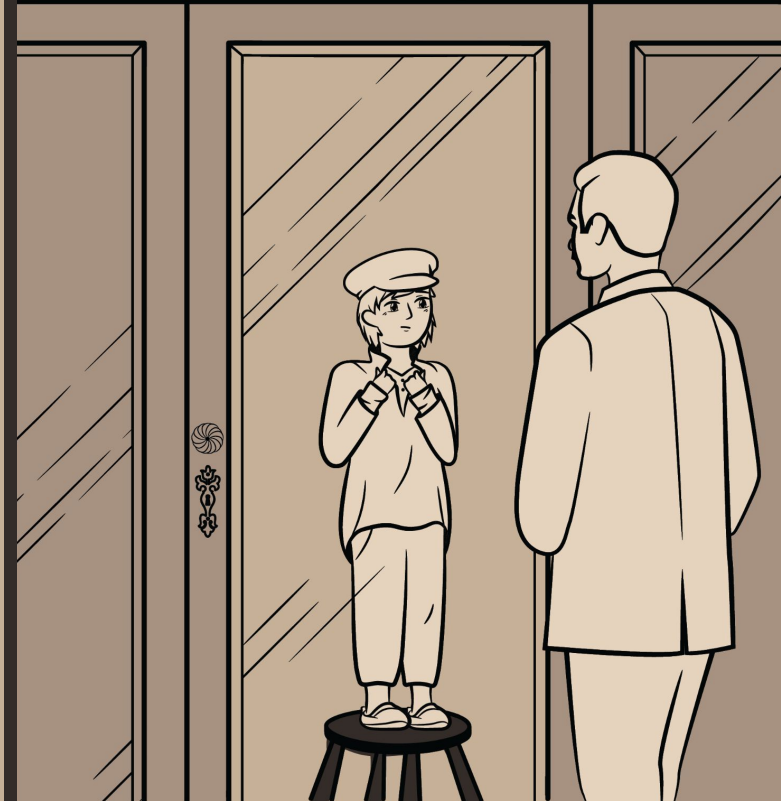
Outline

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Research Question
- Methodology
- Artist Statement
- References

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Abstract

Tales of the good old days, the stories of parents and grandparents when they were young and naive, or the history from where they came are things that have always excited me.

So when I heard the tales of my great-grandfather's antics and what he'd done to his family because of his childhood trauma during the Armenian genocide, it left me wanting to know more about him and made me question how much of the young genocide survivors' behaviors were affected by this trauma in their adult stage. To better depict the narrative told by my family, I used my illustrations and put together a graphic novel to allow the viewer to enable the story of a genocide survivor to be seen and understood.

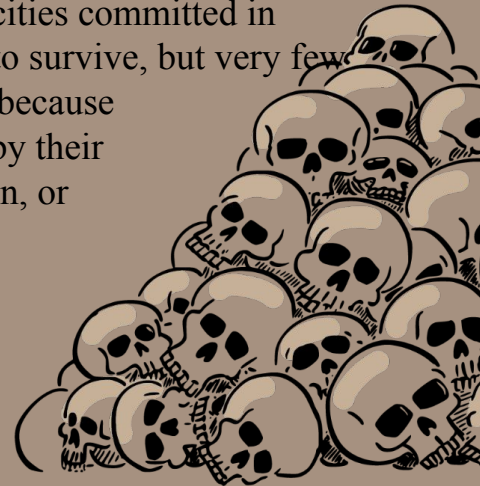
Keywords: Mardin, Aleppo, genocide, graphic novel, survivor, trauma, and parenthood.

Introduction

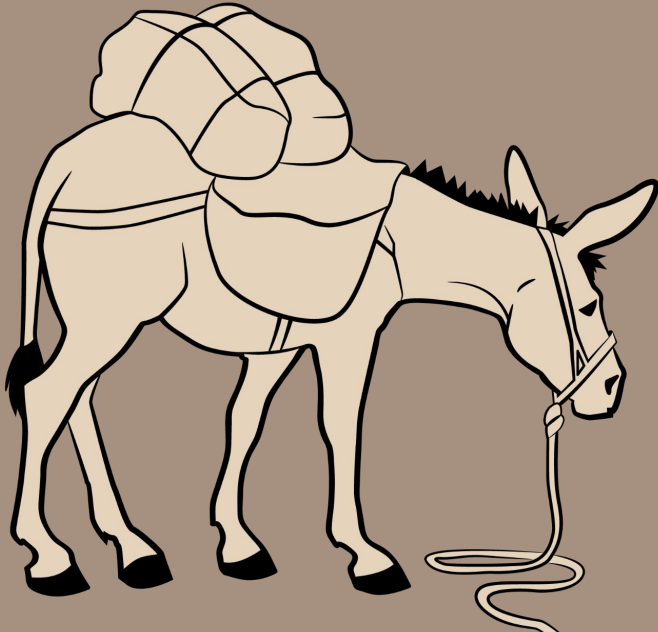
More than a hundred years have passed since the genocide against the Armenians by the Ottoman colonialists. More than one and a half million Armenians were victims of heinous racist crimes and mass killings between 1915 and 1923, which were accompanied by arrests, executions, displacement, confiscation of property, and burning of Armenian cities and villages.

The capstone addresses a very important and underreported issue: life after the ordeal for genocide survivors. There are many accounts and testimonies about the atrocities committed in that period, what they saw, how they managed to escape, and what they did to survive, but very few stories deal with their lives in the new land or the new home. This is simply because talking about the nature and behavior of the survivors can only be accessed by their children or grandchildren after a long time has passed since they settled down, or even after their death.

This creative work aims to commemorate the Armenian massacres in 1915 by telling the life story of a survivor of the genocide, Hagop Barish, in a graphic style appropriate to the tragic events.



Literature Review



Through the graphic novel, the capstone addresses the life of a survivor of the Armenian genocide during the ordeal and his life after the deportations in his new homeland, Aleppo. In order to arrive at an ideally suited graphic novel, meaning must be created through the interaction of image and text; therefore, the literature review is divided into two separate sections: the first deals with the graphic novel as a medium for genocide stories, and the other deals with the genocide and the massacre that took place in Mardin, the birthplace of the survivor.

GRAPHIC NOVELS AS A MEDIUM FOR GENOCIDE STORIES

Genocide is a sensitive and complex subject, and its representation through graphic novels raises questions as to whether these novels can be valuable artwork. Therefore, borrowing a group of narratives related to humanitarian issues, especially international graphic novels that focus on genocide, helps to identify the different drawing styles and production strategies used in these works that facilitate emotional interaction in the narrative. That is what Laurike in't Veld did in her book, *"The Representation of Genocide in Graphic Novels"* (2018), where she analyzed a group of graphic novels that focus on the holocaust and genocide in Armenia, Rwanda, and Bosnia driven by the conviction that analyzing a group of these narratives will lead to important knowledge about the ways in which they deal cultural texts with historical cases of mass violence (Veld, 2018).



THE GENOCIDE AND MASSACRE OF MARDIN

Many survivors spoke about the Armenian genocide; their testimonies were taken and documented in books. The first seven years, in particular, of Barish's life were in Mardin, so it was crucial to find testimonies of some of the city's residents. Such as Ibrahim Kaspo, who wrote in his manuscript "Mardin as I Knew It" about the massacres that took place in his hometown, and Abdo Hana Bizer, who was twenty years old when the massacres began in Mardin, an ancient and beautiful city, as described by the historian Gaunt in his article "The View from the Roofs of Mardin: What Everyone Saw in the 'Year of the Sword'" (2015). As well as Ternon, who dealt in detail all the events that occurred during that period in his book, "*Mardin 1915*" (2002). He mentioned the massacre of Mardin's men, the arrest of its notables and their deportation in convoys and then their slaughter, the evacuation of Armenian families, and the seizure of their property.



Research Question

The world has witnessed and still is witnessing many great human tragedies. Many graphic novels ask about or cover anecdotes of ordeals and survival; however, the primary question we should be answering is: To what extent do the crimes of humanity, specifically the Armenian genocide, affect the survivors in moving forward in life? In order to reach a comprehensive view of the repercussions of these atrocities, we must answer if the survivors pick up any unusual behaviors from the ordeal that affected their personality and their dealings with their families, especially with their children. If so, what kind of behaviors?



Methodology

WRITING PROCESS

In the first stage, a script was written based on the research information. Testimonies were sorted according to dates and locations, and the dialogues contained in their stories were transferred into a file that was used in the text of the graphic novel, in addition to the names of the people mentioned in their testimonies of the victims and perpetrators, to add credibility to the story. All this was vital for the first half of the graphic novel because it deals with what happened during the Armenian genocide and the Mardin massacre in order to highlight the repercussions of the tragic events more clearly in the second half of the novel, which focuses heavily on Barish's life, his survival and his deportation to settle in Aleppo, which was all based on the information from the interview with his granddaughter.

Baked Scone

#e5d3bc

Rodeo Dust

#c5b097

Donkey Brown

#a69180

English Walnut

#332c29

Black

#000000

DRAWING PROCESS

Before any work could be done, a suitable art style was required. The character's expressions were just as vital as the structural backgrounds, as they represented the location of real places, which were used as a reference for the novel.

The color scheme for the novel was inspired by vintage photographs of soft brown and beige tints as opposed to the classic black and white colors. The choice of the Old West color scheme serves a purpose which was Hagop's love of photography.



St. George Armenian Church, Mardin - Turkey, Europa Nostra, 2018



Artist Statement

The central purpose of my graphic novel is not just to depict the tragedies that had befallen Armenians during the genocide but the lasting impact it had on the people that were directly involved. We hear the tales of survival and hardships that the survivors had to endure, the struggles they had to encounter. Yet, why is it that we never question what became of their lives? Not in the sense of establishing a brand new start, home or life, but how much of the massacre influenced them on a traumatic scale that ultimately affected their behavior?

Storytelling is a powerful tool as it is; however, I wanted the viewer to connect to Hagop Barish on a deeper level as the events of the genocide and the life he went on living are better depicted through visual imagery, and so the concept of creating a graphic novel came to mind.

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THANK YOU