

Narratives around Boli

By Ani Galstyan



ABSTRACT

Narratives around Boli brings together the stories of three women (my great-grandmother, grandmother and mother) about their lives back in Nakhijevan and as refugees in Armenia. All three of them had similar life experiences however their interpretations are different. This research is conducted through oral history, scholarly articles, as well as stories based on personal life experiences. It is represented through narratives based on the interviews conducted with the participants.

METHODOLOGY

The main method of this research was oral history and interviews with the participants. In order to make the stories appealing creative writing techniques were implemented as well.

The Iron Lady



Nushig's story is worth sharing as she serves as an example for those who have lost faith in everything and have struggle finding their purpose. She is one of the three refugee women portrayed in the narratives. Nushig initiated the narratives around he boli, which is a leafy green growing in the mountains.

She left Nakhijevan in 1988 and settled in Eghegis village, Vayots Dzor region. She was the only librarian in the village.

Nushig was and still remains a symbol for the village as she was a true representation of beauty, kindness, generosity, selflessness, diligence and courage.

She went through many hardships, including losing her two children. Her story shows how resilient she was despite all the hardships she lived through and how she created a new meaning of life for herself.

Grandmother's Story

My grandmother was born and raised in Aznaberd village, Nakhijevan. She left Nakhijevan in 1988, along with other refugees. Throughout this story I try to show how she as a refugee got integrated into the new society and what challenges she had to face.

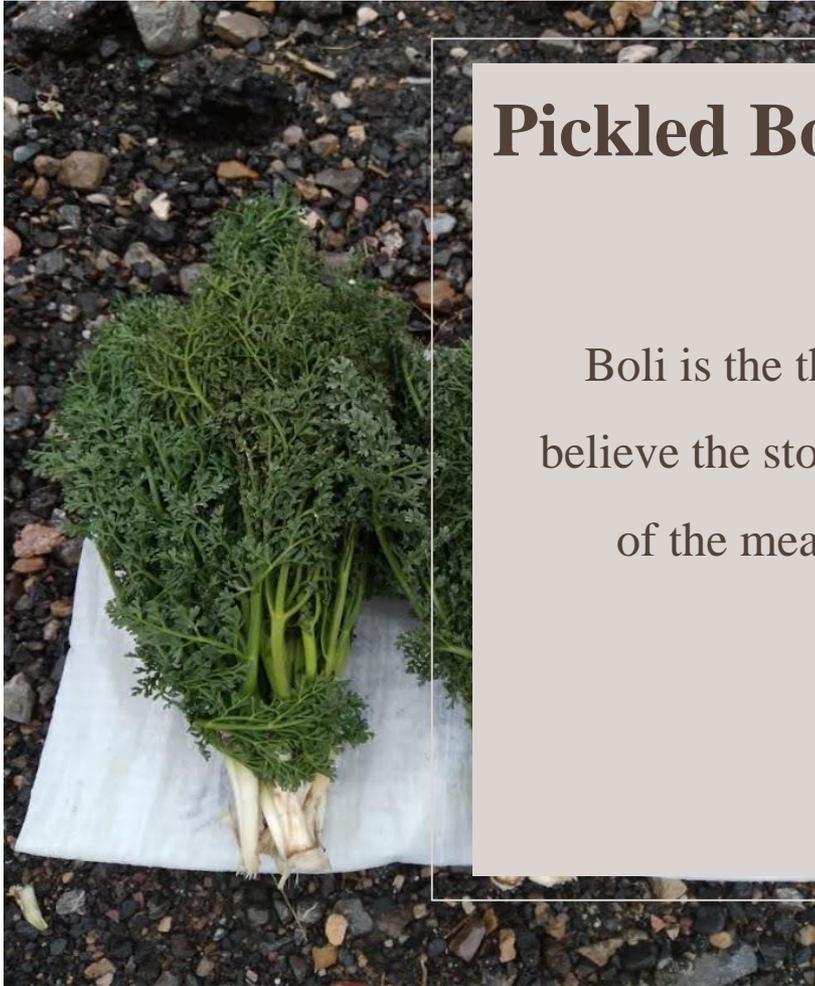
Her story is very inspiring as, again, she is one of the strongest women I have ever met. My grandmother always amazes me with her positive way of thinking. I wanted her story to live forever and inspire our future generations.



Anahit's Story

I continue the combination of our family narratives with my mother, Anahit. The story starts from her early childhood in Aznaberd, mostly the memories of her childhood. The beautiful bond between her and her village is highlighted in this narrative.





Pickled Boli Recipe

Boli is the thread that linked these stories together. I believe the story would be incomplete without the recipe of the meal, which was present in each narrative.

Ingredients

- 1kg boli
- 1 litres water
- 0,5 tea cup salt
- Vinegar
- Garlic

Carefully wash the boli, add it to the water and boil for fifteen minutes. Then add the salt, vinegar and some garlic. Enjoy! Simple, isn't it?

The Creative Aspect

This research is a very important one for me and my family. In order to keep it from generation to generation I decided to present it in the form of a small book with the stories and photos of this research. The book is in a digital form at the moment, but it will be printed soon.

Pages from the Book



A FAMILY ARCHIVE

Narratives around Boli

ANI GALSTYAN

Pages from the Book

The Iron Lady

I wrote this story for my Journalism class, as a feature story. At that time, I had a chance to interview Nushig and see the expression of her eyes, while she was passionately telling about her life in Aznaberd. I consider this story as one of those, which were eye-opening and very emotional for me. Eye-opening in terms of seeing the ordinary in life and making the ordinary something special. I had a chance to read some parts of this story to her, and I am glad that before she passed away, she knew what an important role she had in my life and how much she had taught me. This story became the foundation and the reason why I decided to write the stories of my grandmother, mother and myself, drawing a fine picture among four generations. Four generations of women of different ages, who were influenced by the historical trauma caused by the invasion of Azeris in Nakhijevan.

She is the reflection of beauty, kindness, generosity, selflessness, diligence and courage. The Iron Lady - this is how everyone calls her.

Pages from the Book

Her three grandsons, Armen's sons, adore their grandma. They won't eat or drink unless they know their grandma has done so. Not only her grandchildren but also all the children of the village love her. Even though she doesn't work as a librarian anymore, she still has created her own small library, where people come and listen to her interesting stories as well as read books. Noushig is a fabulous communicator. She is a teacher with experience. She welcomes everyone in her house and doesn't let them go until they have drunk the "urtsov chai", which is tea made from mountain thyme.



Pages from the Book

Grandmother Manya

My grandmother was very shy to give an interview. She kept making jokes as we were starting the interview. At first, I had my interview guidelines, consent forms, the equipment ready with me. As we started, I realized that I needed to have a simple conversation with my grandmother rather than set her in a position when she will overthink the answers she would give to me. She kept questioning every answer she would give me. I put everything away, the questions, the various forms and asked her to be herself and just tell her grandchildren about herself like she does whenever we are around.

Manya Khachatryan, my grandmother, was born in 1957, in the village of Aznaberd, Nakhijevan region. Her father, Khacho, was a simple workman and builder. Her mother, Duxik, worked on a collective farm (kolxoz). Her family included her mother, father, herself, and four siblings. She was the youngest in the family. To the questions, whether she was teased a lot by her siblings, she cheerfully says that she was loved the most and no one ever gave her a hard time.

Thank You :)