Learning from Our Lives

Women, Research, and Autobiography in Education

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CHAPTER 6

Ways Without Words:
Learning from Silence and Story in Post-Holocaust Lives

Anna Neumann

A BOUT A YEAR AGO, I began to look closely at the relationship between my work as a researcher-interviewer—as a scholar who seeks to view the space that exists within and between my subject and my self—and my own existence as a post-Holocaust Jew who has learned how little I can truly know of another person's experience. I wrote a paper that described what it meant for me to listen to my father as he spoke, first to his brother and much later directly to me, about his captivity in Auschwitz. I described how my father, speaking to us in post-Holocaust times, tried to tell what could only be told in the words—the utterances—of the camp itself; no other words and sounds, emerging beyond the camp, could begin to contain or convey what he knew. What he wanted to tell was, of necessity, incomplete in its telling. What he said and what we heard consisted of text we could scarcely comprehend and silence we simply could not fathom.¹

What I learned from that writing, for my self and for my work, is that how I now relate to others, even in the conduct of my professional work, notably my research—how I listen for the knowing of persons whom I interview, how I imagine their lives, how I sense the limits of their words to convey what they feel and know, how I sense my own inability to comprehend what they know and learn even as they speak—reflects what I learned through my father's efforts to tell his stories years back. While at one level the paper described how I learned of another's life by listening and by trying to understand, at another level it pointed at what I could never hope to learn of a life apart from my own, no matter how hard I tried. It spoke of the silences that emerge inevitably in every text, that grow in every effort to imagine

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE CITED

another's life, that accompany every gesture of empathic imagination. It taught me that the stories I hear of others' lives are composed only partly of text; they are also composed of silence for which no text can exist.

As I finished the paper, I was surprised to see how very incomplete even my own writing of my experience with my father had been—how in attending to the silence and text that comprised his story, I had neglected to describe how my mother's life, existing in wordless form, enabled my father to tell his story. I was surprised at how absent the story of her survival, in the Holocaust and beyond it, was in what I had written—how little I even knew about it, how little she'd ever revealed to me. While my father's silence emerged from the text of a story he actually told to those of us who listened, even as thoughts he could never fully articulate or ever completely share, my mother's silence seemed to emerge from the dissolution of story itself, from the absence of virtually any recognized text, however flawed, and from the lack of people who would listen. While my father had a story that I and others acknowledged as real, though few—if any—could grasp it, my mother's story, as real as it was for her, has remained largely unknown, even to me.

In this chapter I speak once more about the interplay of text and silence in stories of human lives, but this time I draw on my mother's life and stories, in various versions of their telling, more so than on my father's, though his stories (and mine) intertwine with hers in ways I can hardly take apart. I learned from writing my father's story that with every text that's told comes a silence that cannot be converted into words or understanding that is fully shared. I learned from my mother's life that even in the silence of a story that lives without words, there exists a text to know and to tell, though its telling may occur in unexpected ways.

In this chapter I draw on my understanding of my mother's experience in the Holocaust, including how I constructed it within myself (and how I continue to do so even now), to describe the place and meaning of untold stories in the lives of those who could tell them, and in the lives of those who could learn from their telling. I also try to describe how stories (like my father's and my own) may emerge, in articulated form, from within other stories that (like hers) exist untold, or that are told in unconventional ways, that is, without words. I conclude by exploring to bring words to stories that have existed without them for much of the space of a life.

In the pages that follow I present and discuss three versions of what I have come to call my mother's story of her experience of the Holocaust. The various "tellings" or revelations that the three versions imply occurred at different times in my life, and over diverse lengths of time, and thus the three differ from each other in important ways. The last two tellings, which reflect my mother's talks with me just over the past few years, occurred more closely in time to each other than the first, which occurred initially during my childhood, although it continued throughout my adolescence as well.

The three versions of story also represent different forms of telling (for example, oral, written, enacted, or a combination) constructed for different audiences. For example, the first version largely reflects the "voice in my head" recounting the story I constructed out of fragments of story that she told me out loud and that I gathered by existing in her presence over many years, for example, by watching her alone or in interaction with others around her. In other words, the first version represents, in part, a "protected" story told to a child in bits and pieces; it also represents multiple, mostly unintended tellings that the child "read" into her mother's presence. The second version represents my mother's tape-recorded voice, presented here as a fine-grained transcription, as she recounted her story to me, this time as an adult, and with my husband present as well. The third version presents her voice again, but this time in the form of a written testimonial that she recently composed for the German government in application for long-overdue reparations payments.

The questions that lie behind my retelling of three versions of her story and with which I struggle in this chapter, and in my work more generally, are: How can we think of untold stories? What are they? How do untold stories manifest themselves, especially in the lives of those who would tell them, and what is their significance? How might we gain awareness of the existence of untold stories, even if we cannot know their contents specifically, and how important is it for us to do so? To what extent should we, as researchers, pursue untold stories? What good or harm might come from such pursuits?

I begin with the earliest version of my mother's story that I can remember—one I have constructed, in my own words, from my earliest memories of what she said of her life, and my memories also of how I saw her live in the present, though in terms of what I believed to be her past.

My mother says that when I was young, I hated to eat. One of her ways of convincing me to have a meal was by promising to tell me a story as I ate. She would pick me up and put me on the large cement block near the gate of our veranda so that I was just at eye level with her. Then, while she spooned soup or eggs or sour cream into my mouth, she'd point at the picture she'd just taken down from our living room wall, and she'd begin the story it brought to her mind—about a girl who lived in the house by the lake and with
thought he had died—my grandmother cried every day—until one day he miraculously reappeared, thin and very, very sick.

After the war, my mother and her family returned to Romania, and shortly thereafter, to avoid Communist rule, they left for Israel.

This is the text that grew in my head over the years of my childhood and adolescence as I collected bits of information that she shared with me, or with my sister and me, initially in the Yiddish that, for much of my life, we spoke at home. But I never heard her say these words, in any language, to anyone else. Usually she listened to others tell of their lives rather than revealing her own to them, or she spoke of her life in the present as though a past did not exist for her, or as though the past did not matter.

But I did not construct my mother's story only from selected fragments of text such as these. I constructed it as well out of thoughts I had in watching her, and in watching also those around her as they talked or stood with her, sometimes as they forgot her, sometimes as they fought against her, even as they struggled to surpass the growing intensity of her voice and her thought. I constructed it, not through listening to her talk directly about her story but through watching her absorb the stories that others would tell, watching her play with thoughts about the places of those stories in the extraordinarily varied lives from which they emerged and which they reflected. I constructed it through attending to her silences, when she sat and thought, gazing into spaces ahead. And I constructed it through watching her confront her own stories silently, as she seemingly battled the present moment of remembrance, as she forced her attention onto what simply had to be done by the end of this afternoon and within the next hour. I constructed it through observing her close attention to the lives of others—doing for them, wondering about them, planning what she'd say to them next. And I constructed it through thinking back on what she had once said—or what others had once said to her or about her—combining one small thought from conversation and watching today with thoughts even more slender, more fragile, more compressed, that I'd recall from conversation and watching years back.

These fragments and splinters of story—and of story about story, story emerging from the shelf of a story I'd heard long ago—grew and joined, interweaving thought from right now with thought-recalled from a long time ago into thought I constructed for myself, perhaps not in pure fact, but in mind and in love and in wanting to know who she was, who I imagined she was, wanting to believe I knew her, wanting her image in my life right now.

I chased after the ghosts, and shells, and splinters of her stories, as I heard them—coming out of my memories of past conversations, or uttered in the
moment—trying to hold and understand, trying just to have an image of what she might be. I wrote in a paper not too long ago how even in the void of not-knowing, we nonetheless come to know, how even when we have no interpretation, we nonetheless construct one, gathering wisps of sight and sound that surround us into images that, through the weaving of interpretation, become real for us. ¹ I know that while my mother never told me, never told anyone (as my father tried to), about the harshness of her life in the war, about the resentment and anger out of which her life grew, I absorbed a story nonetheless, constructed it through weavings of bits of talk, and touch, and looks, and sighs, through moments of closeness and distance, through remembrances of conversation that flowed and conversation that stopped and switched and turned even in mid-thought. What emerged as my story of my mother was less a story composed of the knowing that words can bring than a story constructed from the knowing that unworried feeling creates.⁵

I constructed, in this way, a story that, like her, I did not tell out loud—of how embattled she was with her past but how determined she was to live right now, of how bitter her losses had been yet how vigorous and filled with hope her efforts to restore and remake had become, of how much had been taken from her but how much will and strength she had to take so much of it back. I sensed this story long before the person-to-person talks, cast in real spoken words, that we finally had just two years ago, when, with tape recorder in hand and my husband close by as well, I asked her to talk of herself, and he then asked why, before this time, she had not.

From notes I made to myself:

September 26, 1992 [morning]. I now live in Lansing, Michigan. I am married, have a house, furniture, a schedule, a profession, an adult life. In all those years when I heard my father talk—mostly to others because he could not talk directly to me, though later in his life he could—my mother said little. She said little about herself to me or to my father or to friends in front of me. I knew she was from the northern part of Romania, a piece of land that, before the war, was contested territory, having once belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. And when I had once looked at a map, I realized she was talking about Transylvania [⁴], what to me was only a fictional land, something I had read about in books. She used to talk about Suchava [sic], where she was born and lived, but in my mind it was a far-off place and she always minimized it. She never said much. And I knew in general terms of her war experiences, what happened, some of the events, little more. She would always point to my father and say that his story was more horrible.

When my mother visited me at the end of September 1992, I was in the midst of writing my autobiographical account of what and how I learned, about myself and about learning itself, from listening to my father's accounts of his life throughout the course of mine. I was devoting immense energies to remembering the substance and form of past conversations with him—what he'd said about his life in the war and beyond it, what I'd felt as he spoke—in part because his advancing Alzheimer's made me fear that soon his memories would be lost and, with them, perhaps, the person I'd become in living among them. But as I struggled to remember what it had been like for me to learn of his life, I couldn't help but ask, as well, what I knew of my mother's life in that war. I couldn't help but wonder why I was not writing about her in the same way that I was writing about him. Why wasn't she more in my story? My paper, after all, was supposed to be about me—about my life and my work. Why was my understanding of myself, as a scholar and as a post-Holocaust Jew, not framed in terms of my relationship with her inasmuch as it was framed so clearly in terms of my relationship with him? Why hadn't her experiences permeated my life in the same way? Why did I know so little about her life? Why wasn't her story more present in mine?

I started one of our morning conversations that week by asking her questions about her life in Romania. I learned enough, from that brief talk over breakfast, to appreciate that there existed, in her head, mountains of details about her experience of the war that I simply knew nothing about. I came to understand, from that snippet of talk, that she had never spoken to me of her life in more than the vaguest of terms. Rather than searching for words, she would cut herself off, switch topics, or just say she did not remember. I wanted to ask her more, and to ask her why she'd always said so little, but I hesitated. If she hadn't spoken, perhaps it was for a good reason, that it might hurt too much, that she'd have to recall something horrible, that I would have to hear it and live with it and live also with knowing that for much of our life together, I just hadn't asked, or that I hadn't asked in ways that would help her talk. But I was also frustrated and angry in realizing how her life had simply not entered into mine in the same way my father's had. Back at my computer, I made notes of what she'd just said and my feelings about it: "I know, from all these years with her, that her memory for detail is outstanding, and frankly I find it hard to believe she does not remember."

Later that day I asked if she would mind repeating our breakfast conversation after dinner when Aaron, my husband, and I could both listen. I asked...
if I could tape-record what she said. She seemed surprised at my interest, but agreed immediately, and agreed again later that day when I asked her once more if it would be okay to talk.

September 26, evening

JUDITH: I was born in Suceava, Bukovina, Romania⁶ . . . My years // til // fifteen years // I had a regular life // more or less. But as I was fifteen years I couldn’t continue in my education any more. I had to take private lessons because Jews were not allowed in school any more. [Soon after this] we were // we were deported at // deported from our town. That means all // all Jews had // were deported from Suceava to Transnistria [a portion of the Ukraine].⁸ We went // with // by train in very bad condition to // to Bessarabia // to Bessarabia // which is at the Prutetsc [border] // which is // there we had to take the boat and go // went over to Transnistria which is Ukraine. We were // when we came to Mogilev which is the town after we // which is the other part of Romania that’s in the Ukraine // we had to walk for a few days // til another town // town that was Shargaro. We were together, my // my mother, my father, my aunt, my cousin, and my two brothers. When we arrived // when we arrived in Shargaro we // the situation was real bad. We found // we found a very small room for our // for the whole family and . . . after // uh // after // after a year, they took all the young men // all // uh // the young men to work // to the other part of Ukraine // which was occupied by the Germans. We were occupied by the Romanian. And // but we // right away as Bubi [the older of her two brothers] was already sixteen years old and very tall, we // sent him to a village so he won’t be caught. And Ianu [the younger brother] was home // he was thirteen years old and // a child at that time and we were thinking he wouldn’t be taken, but they took him instead of Bubi.

ANNA: Who did the taking?

JUDITH: Uh // they were policemen, Jewish policemen, and they had a list of // young boys to be taken. Ianu was not on the list, but as they did not find Bubi, they took Ianu. And we never thought that Ianu was going to come back. Because he was very thin and he was sick. But he was a few months there. We hadn’t heard of him anything // and on one [day] he just appeared, he just came back . . . He was in the hospital for a long time. At that time we were very bad [things were very difficult for us]. . . . Bubi used to work as // as a mechanic. He used to be a schmidt // schmidt. And we had a little bit money and so we could // we could live. But we were extremely sad until Ianu came back. We were thinking we won’t have him any more.

ANNA: You were living in a little room?

JUDITH: In a little room // this was all [that there was] [describes dimensions of the room, in terms of my dining room, as about eight-by-eight feet]. . . . And it had an oven and there I used to sleep on the oven. And down [used to] sleep my father, my mother, and the two boys. And that’s the way we lived. . . . A piece had an oven and on the oven you knew // was // was empty // I could sleep there. I slept by myself. And they slept all down you know. . . . We were there for three year. After the three years // when the war // I mean // the Germans retreat, they retreated, and Romania got normal, more or less normalized. They said all the Jews to come back. So my brother made a mignale // a carriage.

ANNA: Why did they move everybody over there?

JUDITH: They just wanted // because Jews were very rich // we [her family] were not . . . rich people, but we had three houses. They [Jews] had everything you know. Everybody had a business. They [Romanians collaborating with Nazis] wanted everything. They just had a // the Germans asked them to move // to // to move. They were thinking. After a while we would have been taken to Auschwitz too. They wouldn’t have kept it, kept us over there. But the war it was very bad, and they had too many people from // from the other countries. If they would have finished them [in Auschwitz] we would have, they would have taken us. This was the plan. The plan was to take us too. After a while we would have gone to Auschwitz too. But thanks God, the war got to an end. And so // uh // we had to go back. Bubi made a carr-- // a mignale, yah! // and not a horse . . . with a donkey. We put all our things and we started // we started walking til Mogilev. Then from Mogilev we went with a boat // not with a boat, I think it was already a bridge // it was a bridge there. So they went with this carriage on the bridge, you know, with everything. And when we came to Bessarabia, it was very many days to walk home. I could[n’t] walk, and my father couldn’t walk either, and the aunt. I mean they were already sixty years old there, fifty-five or sixty // so we three went to catch a train and // and my mother // the babbeh [my grandmother] // my mother with my two brothers // they, they walked with this carriage and with the things and with the donkey. We [my mother, her father, her aunt] went by train, and on the way I had lots of difficulties. I was a young girl and they took me // they were some drunk // drunk soldiers. They took me there to a room. I had very much luck
because some officer came in and I // I went out and // I found the fa— // the aunt. Because my father went by train // somebody took him // he couldn't walk at all. And // the aunt waited for me. She didn't // didn't want to go away without me... My aunt and myself, we started walking to our town. It was a few days we had to walk. It was very far // from north Bukovina to south... And myself I told I don't want to stay there [in Romania] for a minute [more]. I didn't even have a dress to wear. I had this dress // nothing....

AARON: So you've talked about your experiences to // [Anna before]?
JUDITH: No, I never talked. That's right! [Turns to Anna] I never //

Anna: Why not?

Judith: First of all //, it was //, you know, I always worked... I was very little with you and with Lily [my younger sister]. [To Aaron:] You can't imagine how hard I worked. You can ask this. [She turns to Anna.] Anna can tell you... So I didn't have time, and I wasn't interested for them to hear many stories, you know, all these problems.

Anna: Why not?

Judith: Because I wanted you to think about good things when you were young. If I didn't have a good life, I wanted you to have a better one.

Anna: But Daddy talked about them—

Judith: Daddy used to talk maybe more. I don't know why. Because, like you say, with Uncle Nandor [his brother]—[To Aaron:] his brothers used to come [to our house]—and there he used to tell them the story of the whole family [his family]. But whom should I have?? I didn't have whom to tell it.

Anna: No, you didn't have anybody to talk to.

Judith: I didn't have any family. I didn't have // And my children had other things to do. You know, I wanted them to have friends. I wanted them to be happy [inrawn breath on tape].

For all of the years of my life with her, my mother did not put words to her own life. There was no one, no other adult, who could ask her to talk, who would really listen to what she said, who would respond if she called. She had left her own mother and father and brothers in Israel, where they had immigrated after returning to Romania from the Shargorod ghetto at the war's end. After marrying my father, and after eleven years in Israel, she moved with him and with my sister and me to a South Texas town with a small Jewish population. Few of the people she encountered in her life there cared for a survivor's tale, and fewer still cared to hear stories of deportation that, in the still-emerging discourse of the Holocaust, had not yet been legitimated as a survivor's tale.

But while my mother said little, about her life, through the course of both of ours, she was never still, and even today she is not. She worked, she continues to work, extremely hard. Through the years of her life with my father, she engaged in a labor that displaced her telling, but that displaced, as well, the silence of what she did not tell. It was work that—despite the silence it invoked for her—created, for my father, a place and time in his life within which he did struggle to tell, with words and with silence, what I now believe he had to tell to survive the fact of his own survival.

My mother's work, driven in part by her silence, became the human context of his telling. She left him alone with his brothers to talk, often expressly removing herself from conversation, withholding her own story in a way that positioned his at the center of our lives and at the center of our understanding of ourselves as a family. She spoke for him when he failed to express himself clearly to others, and she helped him understand why others thought and spoke and acted as they did. She carried out, even invented, the detailed work of the clothing store that he managed, making it exist as a store day by day. Through her labors, she crafted the place and time, the activity and thought, that became their daily work and that became the means for earning the living that let us live, and think, and speak, and exist as most middle-class American families in Brownsville, Texas, did, that gave us the livelihood that in every way supported our lives.

My mother immigrated to America with my sister and me, aged three and six, in 1958, following my father who had made the trip by himself several months before. My sharpest early memories of our lives in the new America—in Laredo and then Del Rio, Texas, in Waco, then for many years in Brownsville, Texas—portray her behind a waist-high counter, leaning forward over an upper counter, lifting parcel after parcel of women's and young girls' clothing well above her head, asking after the customer's daughter and husband and neighbor, explaining how happy she was to see her again and how long it had been since she'd last come in, counting pesos and dollars interchangeably, stashing hangers, storing customers' bags, calculating rows and rows of figures in her head (still in the Romanian I would never comprehend) as she ran her pencil down the page. Turning from customer to customer, helping two at a time, three in the busiest seasons, marking tickets, tearing stubs, taking money, making change, catching up on the lives before her and urging each to come back—switching from the Spanish of her talk with them, to the Spanish-with-English of her talk with the clerks, to the
English of her talk with Lily and me as we scrambled behind her, to the Yiddish of her talk with my father, to the Romanian of her talk, I think, with herself as she thought through the motion and sound all around her.

Franklin's Store in downtown Brownsville was, for me, something of a magical place with my mother behind the counter always at its center, always surrounded by women's voices almost all in Spanish, laughing, counting, inquiring into each other's lives, pointing to other dresses, other coats that other friends just had to see, the radio blaring polkas and Spanish love songs, the salesclerks inquiring after prices, retrieving layaway merchandise that months back she'd boxed in pink-and-black-striped containers. She was the store's main bookkeeper, cashier, chief of credit, head salesclerk, and assistant manager, but to most of her customers and to many of the women with whom she worked closely, she was also a friend. She listened to the stories they told of their lives and tried to understand the families and friends for whom they shopped and cared. She worked this way twelve hours a day, sometimes more, six or seven days a week, maintaining the store as a store, for herself and for us, turning its insides into spaces on which we constructed our American lives.

I learned, from watching my mother those many years, that there are lives, like hers, upon which others' lives are written and lived and told, and without which these other lives simply would not be. My mother's successes in that small downtown store on East Elizabeth Street that she and my father managed together became the context within which the members of my family configured our lives in America—my father continuing throughout his life to try to make sense of his own ravaged past in a postwar world to which he could scarcely relate, my sister and I struggling for some semblances of meaning amidst American ways, even amidst intellectual pursuits, that seemed oceans apart from the simpler, clearer, everyday knowing of our parents' lives.

Even as I write this I labor over words that will bring what my mother wrought for us to the forefront of my story, placing the text of my father's life and my own farther back. Through her work in that store, virtually every day of her life, she crafted a netting of time and place and being, within which we could come to be what, in fact, we all became. My language falls short—I stumble over the intricate shadings and interlacements of distance and relation, silence and sentence, feeling and word that might begin to capture the untold details of how her life spread out as a place and time for ours to become. The silence of her life—its submergence in the lives of others, its displacement in work—created the space on which my father, my sister, and I could write and tell and make our own.

The last retelling of my mother's story came about a year after her visit to my home in Lansing and as a quick, straightforward, and painfully honest response, on her part, to one of those unexpected turns of history, when unknown faces suddenly become known, when evenotics are named, when those who have stood silently in the background of history come forward to reclaim their parts in its making.

This last iteration of her story began when my husband, Aaron, in reading The New York Times, ran across an announcement that the German government was just revising its long-standing reparations policy so as to recognize (that is, to treat as real and legitimate) the claims of those who existed during World War II in ghettos and in labor camps, though not in the torturous death camps that have, for years, been associated with images of the Holocaust survivor. After days of hesitating, I broached the topic with my mother over the phone, knowing that the pension resulting from a successful application could mean a great deal to her, instrumentally and expressively, but fearing also the substance I knew she would have to unearth to make her case.

She literally jumped at the chance. "I'm a survivor too," she said, with an edge and quickness that made me feel that she actually knew and regretted how little I, like so many of those with whom she'd lived, understood of what her life had been. I sent her the clipping that Aaron had found, but before I could really ask what she wanted to do about it, she informed me that she'd already phoned New York, that she'd given the basic facts to the woman who took her case over the phone, that she'd called her brother in Israel to find two old friends who would testify to the veracity of her claim, and that she'd started already the essay of testimony that she would have to make.

She called me two nights later to have me listen to her account... was this right? was the English good? I told her, after I'd listened and after I learned what that New York office wanted, that she would have to be much more specific, that the language was fine, but that she would have to tell more than she'd told, and maybe more than she wanted to tell. "What? I don't understand. You mean my English is no good?" she said. "Maybe you can write it for me." "No, Mama," I replied, "your English is very good. And I can't write it for you because I'm the one who doesn't understand." And I gave her an example, from specific bits of what I remembered she'd said to me just the year before, about how one turns a story about "terrible things," about "suffering very much," or about a "situation that was very bad," into a detailed account of living through hunger and dirt in a space so small that she
had to sleep on an oven. She said she understood and that she would write again. I asked if this was what she really wanted. She insisted it was. She called me a few nights later to read me the most explicit account I’ve ever heard her make of her life:

The anti-Semitism in Suceava-Bucovina started in 1940. Jews had to wear a yellow Star of David on their chest. I always wore a yellow Star of David to identify me as a Jew. Jews were not allowed to be seen in groups; it was punishable by incarceration. In winter of 1940 I went to visit a friend. As I entered his house there were 5 friends visiting her [sic]. After me came the police, we were all arrested and taken to the police station. I was severely beaten there, because they said I had to confess that I am a Jewish communist. As I did not confess to anything, I was sent to Jasi-Moldova to the terrible penitentiary. There I was kept for a few months. I suffered very much there. I was beaten by the guards and humiliated.

In September 1941, every Jew from Suceava had to be at the train station. We were put in a train in cattle wagons without water or food or air. After days of traveling in this situation, we arrived in Basarabia [sic], weak, hungry and thirsty. We stayed there for a few days, we did not have food and lost all our belongings. We were transferred in little boats over the Niester [sic] to Transnistria-Mogilev. From Mogilev we marched to Shargorod. On both sides of the marching transport were soldiers with bayonets. People who could not walk were hit on the head. I was one of them hit badly. We marched for a few days and ate only a piece of bread we were given. We arrived in Shargorod hungry, dirty and sick. With much difficulty we found a little room in the Ghetto Shargorod 3 feet by 3 feet [**]. We were 5 people, my parents, my two brothers and myself. All this time I slept on the stove, ate once daily, bread was not available.

In Shargorod I was taken by soldiers to work in the fields. I was beaten with sticks by them. My hands were all swollen.

In winter was very very cold, I had no shoes, my feet were full of frostbites [sic], open wounds.

In 1943 I had typhoid fever [*typhus]. I was in a hospital—around 80 people to a room lying on the floor, with no medical help, left to die, but survived by miracle.

In May 1944 we had to walk home for weeks from Shargorod to Suceava, Bucovina. On our way back, as we were in Basarabia, I could not walk anymore and waited for a train. A train arrived with Russian soldiers. The soldiers took me to a room at the train station, they wanted to rape me, some officer knocked on the door and I was able to escape. I was very scared and somehow after many days I found my way home to Suceava. I arrived home only with the dress I wore and torn shoes. After a few months I decided to leave Suceava. I saw no possibility to continue my education. I left for Bucharest . . . and then left for Israel.

Even in this retelling I knew there was much she’d left out and much more that, even if she’d tried, she could never retell in a way that I and others would understand. She told me that her efforts to write had made her cry, that she hadn’t slept, that in writing she’d found thoughts she’d long tried to forget. I called her every night for some time after that, and when, six months later, she called to tell me that her application had been approved, I asked if she could have a copy of the text I’d reproduced above and that she read to me that night.

While I’ve cast my mother’s story as three versions of text and silence, as though each version were discrete and singular, this was not the case at all. Each version consisted of multiple versions and multiple tellings stretched over time. For example, the first version stretched over the years of my childhood and adolescence, and even in my adulthood, it existed as my primary interpretation of my mother’s life in the war.

The second version, situated within my adult life, represents a response to the silences I discerned in the paper I wrote about myself with my father; it continued through the course of an initial conversation I had with my mother over breakfast one morning, which I did not tape-record though I wrote about it privately and later reread and rethought what I wrote; it even continued later that day as I tape-recorded our talk of her life, as I reflected on it later in conversation with my husband and in my own thought alone, and as I listened again to the tape I made, though much later on; it continued also in my own transcribing of parts of the tape into a fine-grained script that, in addition to hearing, I could actually see with my eyes. The transcript helped me discern the density of breaks in her voice—the hardship of finding words to fill silence, to replace what has always stood in silence. Ironically, while this version started as speech, it ended as writing.

The third version was, in some ways, the converse of the second. For this telling, my mother prepared a narrative that she read to me over the phone; she sent me the narrative and I read it again and again, silently to myself; I also read it out loud, trying to absorb what might have meant for her to live this life, and then to write it down in English, a language she’d never before used to express it. This version, while starting as writing, ended as speech.

With each rereading and retelling I’ve come closer in myself to the story I know of my mother’s life, and she too has come closer to me. Learning her
story became a project for me that I think will continue in my life for years; it has involved (and continues to involve) much more than a one-time telling, for example, as she elaborates, in telling that builds on telling, on what she said some time before, and as I repeatedly retell and rethink to myself what I hear her say. The retelling of her story continues in my mind. I think it will for a long time to come.

I have also learned about my mother's personal experience of the war through sources beyond herself—by exploring the tragic historical events, officially recorded, in which her personal experience was cast, but to which the post-war world has, until recently, given little heed, thereby overlooking the lives of those (like her) who endured those events, and who endured also their aftermaths.

In 1930 approximately 145,000 Jews lived in the Romanian region of Bukovina where Suceava is located. It is estimated that 125,000 Bukovinian Jews perished in 1941 alone on the death marches to the ghettos and labor camps in Transnistria, the Ukrainian territory that Romanian and German forces conquered and that Hitler awarded to General Antonescu and his son, the Romanian heads of state. Aron Hirt-Manheimer describes the plan of the Romanian government in conducting the deportations to the ghettos and camps of Transnistria, including Shargorod where my mother and her family were interned:

Here [in Transnistria] the exiled Jews were expected to perish of "natural causes," nameless victims of a world at war; accordingly, the Romanian administration denied the deportees food, water, soap, clothes, fuel, shelter, and medicine. Forced on death marches to remote localities throughout the approximately 16,000-square mile territory, thousands died of exhaustion, disease, and exposure. Those who fell behind were beaten or shot. Naked, decomposing corpses on the roadside became the leitmotif of the Romanian Government's crusade to exploit a "historical opportunity" to rid the nation of its unwanted Jewish minority. (p. xxvi)

In November 1941, after three months of deportations, Franklin Mott Gunther, the U.S. representative in Bucharest, sent the following message to Washington: "[The Bukovinian Jews] are being evacuated eastward into the war-devastated territory of the Ukraine under conditions so appalling that they would seem to afford a substantial share of the evacuees little chance to survive. . . . This modern Captivity would seem deliberately calculated to serve a program of virtual extermination . . ." (p. xxix). According to Hirt-Manheimer, the younger Antonescu's justification for the deportations was straightforward: "We are now at the moment in time most favorable for ethnic liberation, national revision and the purification of our nation from all those elements alien to her soul, which have grown like weeds, darkening her future. In order that this unique moment not be lost, we must be implacable . . ." (p. xxv). The elder Antonescu clarified this point:

I am for the forced migration of the entire Jewish element from Bessarabia and Bukovina, which must be thrown over the [Russian] border. . . . You must be merciless . . . I do not know when . . . the Romanian nation will again enjoy this total freedom of action, with the possibility for ethnic purification and national revision. This is the hour when we are masters on our territory. Let it be used! I do not mind if history judges us barbarians. . . . If need be, shoot with machine guns, and I say that there is no law . . . (p. xxv)

Yet even with documentation such as this, the experience of Romanian Jews in Transnistria during World War II is hardly known and hardly remembered, existing, for the most part, as "the forgotten Holocaust" and "the forgotten cemetery." In many ways, I think of Transnistria as one of many untold stories enshrined in history itself.

It is, however, so hard for me to comprehend how horror can actually compete with horror in the chronicling of history, whether in terms of generalized, large-scale events or, more particularly, in the lives of individuals. In many ways, the particular and personal silence of my mother's experience in the war parallels the more general silence of the Jewish-Bukovinian exile to Transnistria defined as historical event. In the eyes of recorded history, Transnistria, compared with Auschwitz, exists as horror in the shadow of greater horror. But how does the world even begin to compare two such events? And how do we dare to classify the horror of one's experience, enshrined in event, as greater or less than another's, enshrined in the same or another event? There are times when comparison makes absolutely no sense, when neither likeness nor difference matters at all, when all we can do is try to attend, with all that we have in our selves, to stories of life and stories of death—told and untold, then and now and later—one by one by one.

ON STORIES TOLD AND STORIES LEARNED IN SILENCE

As I look back at my mother's story—and at my story of how I discerned her past—I realize what I learned from her about the existence of wordless stories in people's lives, and how the telling of such stories proceeds nonetheless.

People live their stories as much as they tell them in words. They live them in what they do not say. They live them in attending to the words of others rather than their own. They live them in the gaze that comes with inward
thought and inward talk while others all around are conversing. They live them in the feelings that come to surround them, that they give off in sighs and looks and gestures, or simply in the feeling that their presence evokes in others. All of these are forms of telling, though without words, and they are forms of telling that we can begin to read and hear, though also without words.

I am coming to believe that the telling of a story, however it occurs, is part of the living of a life and that to shut a story down is to shut down, as well, the life of which it tells and from which it flows. An untold story, or one that is told unconventionally without words, relates the teller’s continuing struggle to live. For a survivor, it relates the teller’s continuing struggle to survive.

The texts that some people speak out loud, or that they commit to writing, emerge within the time and space that surrounds them and within which they are told. Conversation as text is embedded in the silence that surrounds it, that breaks it up into words and spoken thoughts, letting those words and thoughts exist as distinctive sounds; written text exists on a page that is otherwise blank and whose blankness lets black print emerge, word by word, as part of distinctive statement. While oral and written texts, emerging as conversation and as writing from silence and blankness, have clear and identifiable authors, so, too, do the silence and blankness that exist with these articulated texts, holding and supporting them, serving as wordless backgrounds against which the spoken or written words of authors may appear and become real. What I have learned from my mother’s story is that though story and author existing in text are readily identifiable, a story and an author exist, as well, but in far less visible form, in the silence and blankness that exist with text, around it, as context. Even context can hold a story of life and one who would tell it. In the case of my family, my father’s partially articulated story, and certainly my own, came to exist as text that grew in the context of my mother’s unarticulated story.

But how can we find such stories? How can we even know they exist in lives around us? How can we hear or see, sense or absorb their very existence, even without glimpsing their content? Discerning untold stories is bound to take an unconventional ear and eye, and mind and heart, for the evidence we collect—even that these stories exist—will be drawn less from text than from the silence and diffuseness of context. It requires attending more to what is absent than to what is present, more to what remains unsaid than to what is said, more to what is unacknowledged than to what is acknowledged, more to what remains unknown than to what is known. In Henry Greenspan’s terms, this discerning requires attending more to the “not story” inscribed between the words of text than to text itself.

Stories, to me, are the sense and meaning we derive from our selves and our lives, for ourselves and for others. They appear less in the clear, hard, textually rendered lines of setting and event, action and plot, movement and sequence, plan and accomplishment, than in the often fragmented, even wordless expressions of experience and emotion. Stories are what we feel and tell ourselves, about how we know our pasts, even in the contexts of our present-day lives. We also tell these stories—of our selves and our pasts, with words and without—to others in our lives.

But there is another dimension to story that exists in the present, and that is the story of the story’s telling. It is also the story of others’ coming to know of the story that is told, both with and without words. It is the story of how the story of the past, and/or the story of the self, lives in the present. Even with my mother’s untold story, there are multiple stories: the story of her life in Transnistria, the story of how she lived with that story (and without expressing it in words) through much of her life after the war, the story of how she came to express it years later in words. And there is the story as well of how I and others in my family came to know her story, how we lived in the past with what we knew, however vaguely, how we lived with its wordlessness, how we live now with the telling she has begun, how we live with our telling of what she tells. Though I’ve come to believe that few, if any, untold stories exist in pure untold form (they tell themselves in other ways), I believe that the story of their telling, and the present-day “reading” by others of that which is the subject of their telling, can itself exist in untold form. We can sense another’s life without acknowledging or appreciating the meaning and value and feeling of what we are learning.

I think there are many untold stories we already know, or whose existence we sense in the present moments of our lives, though we do not speak of them. Nor do we speak about our not-speaking, or about the personal pain and distortion that silence engenders when, in Henry Greenspan’s words, the would-be tellers “live rather than . . . speak their retelling,” in this way constructing a “mode of recounting that severely reduces the lives of recounters” (p. 163).

Even an untold story, existing for years in the silence of a life, can come to be told, in words, to someone who enters a life and who may come to be trusted to listen and to care in ways that make its telling, with words, possible. But such telling is never easy. It can, in fact, be incredibly hard, as I learned through my mother’s efforts to tell, and especially through her last account. I think that her telling has, on balance, been a good thing—for me as I’ve come to understand how closely her story of silence is braided with mine of articulated text; for others who, as the bureaucratic descendants of the government that oppressed her, have been forced to come to terms with the
experienced reality of her life; and for herself as she, too, comes to terms with who she is now and how she exists, not just as one who survived but as one who vigorously lives.

ON EFFORTS TO RESEARCH SILENCE AND STORY IN ACADEMIC LIVES

What have I learned (what do I continue to learn) from my mother's life, and her story, for my own research, and through it, for my own life?

I have learned, first of all, how closely life and story are intertwined—how life is lived through story and how story lives in life itself. I have also learned that story often lives unworded in people's lives though it is often rendered in other ways, without words. And I have learned that the rendering of story, with words or without, itself becomes a story, though I believe that this second story (the meta-story) can, in fact, exist untold and in unrealized or partially realized form in the present day of its enactment. The issue for me, then, is as much the question of "what is this person's story?" as it is "what are we doing with this person's story and with the person herself as we come to know what she 'tells' us, whether conventionally, in words, or without?" I am trying to make a career of studying lives—and the making and rendering of articulated story—in college and university settings. Initially I did this by joining with senior colleagues who were studying how people with formal leadership responsibilities related to others who did not exist as leaders in the same way. More recently, I have been studying how professors construct themselves as scholars, alone, but also as they relate to others under the rubric of professorial collegialship and other forms of intellectual relationship. Within this study, I am hypothesizing (that is, "finding" through my own thoughts and, until recently, without data) that professors tell stories of themselves and their lives through the medium of their work, notably through their scholarship, and that their scholarship often stands (at least, in part) as a statement of personal identity. Viewed this way, scholarship—a topic that, by virtue of its "professional" nature, is often separated from life itself—becomes, ironically, an expression of one's personal self in one's work. Though it is hard to imagine scholarship literally as untold story, it might nonetheless be construed as a series of stories of self told unconventionally, that is, through the words and substance and rituals of scholarly practice.

Given this perspective on scholarship, it becomes possible to ask how the story-of-self emerging in a professor's scholarship exists as part of a second story (a meta-story) of how the professor tells her story-of-self-in-her-work to others, and also how others "read" and come to know and feel about her story. As I noted above, this meta-story may itself be largely untold and hard to grasp by those who live within it. It may be more discernable to an outsider (or to a wise insider) who can listen to the holder-of-story while listening as well to others who exist with her, attending to what they all say, but also to what they neglect to say, of themselves and each other.

My aim, in pursuing this line of work, is to salvage the stories-of-self that I believe exist, at least in some professors' scholarly work, in institutional settings that, I fear, often suppress or distort them. I want to know how the organizational worlds, and the worlds of collegialship in which professors exist day by day, may diminish (or otherwise shape) their stories, for example, through pressures to conform. I particularly want to know how professors may resist and persist in the creation of their stories-of-self through their work, perhaps through alternative inventions of collegialship and self. And I want to know how we might re-create the settings in which we, as professors, live and work, so as make these settings more conducive to the construction of scholarly work that more authentically reflects our selves, even as we ourselves continue to be shaped by others around us.  

Through my mother's story, I have also extended my understanding of how silence may intertwine with articulated story, supporting its very existence as story, but also how silence may itself bear story. I have learned that often both story and, for that matter, data exist as in that which, in standard terms, is not-story or not-data at all, but which mingles and mixes with the articulated story and data that become the texts of research. The study of unworded story requires the study of that which exists, as con/text—literally, with text—in the spaces between words, in the momentary stops between speakers in conversation with each other. And it requires a research approach that is antithetical to standard research practice that attends mostly to text—to articulation—ignoring the silence that exists with text, behind it, around it.

In particular, I have come to appreciate how research that seeks to find, and possibly to articulate, untold stories raises significant moral issues—for example, the question of what might happen if the subject of a research study should find herself at the center of a clearly articulated meta-story that she herself may never have told—that is, directly, in words—but that the researcher derived by examining the words and actions of this subject in relation to those of other persons existing with and around her. To what extent can untold stories, derived through research that draws from the texts of multiple people existing in a single shared social space (what I have called the meta-story), be shared with the people whom they are about and who might someday tell them, and at what risks? But what risks are involved in neglecting these stories altogether?
I wish to address these questions by discussing an example that emerged in my own work. In 1991 I wrote a paper entitled "Interpreting Silence: Constructing the Role of the Lone Woman in a Male-Dominated Leadership Group." The paper told the story of Elizabeth Collins, Academic Vice President of Meridian College, one of thirty-two sites in the Institutional Leadership Project. Elizabeth Collins was the lone woman on Meridian College's presidential leadership team. Through interviews with the president, other senior administrators, and faculty leaders, I developed a picture of what life was like for Elizabeth Collins as the only woman in the president's "cabinet."

I learned that she defined the college and its leadership needs quite differently than did her male colleagues. This recognition drew me to the question of how to pursue the experiences of individuals whose ways of understanding the world place them in the minority. In this case, I found that Collins was uncomfortable with the poor fit between her natural sense of self and the demands of her professional leadership role, but that (as best I could determine) she had not reflected on the source of her discomfort and its origins in the differences between her own conceptions of organization and leadership and those of her male colleagues. Rather, because no one in that site had articulated those differences, they were interpreted by most others as flaws in her leadership abilities, thereby undermining her ability to carry out her job.

I learned also that the president and other male administrators used several strategies in the course of their work that had the consequence, whether intentional or not, of "silencing" Elizabeth Collins. Their actions perpetuated misunderstandings about who she was and what she believed by failing to take advantage of opportunities to interpret her ideas, role, and behaviors to each other and to the college community. Moreover, in their own interactions with Elizabeth Collins, they urged her to temper her natural voice, encouraging her to act and think more like her male colleagues. While Meridian College was widely deemed a successful institution, Elizabeth Collins's contribution to that success was scarcely acknowledged, even though my analysis pointed to the important role that she had played.

The paper was difficult to write. I found myself revisiting and reinterpreting data that I and my colleagues had used primarily to characterize the president and his campus leadership. As I reimmersed myself in the data, the silences—what was not said by and about Elizabeth Collins—became more apparent. The stories we had crafted about Meridian College had left Elizabeth Collins's story untold. Her story was not a comfortable one to tell, in its descriptions of the systematic silencing of a capable individual—doubly so in the way her gender contributed to this silencing—but perhaps even more in its portrayal of the seeming lack of (articulated) insight Elizabeth Collins had about her situation and the forces that shaped it. Collins was uneasy with the demands of her job, her relations with faculty, and her need to submerge her natural self in performing her job. But she did not articulate an understanding of how her role as the lone woman on a male-dominated leadership team could have contributed to her discomfort.

When I presented this paper at a professional meeting, a member of the audience asked if Elizabeth Collins had seen the case report I had written. I replied that she had not. This was largely because of the promises of confidentiality that we had made to our respondents. Because the story of Elizabeth Collins drew on the voices of nine different actors at Meridian College, showing the manuscript to her (or to any of the others) would have immediately divulged the identities and responses of all of these respondents.

While this was a compelling ethical rationale, another moral issue emerged shortly thereafter. A reader of the paper, unaware of the promises of confidentiality my colleagues and I had made to our respondents, questioned the decision not to share this paper with Elizabeth Collins. The reader cast the issue as an ethical one, arguing that Elizabeth Collins had the right to see what I had written about her, and the right to withdraw data about herself that portrayed her as weak or incompetent. This reader invoked Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba's principle of member checking in qualitative research, described in *Naturalistic Inquiry*, which involves sharing case reports with respondents who provided the data on which the reports are based. According to Lincoln and Guba, failure to member check abridges the rights of research participants and thus violates the primary ethical imperative in social science research to minimize the potential harm to these participants.

This perspective, however, fails to acknowledge another source of harm to participants that may outweigh the potential harm to respondents stemming from a decision not to member check. In some cases, a research report may tell a story that may be harmful to an informant, perhaps revealing uncomfortable truths or criticizing the status quo or the informant's fundamental assumptions. The risk to a research participant may be especially great when the research is reporting an untold story (in this case, an untold meta-story). As I have suggested earlier, some stories may remain untold for good reasons.

I believe that returning "Interpreting Silence" to Elizabeth Collins may well have been harmful to her. Her life at Meridian College was difficult. From my point of view, she had constructed a personal narrative that was clearly at odds with the narrative I constructed through my interviews with her and others but that nonetheless enabled her to live and work in a hostile environment. The story of Elizabeth Collins that I told in "Interpreting Silence" could have burst this delicate bubble. I do not mean to be melodramatic, but the risks are real. My mother's reaction to telling her long-untold story is ample evidence of this.

This moral issue—the potential harmful consequences of telling an untold
story—poses some interesting dilemmas for naturalistic inquiry. Lincoln and Guba contend that naturalistic inquiry involves a blurring of the line between researcher and researched, with both parties collaborating equally in collecting and interpreting data. Naturalistic inquiry also involves intense negotiation between researchers and respondents over the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. How can this be done when stories are untold? Will respondents be willing to participate in research projects that may lead to results and interpretations that make them sad, angry, or uncomfortable?

The process of naturalistic inquiry proposed by Lincoln and Guba leads to the disconcerting conclusion that it may not be ethical to study—or to report—untold stories. This runs counter to the critical tradition of much qualitative interpretive research. Although there are no clear-cut solutions to a dilemma such as this, it seems to me that it should be possible simultaneously to pursue the telling of untold stories and to protect research participants from the harm that might come from exposing them to these untold stories. It is possible that, in some aspects of naturalistic research (for example, in the pursuit of untold stories), there can be no general methodological rules that apply uniformly to a class of research settings but rather that decisions to tell or not to tell all or part of a subject’s story are part of the complicated, particularistic, ungeneralizable, and very human stuff that comprises this research endeavor. In this case, the potential harm of returning an untold story to a respondent, who may have a very hard time living with what s/he learns from it, may overshadow the potential harm of withholding the interpretation from the respondent.20

If untold stories come to exist in our research, inasmuch as I believe they already exist in our everyday lives, then we will need to think through, with extraordinary care, what it means to relate to the people who exist in our studies in much the same way we think through what it means to relate to those who exist in our lives every day.

CODA

My mother often tells me how awkward she feels that she never finished her education, that she doesn’t have a high school or college degree, that her English is not smooth or refined, when so many around her—especially her children—have, in her eyes, accomplished so much. I wonder if, when she reads this paper, she’ll realize how this daughter, who’s “finished with school” so many times over, who’s credentialed to the hilt, and who writes and speaks in this American world with relative ease, still struggles to learn—from what her mother seems always to have known—what it means to create and pro-

serve a story of self in a life (yes, even a scholarly life) so thickly inscribed with others who struggle to do the same.

POSTSCRIPTS, 1994–1995

On my mother. I wrote this chapter in 1993 with my mother’s knowledge and encouragement. But when she read my draft, she wanted to know why I had revealed her lack of a formal education. This was not something she was proud of; rather, it was something she wanted to hide. I talked to her—as did Aaron—about the difference between really learning and mere schooling (though not in these words), and that to us, the former (which reflected so much of her life) meant so much more than the latter (to which she had so little access). So to make up for any possible mischaracterization of what this woman has done with her life, as a learner and maker of her own and others’ stories, I add the following:

My mother compensated for her lack of schooling by reading Hebrew translations of Tolstoy and Shakespeare, among others, an unusual endeavor in the Israel of the 1950s. In her lifetime she has been both fluent and literate in seven languages: Romanian, French, Yiddish, German, Hebrew, Spanish, and English. She maintained, in Franklin’s Store, an incredible bookkeeping system, personally tracking, with paper and pencil, thousands of accounts over the years, and with them the lives and faces and words of the people whose names they bore. Although she had access to an adding machine, she was actually faster in the computations she carried out in her head, and no one but no one ever caught her in error. She handled all her own and, in his late years, my father’s affairs, and she seemed to have no trouble at all bringing in the bureaucracies of schools, hospitals, department stores, nursing homes, and Medicare itself to their knees. She’s far better versed in world affairs and community affairs, and the personal affairs of those around her, than I will ever be. And to this day, neither my sister nor I nor her friends can keep her in books.

I can only begin to imagine how rich and full and clear, how accomplished and refined, her story might have been had it just been cast somewhere else and in some other time.

On others who have written this with me. In writing this chapter, I learned that in composing autobiography, I do not (and cannot) write only about myself; I write also about others in whose presence I become myself. But I also learned that I do not (and cannot) write only by myself. I am indebted to those who have read and talked and listened and, literally, written with me, in particular . . . to Aaron Pallas with whom I talked (and continue to talk)
incessantly about lives and about research, and who, in many substantive ways, shares in the authorship of all my autobiographical endeavors; to Penelope Peterson whose careful questions helped me realize that what I search for in others' lives, even as untold story, has sources in my own, untold as that may be; to Chris Clark who responded to me in ways that helped me discern what I was just beginning to sense. My thanks also to Maxine Greene, Steve Weiland, Estela Bensimon, Diane Holt-Reynolds, and Sheryl Welte for encouragement and helpful comments. My deepest thanks, of course, are to Judith Fuhrer Neumann for letting me tell a piece of my story in the terms of a story that is hers.

NOTES

1. This paper was entitled “On Experience, Memory, and Knowing: A Post-Holocaust (Auto)Biography.” For thoughtful commentary on differences between the language of the camps and the language of post-Holocaust existence, see Lawrence L. Langer’s Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory and Sander Gilman’s Inscribing the Other, especially Chapter 13, “To Quote Primo Levi: ‘If You Don’t Speak Yiddish, You’re Not a Jew,’” pp. 293–316.

2. “Lives as Texts,” Henry Greenspan’s examination of how Holocaust survivors recount their lives, contributed in important ways to my understanding of untold stories and to unconventional modes of “telling.”

3. When quoting or referring to myself at earlier times in my life, and occasionally when quoting others, I use a bracketed asterisk [*] to indicate a belief or statement, articulated by the speaker, and which was later corrected; the correction is noted elsewhere in this chapter. For example, the bracketed asterisks in this narrative indicate that at one time in my life I believed that my mother had been forced to stop school when she was in fifth grade, that an aunt taught her privately for a brief time after this, and that her youngest brother was taken away by Russian soldiers. As I indicate in later text, I learned, through conversations years later, that she actually left school when she was in eighth grade, that a cousin taught her, and that her brother was abducted by “Jewish policemen” collaborating with Nazis in Transnistria. When no correction appears later in the chapter, I note the correction after the asterisk.


5. I have found interview-based accounts of how other sons and daughters of survivors learned their parents' stories to resonate closely with mine. An example is Helen Epstein’s Children of the Holocaust. One respondent in this book says, “The fact that it wasn’t talked about made me know it more. . . . [My parents] would lapse into thoughtfulness and for me the lapse was an answer. . . . I don’t know how or where or when I heard stories from the war. It’s as if they came through thin air to my ear” (p. 179). Epstein, herself the daughter of survivors, adds, “Like most survivors neither [of my parents] imagined how, over the years, I had stored their remarks, their glances, their silences inside me, how I had deposited them in my iron box like pennies in a piggy bank. They were unconscious of how much a child gleaned from the absence of explanation as much as from words” (p. 335). In In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation, Aaron Haas quotes the adult children of Holocaust survivors describing how they learned of their parents' lives, for example, by attending to “snippets” and “tidbits” (p. 74), “bits and pieces” (p. 82), and to “undercurrent[s]” often nonverbal in family talk (p. 71), which they then constructed into stories themselves. “The story,” said one interviewee, “popped into my consciousness in an accidental manner since the age of six” (p. 69). Other works that consider the intergenerational transmission of survivor stories include Randolph L. Braham’s The Psychosocial Perspectives of the Holocaust and Its Aftermath, Art Spiegelman’s Maus: A Survivor’s Tale and Maus II: A Survivor’s Tale: And Here My Troubles Begin, and Dina Wardi’s Memorial Candles: Children of the Holocaust.

6. According to Martin Gilbert, in Atlas of the Holocaust, on the eve of World War II, the city of Suceava had the third largest Jewish population in Bukovina, a region in northern Romania.

7. In the text that follows, I use a double slash (/) to indicate a stop or break in the speaker’s flow of words as recorded on tape. I use three dots ( . . . ) to indicate deletion of one or more words on tape.

8. In the introduction to Jagendorf’s Foundry, Aron Hirt-Manheimer describes Transnistria as an “artificial geographic entity that existed from 1941 to 1944” (p. xxv). Located in the western Ukraine east of the Dniester River, it was about twice the size of New Jersey. In fall of 1941 the Romanian government deported between 140,000 and 150,000 Jews from Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Dobroghia (all regions of Romania at that time) to ghettos, labor camps, and concentration camps in Transnistria. As best I can determine, the area which was Transnistria is over 150 miles north and east of Suceava.

9. Gilbert, p. 73.


11. I worry that the juxtaposition of Auschwitz and Transnistria, viewed in terms of my parents’ experiences in the war, will be interpreted, by some readers, as a gender issue in which the man’s story dominates (that is, silences) that of the woman. While my father held fairly traditional views of men’s and women’s roles in society and in the family, the dominance of his story and the relative silence of my mother’s appears related to far larger and more complicated issues concerned with the social construction of historical text. Stories derived from other survivor families bear out this proposition, as in this interview with a woman whose mother was interned at Auschwitz and whose father was deported to Transnistria (the exact opposite of my family’s experience). My father doesn’t talk about it much . . . it doesn’t become a very melodramatic issue at all. From what I understand, the Germans arrived in Romania relatively late. My father was in what they call a work camp for three years. I have no idea where, I really am ashamed to say. Somehow, we always minimized my father’s experiences. In work camps, where he was, people did not get killed. They
just worked, like prisoners of war in so-called normal circumstances. . . . My mother and her family were taken to Auschwitz the last years of the war . . . .” (Epstein, 1979, pp. 119–120).

12. Mary Gergen also refers to this view of story in “Life Stories: Pieces of a Dream” in the volume Storied Lives.

13. Some examples of my research on college and university leadership include Neumann, 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1995a, 1995b, and Bensimon and Neumann, 1993. These studies focus on the cognitive and symbolic aspects of academic leadership viewed as interactions among administrators and faculty, and among administrative peers, particularly during financially stressed times. Several of these articles have emphasized how people who are not in leadership positions make sense of their leaders’ words and actions, and how leaders themselves make sense of their own roles and others’ responses to them.

14. My initial explorations of this topic are recorded in a working paper entitled “The Ties that Bind: Notes on Professorial Collegialship as Academic Context,” a literature review constructed in autobiographical perspective. I have also initiated a three-year longitudinal, interview-based study of professors’ learning, scholarly identity, and collegialship after tenure in order to study professors’ engagement in scholarship in the early stages of mid-career. Though this study focuses on others, it is strongly self-referential in that I am, by virtue of the date of my tenure, a member of the generation of faculty I am studying. Early results of this study are reported in a working paper, “What Do I Do Next?: Constructions of Self as Scholar in the First Post-Tenure Year.” Though I began this line of work in reflection between several literatures and my own life story, I have recently brought the stories of others to bear on my learning as well. I consider my writing in and editing of this volume as further extension of this work.

15. Susan Krieger’s Social Science and the Self: Personal Essays on an Art Form helped me to shape this view.

16. For an elaboration of this perspective, see Dorinne K. Kondo’s Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace.

17. I worked as assistant director of the Institutional Leadership Project, a five-year national study of college and university leadership supported by the National Center for Postsecondary Governance and Finance, from 1986 to 1990; the project is described in my publications on this topic. “Meridian College” was one of the study institutions; all names and titles, of persons and places, are pseudonymous.


20. There are times when the masking of identity in research reports, and the withholding of other information about a research site, has greater import for what persons at the site might learn from reading the report than what readers existing outside the site might learn from reading it. In such cases a researcher will need to think through how much of the report should be withheld, and in what ways, both in terms of what the general public will see and what individuals on site may learn about themselves and each other.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


