

Auto/biography, Pedagogy and Process

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For the Diploma in Process Work

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“Everything is happening within the context of an overall story direction, a powerful story trying to create greater awareness.” (Arnold Mindell, 2010)

“Everything is held together with stories. That is all that is holding us together, stories and compassion.” (Barry López in Evans, 1994)

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Introduction

As the project for my Diploma in Process Work, I wrote an academic book in the field of education under the title, *Auto/biography and Pedagogy: Memory and Presence in Teaching*¹. For the past 30 years, I've been involved in the study of teaching from a narrative perspective; the book represents the latest stage of my academic work in the field of education. In writing the book, everything I've learned over the past twenty years of studying Process Work (PW) both informally and formally came into play. The book represents a sustained effort to integrate the ideas of process-oriented psychology with the perspectives and theories of narrative, to introduce processwork concepts and ideas to an audience of educational researchers and practitioners who might not otherwise come into contact with process-oriented psychology, and to show the relevance of processwork for an examination of education and teaching. This contextual essay is intended to present my book to the PW Community, highlighting the theoretical concepts of process-oriented psychology that played a role in developing the ideas in the book, and describing some aspects of my personal process behind the writing of this book.

In section 1 of this essay, I trace the story of how the two strands of thought and practice, processwork and narrative, have gradually come together in my life and work. Section 2 presents some major concepts of process work, and discusses them in relation to relevant concepts and theories of narrative research. The third section provides an overview of the book and explains how each chapter in particular and the book as a whole relates to processwork. Section 4 discusses inner work and highlights the processes that allowed me to write about my mother; some excerpts from Chapter 2 of the book are provided to illustrate the process. The fifth section discusses

¹ Elbaz-Luwisch, F. (2014). *Auto/biography and Pedagogy: Memory and Presence in Teaching*. New York: Peter Lang.

process-oriented writing as a form of inner work, and shows how it serves to foster professional and personal growth for teachers, with excerpts from Chapter 5 of the book to demonstrate this. Section 6 focuses on worldwork and the uses of conflict in educational settings, illustrating with some passages from chapter 8 of the book. The final section of this essay will summarize and conclude with some suggestions about how these ideas might be taken further.

1. My journey to processwork

I had always intended to study psychology, but at university in the 1960's behaviorism was the prevailing perspective. In the introductory psychology course, our professor was Donald Hebb, a well-known founder of neuropsychology who had written our textbook. One shining moment stands out from the course. Hebb's co-teacher, Dr. Muriel Stern, was teaching the class that day, and a student mustered up the courage to raise his hand and ask, "What about Freud?" Dr. Stern put down her notes, left the podium and came to stand at the edge of the stage. In an almost conspiratorial tone, she explained that while Freud was no doubt a great thinker, his work was "not science", and thus could be of absolutely no interest to us as students of scientific psychology. My friends in the honors program in psychology belonged to an elite group: they took part in department seminars, wore lab coats, and spent their time injecting rats with drugs and then sending them through mazes. I was a little jealous, mainly of the group spirit and support my friends were receiving (and perhaps also of the lab coats). The psychology program, however, seemed to have little relevance for the lives of human beings; I chose instead to take courses in literature, political science and philosophy, eventually focusing on philosophy. Later, in Israel, I moved to education, studying curriculum and teaching and continuing to doctoral studies in which I was at the forefront of the development of the new area of narrative research on teaching. My research has involved interviewing teachers, writing and interpreting their life stories; I taught qualitative and narrative research methods to prospective and practicing teachers, and also taught courses that focused on multiculturalism in teaching and explored the use of stories to foster dialogue across ethnic, religious and national borders.

I had been interested in depth psychology since my first year at university when I read Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* while sitting in the back row of the chemistry class. I went on to read Jung and Jungians, but did not yet see much connection between my personal interest in understanding dreams and body wisdom and my professional interests in education, teachers' lives and narrative research. It was in the University of Haifa library, in 1992 or 1993, that I first encountered the concept of the *dreambody* (Mindell, 1982): Mindell's first book was on the shelf devoted to work by Jungian writers. I sensed at once that this work was important for me, though I didn't quite understand what I was reading; I returned to *Dreambody* several times over the next few years, as well as reading other books by Mindell.

In 1995 I had a dream: I went to see a therapist, but he was not there; I sat down on the floor of his office to "work on myself alone." I had just finished when the therapist arrived; surprisingly, he did not look much like the actual therapist I was expecting. When I told him I had finished working, he smiled and told me I should come to a meeting taking place in a couple of weeks. I asked about the location of this meeting, and he gave me only a vague answer. I left feeling a bit irritated with myself for not being more assertive about getting the precise address. Some months later while visiting London, I came across *Sitting in the Fire* (Mindell, 1995) which had just come out; I turned the book over to check the price, and saw the photograph of the therapist who had appeared in my dream. I quickly realized that Mindell's ideas were relevant for work I was just beginning with Jewish and Arab student teachers around dialogue based on personal and collective narratives. I bought the book which sat beside my bed for weeks before I began reading it, but once I did so a deep and lasting engagement with processwork took hold.

From the time I read *Sitting in the Fire*, my central interest was in worldwork. I attended the Intensive course in Portland in 1998, and was involved for a few years in helping to organize meetings of Jewish and Arab Israelis (as well as some meetings between Israelis and Palestinians) for worldwork seminars led by Gary Reiss who visited Israel regularly. Participants came with a lot of good will, and with Gary's skillful facilitation these meetings were always powerful and inspiring. But in 2000 the second Intifada began, the peace process faltered, and it became increasingly difficult to organize such occasions. During this time I wrote an article (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004) about my efforts to continue to engage Jewish and Arab students in dialogue, with the title, "How is education possible when there's a body in the middle of the room?" For several years, it seemed that processwork was no longer a central focus for me, and I wondered sadly if it had been a passing phase. During this time I continued to be involved in work at the university with teachers and teacher education students on the issues of multiculturalism; deep democracy (Mindell, 1995; Amy Mindell, 2008) was an important theme in these efforts (discussed in section 6 of this essay). Then in 2006 the Second Lebanon War brought me back to processwork. The war had been a very stressful experience, and after looking for a place to spend a short vacation, I decided to attend a processwork intensive in Switzerland sponsored by RSPOPUK. I was a little embarrassed to tell friends that I was going to take a break and relax by attending an intensive seminar! Luckily the seminar venue was beautiful, the program was absorbing and I felt at home in the learning community that attended the intensive; at the end of the week I was part of a small group that gave a creative presentation on the topic of "Death and Dying." In randomly assigning me to this topic, I felt that the Tao was acknowledging the feelings emerging in me after the war, feelings I'd kept locked inside during the war itself. I felt a strong surge of positive

energy. When participants from different countries were asked to report on PW activities in their home base, I remembered that a two-year program was supposed to begin in Israel, and I heard myself announcing to the group that I would be part of it.

During my studies I was lucky to be part of a wonderful community of students; although I had been familiar with PW longer than most others in the group I felt, and still feel, that there's much more to learn. PW studies allowed me to deepen interests that I'd had for most of my life: work with dreams, how the body learns and carries experience for us, world issues and working with conflict within myself, with others and in groups. The current project is a continuation of the project I submitted in April 2010 for the completion of Phase 1, with the title " The accidental body: my processwork teacher."

The story of how I came to processwork is in many ways a magical story, with fairytale qualities. I was born into a family of Jewish immigrants who were lucky enough to reach the safety of Canada; they raised me to live a careful life, to value official knowledge and make rational decisions. Their fondest wish was a simple one: that I would meet a prince and live happily ever after. And then, life happened, and a different kind of story began. I was too interested in learning to make a good princess; I left the quiet and peaceful home where I'd grown up and travelled far, to a place that only dreams of peace. Along the way my path was strewn with crumbs (see Amy Mindell, 1995, p. 121-127): signs and signals of a spontaneous secondary process that would ultimately take me along a different path: first, there were books such as Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*; later Mindell's work was waiting in the far reaches of an academic library and in a London bookstore. As in all fairy tales, there were many helpers—teachers, therapists, friends and fellow students (often in multiple roles) who appeared at the right moments. The teacher himself took the trouble to

visit my dream, showing up when I was expecting a different therapist. And life events – both personal and political – keep happening in astonishing ways, to remind me that life is a mystery, and that following the unfolding of this mystery with awareness is the only thing to do.

2. Between processwork and narrative theory

The work of Arnold Mindell provides a broad view of the complexity of human experience and the nature of reality. The theory and practice of process-oriented psychology is based first and foremost in the work of Carl Jung, but also in Gestalt psychology and in Taoist, Buddhist and aboriginal worldviews. Processwork theory distinguishes different levels or dimensions of reality: *consensus reality*, which is reality as we know it in everyday life, the world of space, time and causality or of 'everything that can be measured and recorded...that physically exists' (Mindell, 2010, 145); *dreamland* or 'the world of myth and meaning, of dreams and transcendent subjective experience' (Mindell, 2010, 144); and the *essence* level of 'nonduality-based experiences that seem to give rise to everything else (2010, 42),' at a level where polarities no longer exist.

Processwork theory relates to human experience but also to the nature of reality, and it is evident that the theory also addresses the spiritual realm in a significant way. Obviously, the endeavour to deal with the spiritual dimension of life is largely foreign to established academic discourse (Shahjahan, 2005); in the rational and empirical world of academia, a scholar writing about spirituality risks the loss of standing and credibility with his or her peers. Thus it was challenging for me to try to bring processwork theory into relation with the research knowledge of my academic field. Yet the fact that this issue is being discussed within the academic literature indicates that change is taking place. Many scholars point out that the majority of the world's peoples understand life in religious or spiritual terms. Alexander (2005) holds that the majority of people, and particularly women, cannot make sense of their lives without reference to religion or to the sacred in some form; she insists that 'we would all need to engage the Sacred as an ever-changing yet permanent condition of the

universe, and not as an embarrassingly unfortunate by-product of tradition in which women are disproportionately caught' (Alexander, 2005, 13). Mindell's work is clearly aligned with this perspective, drawing on the work of Jung and on aboriginal worldviews all of which emphasize the sacredness of life. Further, Mindell offers a way of putting the empirical and the spiritual together: he suggests that while the consensual reality of physics and the subjective and mysterious experiences of dreamland seem to be two separate worlds that cannot be bridged, they are actually 'different dimensions of a worldview that includes both everyday reality and dreaming' (2010, 157).

How does Mindell's work relate to the narrative perspective which has become one of the central approaches in the social sciences, and on which my own academic work has been based? Narrative and biographical research assumes that to understand people's life experience one should pay special attention to the life as a whole, as the individual tells about it. The narratives and life stories of people in particular situations are studied, in order to understand how they deal with those situations, how change comes about, and how life changes affect the plot of the story, the identity and subjectivity of the teller, and the 'narrative learning' that comes about in the telling and retelling of one's life (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Goodson, 2009; McAdams et al., 2001; Dominicé, 2000). The conceptualization of narrative inquiry developed in the study of teaching views narrative as both phenomenon and method (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000); researchers conduct interviews and interpret them, as well as observing and writing stories about the life and work settings of research participants. Autobiographical narratives are sometimes written by participants themselves, and it has been shown that the telling and retelling of personal stories illuminates, and at the same time contributes to professional development (Johnson and Golombek, 2002).

Narrative research has focused on different aspects of teacher development and learning, highlighting the development of voice, the multi-vocality of teachers' narratives and women's narratives in particular (Bloom, 1996), as well as the 'narrative authority' (Olson & Craig, 2001) that takes shape over time in teachers' careers.

The narrative perspective touches on the processwork worldview in a number of interesting ways. For example, Mindell has used terms such as "life myth", "pilot wave" and "process mind" to speak about the overarching field in which the individual finds herself and which orients her to the future. He has also formulated this in a narrative vein, commenting that "everything is happening within the context of an overall story direction, a powerful story trying to create greater awareness" (Mindell, 2010, 150–151).

Second, the concept of "process" itself has affinities with one of the central terms of narrative theory, experience. Experience and process are not equivalent terms, but both have a similar effect, that of focusing attention on life not as it might be understood by theory, but just as it is, here and now, as lived by the client or research participant. The process worker pays attention to the client's process as it unfolds, without bringing to bear prior conceptual understandings, without drawing on the DSM or other formulations, assuming that all one needs in order to understand what is happening for the client is to follow the signals of the client herself. In a similar way, the narrative researcher listens to the participant telling about her life, and seeks to interpret the text of the story in its own terms. Narrative theory follows Dewey (1938) in making experience one of its' central terms, thus narrative researchers view stories as a privileged form of information precisely because stories allow relatively direct access to the individual's experience. Processwork focuses on

the different channels of experience – verbal, visual, proprioceptive, feeling, relationship and so on – for the same reason: to gain more direct access to the client's experience.

Third, both processwork and narrative theory highlight a conception of "entanglement" as central to the theory. Mindell's notion of entanglement is related to the "processmind," defined as "the palpable, intelligent, organizing 'force field' present behind our personal and large group processes and, like other deep quantum patterns, behind processes of the universe" (2010, xi). In narrative theory, the philosopher Paul Ricoeur identifies stories that "demand to be told" (1984, 1990, 74), and suggests the notion of "being entangled in stories": life is about being caught up in a web of stories, those being lived right now and stories past which are held in memory and which make up the 'background' or larger whole, from which told stories emerge. Mindell's notion of an organizing force field is similar to Ricoeur's idea that there is a "larger whole" against which we live out and apprehend stories, as well as a background, made up of the "living imbrications" of every lived story with every other lived story, now and in the past. Being 'entangled in stories' is something that many of us have experienced as the common and shared urge to make sense of one's life, to live out a worthwhile story within the web of connections, storied and as yet unstoried, in which one finds herself; as stated succinctly by Mindell, the purpose of the overall story is to make possible greater awareness.

Fourth, there is an interesting parallel between edge phenomena in processwork and the notion of "trouble" in narrative theory. Mindell defines the "edge" in a number of ways. Most simply, he states that "an edge is reached when a process brings up information which is difficult for you to accept." (Mindell, 1990, 67) He elaborates further, that "edges are names for the experience of confinement,

for the limitations in awareness, for the boundaries of your own identity." (1990. 71)

In narrative theory, it is generally accepted that for a story to 'work', to be of interest to its audience, some kind of 'trouble' is needed. According to Bruner (1987), "Trouble is what drives the drama, and it is generated by a mismatch" between two or more of the constituents of the typical narrative: the agent, action, goal, setting, and instrument (as elaborated in the classic work of Burke, 1945). In telling or writing a personal story, the teller will consciously or unconsciously highlight some kind of trouble or obstacle, and the story will tell us how the individual dealt with that trouble; in processwork terms, the teller confronts an edge, a limitation in their life and personality, and the story not only provides information about this but often telling the story helps the teller to go over the edge.

Finally, processwork highlights the fact that life is often mysterious, that given the different dimensions of reality and the multiple channels in which we access it, we often know more than we can say. Narrative theory reaches a similar insight based on the ubiquitous nature of story itself. As Hardy commented,

What concerns me here are the qualities which fictional narrative shares with that inner and outer storytelling that plays a major role in our sleeping and waking lives. For we dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative." (1968, 5)

Within this ongoing narrative activity, stories are often said to have a beginning, a middle and an end; but this overtly linear order is deceptive because every story is unique and the particular combination of elements that takes one from beginning to end is always surprising, in literature as in life. And life, like narrative, is rarely predictable; according to one of the main theorists of narrative, Alisdair MacIntyre, life, like narrative, is both free and constrained:

Unpredictability and teleology therefore coexist as parts of our lives; like characters in a fictional narrative we do not know what will happen next, but nonetheless our lives have a certain form which projects itself towards our future. Thus the narratives we live out have both an unpredictable and a partially teleological character (MacIntyre 1984, 216).

It has taken me a long time to tease out and understand the multiple overlaps and connections between processwork and the narrative perspective, but juxtaposing the ideas presented above, I begin to knit together my work on narrative with processwork while also making the connections more explicit. In addition to the many similarities and points of connection that I've spelled out here, it seems that both perspectives seek similar underlying goals: to gain awareness and to better understand that "form which projects itself toward our future". However, while these goals are the primary to the processwork perspective, they are largely secondary in the academic world; this, I believe, helps to explain why forging the links has been difficult for me, and the journey so long. The next sections of this essay will elaborate further on some of the connections and show how I brought processwork ideas into my academic practice.

3. Overview of the book, *Autobiography and pedagogy*

The book consists of an introduction and nine chapters. The introduction presents the rationale for the book, emphasizing that a narrative and auto/biographic approach in education implies attention to experience, and hence to the themes of memory, embodiment and imagination. The introduction prefigures Mindell's view of the complexity of human experience, in which "everything is happening within the context of an overall story direction, a powerful story trying to create greater awareness" (Mindell, 2010, 150–151). I'll briefly review the content of each chapter, indicating the ways that processwork ideas are at work in each chapter.

Chapter 1: Mixing memory and desire like spring rain. The first chapter sets the stage by examining the issue of memory in education, interweaving a theoretical discussion with brief accounts of my own memories, and those of other educational practitioners. As the French filmmaker and daughter of a Holocaust survivor, Chantal Ackerman, noted: "A child with a story full of holes, can only reinvent for herself a memory... One attempts to create one's own imaginary truth" (quoted in Pollock, 2008). The chapter surveys different approaches to memory, noting that trauma, and its accompanying stress, may lead to events being recorded in a fragmented manner, rather than in a coherent narrative (as noted by Audergon, 2005). The chapter emphasizes that memory provides a background of stories within which we live, and which we use to orient our lives, much as the "processmind" organizes our individual and collective lives.

Chapter 2: My mother's story. In this chapter I tell the story of my mother's life, drawing on my memories and on stories of her early life, stories "which demand to be told." I am interested in understanding how her stories live on in my body in gesture, posture and movement, how I am 'entangled' in those stories which influence

how I live in the world, how I stand as an academic and a teacher in the university classroom. Writing this story was not easy and I also reflect on the writing process and my experience of it, using skills of inner work.

Chapter 3: Mothering, Embodying, Teaching. Teachers' stories show that they take up what has been called a "position of presence" in front of students (Estola & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2003), underlining the importance of embodiment in understanding teaching as both lived experience and as narrative. Examining the connections between the body and lived experience, I question the pedagogical implications of these explorations for an understanding of teaching. This chapter emphasizes research on teaching, but Mindell's view of the body and dreambody underlie the account.

CHAPTER 4: Retrieving memory, shaping teaching– stories of teachers. This chapter examines the written autobiographies of 7 graduate students from diverse backgrounds who participated in an advanced methods course on narrative inquiry in multicultural settings. The chapter deals with belonging and marginalization in society and in the teaching profession, with ways of storying development in teaching, and with teachers' sense of purpose and calling. I focus on similarities among the stories despite the diverse backgrounds of the participants, as well as the ways that these teachers manage to produce coherent stories, integrating diverse voices rather than being fragmented by them. The process of sharing and listening to one another's stories is also a process of engaging in and creating deep democracy.

CHAPTER 5: Retrieving memory, shaping teachers– stories of teacher educators. This chapter adds to the research on teacher educators lives, discussing the stories of 6 Israeli teacher educators from different backgrounds. Here as in chapter 4, processwork ideas are not explicit but the perspective is still in evidence. In both

chapters I analyze teachers' stories, looking for what is primary and secondary in a story, what different voices are present, as well as what is not said.

CHAPTER 6: Memory and imagination. Imagination is vital for critical thinking about education and teaching. This chapter (based on Elbaz-Luwisch, 2010a) discusses the use of creative writing and process-oriented tools for attaining awareness, engaging the imagination and facilitating teacher development through autobiographical writing. I draw on the work of Amy Mindell (2005) on creativity as well as making a connection between Mindell's approach and Polanyi's idea of "tacit knowledge", to explore the idea that different kinds of knowledge are active in the work of teaching, and teachers can draw on this knowledge through inner work to further their own learning and professional development.

CHAPTER 7: "Taking the Imagination Visiting" as Pedagogy: Journal Fragments. This chapter explores an idea drawn from Hannah Arendt, that of 'taking the imagination visiting', a way of being in the world that resonates with the ideas of deep democracy. Arendt tried to conceptualize a way of gaining understanding of the life of another person not through empathy but by imagining myself, as myself, actually living the life of the other. Taking the metaphor of visiting literally, I look at this idea through my own experience of travel.

CHAPTER 8: Auto/biography and conflict in teaching and life . Reviewing the conclusions of Li, Conle & Elbaz-Luwisch (2009), this chapter examines some possible benefits of conflict in educational settings, both in the context of pedagogical encounters across borders of difference, and in enabling a more nuanced and multi-voiced understanding of lives in education. The chapter expands on a published article (Elbaz-Luwisch 2009) which looks at my experience of working with Jewish and

Palestinian teachers in Israel, drawing on Mindell's view of conflict as a group's way of learning about itself and creating community.

CHAPTER 9: Presence and Dialogue, Auto/biography and Teaching. The final chapter draws together the themes of body, place, presence, and imagination to suggest ways to elaborate a critical language of teaching. The theme of presence is offered as a major idea that emerges from the writing, grounded in the multivocal lived experience of teaching. I bring into the discussion Mindell's (2010) definition of presence as something unchanging, "a *pre-sense*...something you can almost feel before you can describe it as a feeling... a kind of spirit that sends signals to others before you even know you've sent them!" (39) For Mindell presence is related to the 'essence' level, "a deep and stable part of the self that is like an 'intentional field'" (2010, 42) underlying and orienting who we are in the world.

4. Writing and inner work: writing about my mother

In his book, *Working on yourself alone: Inner dreambody work* (Mindell, 1990), Mindell develops his conception of inner work from two complementary starting points: the 'active imagination' process developed by Jung, and the practice of meditation drawing on various Eastern traditions. These sources allow for a complex and multifaceted way of working on oneself that may be done in any channel (proprioception, visualization, movement work, relationship work and so on), and that allows for coming into deep contact with one's primary and secondary processes, for going over edges, and for attaining increased awareness. Mindell points out that a compassionate inner attitude is crucial because it "lovingly tolerates and accepts potential growth in ourselves... appreciating that all of our parts and relationship interactions can potentially evolve into personal growth." (16) Interestingly, although Mindell does not refer directly to writing as a mode of inner work, much of the book itself was written in a meditative mode to directly represent Mindell's own process of working on himself.

For me, the process of working on myself through writing began in 2008, when I noticed that a mole on my upper abdomen seemed to have grown; I knew I should go for a checkup. After a few months had gone by without my making an appointment, I decided to work on this in a peer group meeting. I couldn't describe the mole in words, and rejected my peers' suggestion to draw it; the edge to explore the matter in both verbal and visual channels was too great. Do you want to become it, they asked? I bent over and became a lumpy creature crouched on the floor, head buried between my knees; in the movement channel, the mole seemed to be a friendly animal, ready to answer questions and even playful, reaching out wiggly fingers to its surroundings. By the end of the process, the mole was talking about things it wanted

to do before it died, and the one most urgent thing, it said, was to write about its mother. My mother. I knew that I had to take up this project very soon.

In the meantime, the mole was removed and pronounced melanoma, stage 1 'in situ'. I spent the next few months getting brief glimpses into the life of a cancer patient: another small surgical procedure, time spent waiting in the basement of a hospital for a set of CT scans "just to be sure," and finally a visit to an oncologist who seemed genuinely pleased to tell me no more follow-up was necessary. In consensus reality I had been calm, in control, grateful for my good fortune and also disconnected from my body. In dreamland I was a mole, scared, hiding in my body, not yet able to do inner work.

This experience behind me, I began trying to figure out how to write about my mother. I imagined a piece of creative writing, a memoir or a novella; but my inner critic warned me that I did not know how to write such a text, much less get it published. I heard my mother's voice clearly telling me not to 'waste' my time writing about her life if it would not 'count' on my academic record. Gradually I realized that the split between academic and creative writing was not necessary: my academic work on teaching and teachers' lives had always been focused on the interconnections between the personal and the professional, and writing about my mother had to be done the same way. What I received from my mother has made me the person that I am, not just in my 'private' life but also as a researcher and academic. So I'd have to figure out how to integrate writing about my mother with writing about teaching and research. I began with my Phase 1 project focused on writing and the body, not yet ready to write about my mother, but it was clear to me that "This time, I knew that I needed to write, and writing about my mother meant combining a number of tasks: writing to record and preserve my mother's history, writing in a more expressive and

feeling way than I am used to, and writing in a way that transgresses and enlarges the limits of academic writing."

I began writing in bits and pieces – stories I'd heard as a child, things I knew about my mother's family of origin, her early years in Canada. I surfed the net for information about the Ukraine, the small village, a farming 'colony' known as Kolonna Manshurova, where she was born, the history of the pogroms her family lived through in the 1920's and what happened to family members during the Holocaust. There was much to write. My mother died in 1978 at the age of 70, of cancer; she had just begun to take life a little easier and to enjoy being a grandmother. My oldest daughter was two and a half when she died, and my son was born just a month after her death. Writing about her life brought up many edges. First, there was an edge to writing so personally in a published academic text, something I had done before and that has become accepted, but this was to be a longer and more substantial piece than I had written before. I had to deal with the traumas of my mother's early life – living through pogroms, the death of her parents, the separation from her siblings and the move to live with an uncle in a different country, knowing that she would probably never see her siblings again. I feel that in some way I too experienced these traumas through her, at second hand but still very powerfully; I felt the need to search and hunt down the traces in myself of her trauma. When my mother died I was pregnant and had a small child to care for, and could not allow myself to mourn her passing fully; I have gone back to this several times over the years, but in a way the writing process was a chance to finally say goodbye. And her story brings up the sense of unlived life, because she died too young, because she lived with so many self-imposed limits. So in writing about her I was asking myself what I really want in life, how I can live more fully and be myself more completely. I have been asking

these questions for a long time but the edge now is to answering honestly and facing the possibility that I might fail to live up to what my answers require. I am now almost the age my mother was when she died, so all of these edges have come into sharper focus and dealing with them feels more urgent than it did when I first formulated the need to write about my mother.

Though I do speak in the book about the difficulties of writing about my mother, the chapter that tells her story necessarily covers up most of the "edge-work" that I had to do in writing, and it is difficult to reproduce it in retrospect. The best I can do in the moment is to present an excerpt (from pages 32-34, slightly shortened), accompanied by comments (in italics) that I make now, trying to remember what I felt as I wrote, and what I feel now on rereading.

Distraught after the death of their father, my mother's older siblings feared they would be unable to provide for their younger sisters and brothers as well as their own young families. *My grandfather was murdered in a pogrom; my grandmother had died some years before of an unknown illness.* At this time the eldest brother, Yankel (Jacob), was already married to Chaika, and they had a son, Shunya. The oldest sister, Maika (Miriam), was also married and had two daughters, Nussia and Freema. *Their names are important, not just because one cousin was named, like me, after our grandmother, but because so little is left. The two sisters, Maika and Elka, were murdered by the Nazis in 1942, and I do not think their place of burial is known. As I write this now, I'm aware of the urgency I still feel about getting the details straight.* They wrote to their father's siblings who had left some years before for the 'new world'... It was said that Efraim's wife, Aunt Toba, "made the best offer," agreeing to take in three of her husband's nieces and nephews. Thus it was that my mother, her younger sister Esther who was 16 and her brother Itzik, aged 15, set off for Canada. Their oldest brother accompanied them by train to Riga, where they boarded a ship for England.

My mother did not mention many details (*and I make up for it by overwhelming the reader with detail... so much has been lost, there's so much I am hoping to recover through this writing.*), but according to online records they must have sailed to Liverpool, where they transferred to the *R.M.S. Alaunia*, a ship of the Cunard Line, for a voyage of almost two months landing in Quebec City on October 25th, 1925.

The *Alaunia II* was a new ship that made its maiden voyage across the Atlantic in February of 1925. It weighed 14,000 tons, had one funnel and two masts, double reduction steam turbine engines, and a "service speed" of 15 knots. It was built to accommodate 500 cabin class passengers, and 1200 3rd class passengers. (*I continue with many more details about the ship, the Cunard*

shipping company which owned it, and more. Writing all these facts provides me with some protection, I am on an enormous edge...)

The *Alaunia* itself, according to photographs, was a rather impressive ship, on which immigrants from many different countries travelled between England and Canada. There are records of some 500 immigrants arriving in Quebec city on the *Alaunia* in 1925, in three different voyages ... The immigrants in that year came largely from Britain and Ireland, Scandinavia, Russia, Poland, and Romania.

Having spoken about the *Alaunia* itself and its business of moving people and cargo from place to place, having indulged in 'screen memories' to the fullest, I have to confront the picture that haunts me, hiding behind this wealth of information. (*Finally, I think I can do this.*) It is a picture of three young people, children really—aged 15, 16 and 17—travelling on their own, while most of the other immigrants are in family groups, parents and children. They have dark hair and eyes and dark complexions; their eyes sparkle, but perhaps with fear and expectation more than pleasure. My mother and her brother are noticeably thin, while their sister Esther is a little plump; they are poorly clothed, and ill-equipped for the Canadian weather. On arrival in Montreal their uncle took them to buy shoes almost immediately. When I picture them in my mind's eye it is hard to hold back tears.

The stories I heard about that period in my mother's life create a mixed tapestry. *I am breathing more easily as I read/write this: they have found a home, they are safe, their lives will now proceed to unfold in an orderly way.* There was the excitement of the ocean voyage, the warm reception into their uncle's home on City Hall Avenue which, simple as it was, must have seemed luxurious to them, and the discovery of the big city where they soon found work in the clothing factories. My mother made many friends among her co-workers; photos show them having fun as young people do everywhere, swimming, picnicking, laughing. When my mother took lunch to work, her aunt always added extra cookies or cake for her to share with friends; many of my mother's friends and coworkers were young women who had immigrated to Canada on their own. My mother thought herself lucky to be living with family. But sometimes she and her sister would go to the park near their home, at the foot of Mount Royal, spread a blanket, remember their family in Russia, and cry. *I recall my mother telling me this with with a little grimace, a bit sadly but with almost no obvious emotion; I grew up knowing that emotion was somehow dangerous.*

Not being able to study was a great disappointment for my mother; schooling was expensive, and the cousins her age had already left school and were working to help support the family. Only one cousin, the scholar of the family, remained in school and became a doctor. But there was an education of sorts to be had in the encounter with people from many backgrounds: one of my mother's best friends was an Italian Catholic girl, Mary Gentile. There were arguments, too. My mother recalled a co-worker who came in one Monday morning scowling, and refused to talk to her; at lunchtime it transpired that she had learned from a sermon in church that the Jews had killed Jesus. Eventually, the two women found a way to remain friends.

This too I was taught growing up: although there could have been many reasons to be suspicious of people from different backgrounds, I was taught to accept people for what they are, to make friends on the basis of shared interests, not to judge people. There were no lectures about this, but a lot of learning by

example, seeing my mother become friends with our Welsh Catholic neighbors, and going to wish our Greek neighbors a Merry Christmas, having lunch with the Czech lady who came to clean our house. I remember with gratitude how when my mother was ill with cancer and asked Anna for an extra day, she told my mother she couldn't come the following week as she had to visit a sick friend; a week later she appeared at our door, did the usual work and refused pay, reminding my mother than on this day she had come as a friend. Tears flow freely as I remember this.)

Working in the garment district, my mother and her friends were able to buy clothes inexpensively, and when I was a girl my mother regaled me with detailed descriptions of outfits bought for a dollar or two: the blue dress with the Chinese collar, the green dress with purple trim. My mother attended night school, until she was offered extra work at overtime pay, an opportunity that could not be refused; she learned to read English largely on her own, and read widely, but being unable to write English well was her main source of embarrassment—or perhaps it was only an embarrassment to me that my mother could not write English?

One night when my mother was returning home after visiting friends, a man passed her on the sidewalk; she was bothered by the fact that he turned away and did not look at her: a man always looks when he passes a woman, to see if she's pretty or not, young or old, she told me. Immediately she was on guard, taking the handbag from her shoulder and holding it firmly in front of her, telling herself, "I have to be firm on my feet." Within moments she heard footsteps behind her and then felt a hand grabbing her leg; she spun round, brought her handbag with its metal clasp down squarely on the man's head and screamed with all her might. The man fled. *I wonder what I would have done in a similar situation. As I grow older the phrase, "I have to be firm on my feet" often sounds in my memory. It's one of the few pieces of advice I received directly in words from my mother, and it grows in significance every day. I feel that it's not just about physical strength and resilience, but that she's also telling me to stand firm, to really be myself. My mother put a lot of her energy into doing for others, being liked and accepted, doing what others expected of her, and she passed this on to me directly and indirectly. I'm comforted to remember that in her way she also told me to be myself, to keep becoming more myself.*

At the same time I was reading academic work on mothers and mothering, on embodiment, and on those concepts in relation to teaching. I produced a long article which I shared with two trusted colleagues. Their comments led to some revisions, after which I sent the article to a journal; the prompt and seemingly genuine reply was that they had found it very interesting, but thought it inappropriate for their journal. I identified a new journal and started making further revisions, but soon began to hate what I was doing: this writing had come straight from my body, my heart, my guts,

and I didn't want to alter it for a journal. I realized that the article was heavy: so many stories, so much pain, so many theories, so many complicated connections between the stories, the pain, and the theories. A thought came to me: maybe this article wants to become a book?

While I pursued the book idea, the topic of melanoma continued to accompany me. One evening a close friend called in a panic: she'd recently had a mole removed and had just been informed that it was melanoma, Stage 2, a little more severe than mine had been. The medical situation was under control, but she was overcome by worry and anxiety, convinced she was going to die. We confronted this together, vividly imagining and listening to the figure of Death who had arrived with her in my living room. By the end of the evening she was relaxed and smiling. She told me she had gone from one friend to another, most of them (like herself) experienced therapists, and everyone had tried hard to help her calm down and take her mind off "the worst". She had also gone to a spiritual teacher experienced in working with cancer patients, who had been loving and kind and had assured her that everything would be fine. None of this had helped. Yet her panic and fear were dispelled, at least for a few hours, by the two of us making nasty faces and threatening noises as we took turns playing Death. I led her through this exercise not quite believing it would help; it just seemed like the only thing to do in the moment, to fully embody what was present in her thoughts and fears. This experience was significant for me in underlining the crucial importance of believing in the client's process. I began to think that perhaps I could be a therapist, and to see that I would have to bring all my creativity to the task, to embody the role of the creative therapist.

The theme of creativity underlies the process described here. Creativity must begin from some starting point. In Jungian terms, alchemy is a process that works on

some "prima materia", literally "first matter", but the term is also taken to refer to the void, the unconscious, the sea, and *the mother* ("mater" is Latin for mother), as well as many other denotations. On the one hand, writing about my mother was a concrete practice which involved relating to personal memories as well as to collective memory and history. But it was also a symbolic act of delving into the unknown, the unconscious, coming up with some treasure and daring to create. When I had completed the book my feelings were mixed. I was happy that I had brought my mother's story into the world, and satisfied that I had been able to 'write about mother' in the context of a book that was somewhat unusual for an academic text. But I had envisioned a much more evocative and poetic piece of writing, less bound by "the facts" of consensus reality, less constrained by academic conventions. It's only recently, in the setting of a writing course focused on the transformation of memory into fiction, that I have begun writing about my mother in a different mode, as a character in a story in interaction with other fictional characters. In this process I imagine a situation, describe the setting, and then watch carefully to see how the characters will behave. It is obvious that the characters represent parts of myself, and their interactions, which are sometimes unexpected, reveal a lot to me about my own primary and secondary processes, edges and possible directions of growth. This way of writing has many similarities to Jung's active imagination but also involves paying attention to multiple channels and roles as the plot unfolds. Writing about mother, in all the meanings of that phrase, continues, and continues to surprise me.

5. Process writing and professional learning in education

The idea of writing as process can be seen in Mindell's (1990) earliest elaboration of inner work. Mindell describes himself in the process of writing – his body position, his feeling of heaviness; he reminds the reader that "the stuff of your visions, voices and body pains is not maya, not an illusion, but an express train to yourself." (p. 40) Others have also noted that writing is an embodied process (Goldberg, 1986; Cixous, 1997; Anderson, 2001). For the late Sara Halprin (2001), writing "is pure motion of hand and mind, leaving a trail of black ink on white paper, a trail of images for the dreaming mind." (p. 12) Halprin is particularly interested in "the clouded, drifting state of sentience" (p.11), that pre-verbal awareness of subtle experiences and sensations that we normally marginalize, and which connects us to the deep realm of dreaming. Halprin describes the process of dropping down into sentience, then coming up to a surprising flirt: her attention is caught by a red hook on the deck rail outside her cabin. This banal functional object, of metal covered in red plastic, "serves no purpose at the moment except as a hook for my wandering imagination" (p.12) but the writer is off on a trail of associations which unfolds, among other things, a story of Halprin's courageous red-bearded great-grandfather, leading the writer to recognize the need to stand for her own strength and courage.

In my work with graduate students, most of them teachers, I worked to give them an experience of writing this way as a means of fostering both personal and professional development. The context was a course in "Autobiography and professional development" which combined writing, sharing one's text with other students, and reading the research literature on teacher development. Class meetings usually began with a variety of writing exercises which invited the students to write about their experience. A central premise of the course was that working directly with

writing as embodied would help participants connect to some aspect of their "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi, 1966) of teaching, some knowledge they held but had not verbalized or formulated before, and would allow them to elaborate on it. Some exercises focused specifically on bringing forward memories from different periods in the lives of participants, while other tasks focused on life in schools and their purposes as teachers.

In developing the exercises I assumed that the body—physical sensations, symptoms, positions and movements—is an important source of understanding that teachers rarely tap into; still less are they likely to pay attention to the realm of "dreaming" (not only nighttime dreams but also daydreams, imagery and flickers of awareness that come and go) which -- if only we notice, can bring us into connection with parts of our identity that may simply be unfamiliar or perhaps actively marginalized. Drawing on Amy Mindell's rich fund of ideas for developing awareness and creativity (Mindell, 2005), as well as my own experience, I adapted, developed and brought to class a variety of exercises; some examples follow.

The scribble. I invited students to think of a problem at work, something large or small that was of concern to them in the moment, and to make a note of it. Then, after relaxed breathing, they took a piece of paper and made a quick scribble or drawing. They were then asked to look at the drawing, pick out some bit of it that intrigued them and redraw it, enlarged on a new sheet of paper—drawn as if it were the whole world. Finally, in a third drawing they were to redraw the initial bit again, this time quite small within its particular surroundings. At this point they might have some new insight into the initial problem, or not; in any case, they began writing an account of the problematic situation, trying to be as concrete and descriptive as

possible. Usually by the end of the writing period people had some understandings of their situation that were not available to them when we began.

Who am I as a teacher? The participants were asked to relax and breathe deeply for a few moments, to close their eyes and pay attention to their bodily sensations, to find what seemed to be the deepest place in the body and attend to that until they could identify some quality associated in the moment with that spot. I then invited them to think of a place in the world that this sensation or quality called to mind and to go there in imagination, to experience being there and even becoming the place if possible, noting what it had to tell them. When they were ready to 'come back' from this journey, I asked them to write about the experience and to answer several questions: "Who are you as a teacher after returning from the place you visited? What new quality would you like to bring to your work, and how will you do that?"

After writing and reflecting on their experiences in teaching in this way, as well as sharing their writing and insights in pairs and in the whole group, the class went on to a consideration of readings in the research literature on teacher development and professional learning. The writing exercises were paired up with readings that seemed appropriate; for example, if the reading dealt with the influence of early experience on the development of teaching, the writing would likely be focused on childhood memories. In discussion these connections were explored and in a later writing assignment the students were invited to use the theories we were reading to make sense of what they had written about in class, leading in many instances to new integration of experience with research knowledge. I will illustrate this integration with two brief examples, summarizing processes that were elaborated at some length in the teachers' writing.

The first example comes from Karen who had written about a humiliating

experience in school: when she was only 8 and had just immigrated with her family to Israel, she needed to go to the bathroom but didn't manage to get the teacher's attention, and she wet herself. In her writing she wondered how it was that her teacher did not have the time to get to know her story, to realize she was not yet familiar with classroom procedures and rules, to sense her need for kind words and simple compassion. Her experience resonated with the work of several scholars who had discussed their own early experiences, and drawing from her reading she formulated her own professional development as a journey "from confusion to compassion": the desire and intention to understand her students and empathize with them was central to her teaching, and she could trace this intention back to her childhood experiences, and forward through teacher education and graduate studies to her work in the present.

In the second example, in one class the writing task of the day was to choose an image from a random selection of pictures of animals, and write a dialogue; Nabil engaged in a dialogue with a rooster standing high on a rooftop, a picture which called up his experience as a pupil sent to a school where he felt alone and different from everyone around him. This childhood memory and the written dialogue brought to mind his experience as a new teacher of math in a boarding school for youth at risk; he realized how much it had helped him at that time to draw on his own childhood experiences in working with his pupils. Thinking about the different kinds of awareness he had at different periods in his life, Nabil began to understand more clearly his current interest in critical pedagogy, and he could see how it was orienting his work and his life in the present.

A third example concerns the way that personal writing contributed to a sense of community in the classroom, allowing difficult topics to be raised. In 2008, at the

time of a military operation in Gaza, the students' writing turned to politically tinged topics. One Jewish student read aloud a text she had written about her experience, a few years earlier, of teaching young children in the south of the country in a place that had been under regular rocket attack. An Arab-Palestinian student who happened to be pregnant at the time wrote a moving plea for peace in which she imagined her body serving as a shelter for all the children whose lives were in danger. Another Palestinian student, Raneen, told about an event from high school: she gave a speech at a school assembly, in which she quoted from a poem in Arabic whose author, unbeknownst to her, was apparently considered "too radical" by the authorities; her teacher was strongly censured by the school principal and passed the criticism on to her. The discussion that followed was heated, sometimes chaotic, and difficult; many students had strong personal reactions, and the atmosphere did not feel very communal. Time for a break approached, and things began to wind down. At this point one of the Jewish students, Karen commented, "At the beginning of the discussion today, I told myself that I would not participate, but then I heard Raneen say how important it was just to talk, even if we disagreed. This threw me off balance, and then I changed my mind—I was wrong." Karen had been pessimistic about any possibility of discussing difficult political issues with the 'other side' in class, but listening to the personal stories of other students representing all the sides in the conflict, and hearing that a Palestinian teacher was willing to talk and listen, Karen's view softened, and her comment had an effect on the atmosphere in class as well. Towards the end of the course many students said that the possibility of sharing their stories and writing on whatever was important for them in the moment had contributed to the creation of a learning community in the class; this theme is taken up further in the next section of this essay.

In chapter 6 of the book, as well as in published articles (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2010, 2002) I elaborate on how personal writing interacts with academic learning. Here my purpose has been to show how "process writing", to use Halprin's term, was taken up readily by graduate students who were practicing teachers, and used by them to explore their own personal and professional development. Personal writing has become fairly commonplace in teacher education and in development programs for teachers; practices range from simply documenting everyday experiences in teaching, and writing reflective accounts of one's experience, to writing fictional accounts based on those experiences. All the approaches are experience-based but they don't necessarily focus on following the process the writer is experiencing. The examples here and in the book hopefully make a case for bringing processwork ideas and methods into teacher education where they have a unique contribution to make.

6. Writing to address conflict: working with life stories as worldwork

For almost twenty years, in my work with teachers and prospective teachers, I taught courses in which one of the main objectives was to bring about dialogue between participants from diverse backgrounds, in particular Jewish and Arab/Palestinian students. In *Sitting in the Fire*, Mindell (1995) claims that "engaging in heated conflict instead of running away from it is one of the best ways to resolve the divisiveness that prevails on every level of society—in personal relationships, business and the world (1995, 12)." Reading this book and feeling the excitement of the possibilities I envisioned within Mindell's examples of his work, I began to understand that my efforts to bring students into dialogue were motivated by something beyond a preference for an active and engaged classroom.

My efforts began with a course known as the "Coexistence Workshop", a required course for student teachers at the University of Haifa; my section of the course was subtitled "Story as a tool for coming to know the Other" and was organized around a series of activities, mostly in small groups, which invited the students to tell stories about their lives. It was the fall of 1997; a peace process was ongoing and the public mood, at least in Israel (much less so in the Palestinian territories) seemed to be cautiously optimistic, although with intermittent setbacks caused by terror attacks.

The course began well: students seemed interested in getting to know one another and willing to try the activities I suggested. About 5 weeks into the semester, an exhibit of political caricatures, captioned in Arabic, was shown in the lobby of the building where our class was held. The exhibit, of work by Palestinian caricaturist Naji el Ali, included harsh depictions of the Israeli occupation, and the captions, in Arabic only, further inflamed the situation. Many of my students got involved in

angry debate around the exhibit, and all I could think was that our work of the previous month had been completely undone. (I had recently read *Sitting in the Fire*, but had not yet taken in the full impact of Mindell's approach to conflict.) But afterwards, the students spoke soberly and clearly, many of them – on both sides – expressing the same feelings: disappointment that the "other side" did not seem willing to listen, and hopelessness about the possibility of reaching mutual understanding, let alone peace. I went home puzzled that day: the event had seemed a disaster while it was ongoing, and many students seemed shocked. Still, their shock had led them to share feelings in an honest way, and I had seen argument wind down and turn into civility and perhaps the beginning of friendship. The following week all the students were back, mostly smiling and ready to continue the work of the course. My understanding of the role of conflict in education was beginning to change (see Elbaz-Luwisch, 2001, for a fuller narrative account of the experience).

Before reading Mindell's work I would not have attributed any positive role to conflict in education. Living in the midst of conflict, I thought, one's thinking becomes solidified: not just "us" and "them," the most obvious and all-encompassing of distinctions, but "war" and "peace," "dialogue" and "argument" among others, come to be seen as polar opposites. Polarized thinking seems to narrow the mind, reduce flexibility of thought and make criticism difficult. At bottom, polarized thinking is grounded in early experience: it is in the family that we first learn where we belong, who "our people" are, who we consider to be others, and how we should relate to those others. In my case, growing up in a family that had experienced war and conflict at close quarters, I had been taught to avoid conflict at all costs.

Recently, together with two colleagues working in Canada and the United States (Li, Conle & Elbaz-Luwisch, 2009), we explored the phenomenon of

polarization as it appears in the context of teacher education in Canada, the United States and Israel. We found many commonalities in our work in these three different settings, though the issues around which polarization occurred were obviously different in Israel, a society often described as ‘deeply divided’ and in an intractable conflict (Bar Tal, 2007), than the issues which came up for prospective teachers in Canada and the USA.

In Israel over the years the political situation has become vastly more complicated as well as entailing greater risk, more violence and suffering both inside Israel and in the Palestinian territories. Every possible aspect of life in Israel seems polarized: between right and left, between religious and secular, rich and poor. The population is more diverse than before: while the distinction between Jews of oriental (Sephardic) and European (Ashkenazi) origin has blurred somewhat, new immigrants from the former Soviet Union seek to maintain their language and culture, unlike previous immigrant groups which sought to adapt and fit in. There is a growing population of foreign workers who have few civil rights. And the Arab/Palestinian community continues to press for increasing autonomy and the fulfillment of the equality promised by Israel's declaration of independence. The only thing that temporarily unites all these groups is suffering: during terror attacks and wars, it becomes clear that no group is untouched.

Among teacher education students as in other sectors of society, the background conditions of conflict give rise to diverse opinions and strong feeling on all issues. While some students are politically active, most do not want differences of opinion to interfere with the business of getting an education. When political views are expressed in class there is a sense of a taboo being broken; for some this brings relief and can be energizing, but for others it causes distress.

Experience has taught me not to assume that I know how other people live or what they think, particularly since so many aspects of life are changing rapidly and many people have hyphenated and multiple identities. Although it is difficult to remain detached and open-minded—I do have opinions and I care deeply about what happens—I hope that by retaining the sense of being a learner I can model for my students a way of being interested in and open to finding out about one another's lives and cultures.

Thinking further, it seems that war and peace are not really diametrically opposed: many situations bear elements of war alongside elements of peace. The well-known story of German and French soldiers calling a spontaneous Christmas Day truce in the midst of the First World War comes to mind. Similarly, some life situations call for a warlike attitude to achieve a peaceful result: the war on poverty, on illiteracy, on racism, the battle of a patient diagnosed with cancer, and so on. Hillman (2004) suggests that the desire to end war is shared by many, but that the love of war is also shared, and is a basic human instinct. Lingis (2012) links violence and splendor, reflecting on the many instances in the history of art where war has inspired exalted aesthetic performance and monumental works of art. Clearly a simplistic polarization of war and peace is not adequate to capture the complexities of our relationship to the two terms.

The intricacies of the situation in the middle east are highlighted by the work of Ben-Ze'ev (2011) who studied Palestine in 1948 by gathering the stories of rural Palestinians, women and men, stories told by fighters of the Palmach (the fighting force of the Haganah, set up in 1920 to defend the Jewish settlement) and of the women of the Palmach who served in a mainly non-combatant role, as well as stories of soldiers serving the British Mandate. Her account demonstrates that the stories

themselves were not static and that accounts of the war from opposing sides often complemented each other, and sometimes converged. Palestinian women who had had little opportunity to speak up about their memories, were happy to tell about everyday life, knowledge of foodstuffs, plants, springs and the shrines of saints. She adds that "the logic of certain chaotic episodes may continue to unfold long after their occurrence. (83)

The complexities highlighted by these accounts of the local conflict, lead me to think that there may be different degrees of conflict and violence, diverse ways of dealing with conflict, mixing with diverse sorts of dialogue and processes of working through issues. In specific situations, we do sometimes manage things in decent, humane, democratic ways that take account of people's needs regardless of which side they are on. Perhaps the ways we manage and work with specific small-scale conflicts, as they arise, may contain within them the seeds for dealing more productively with larger conflicts.

Mindell's (1995) approach suggests that conflict is actually the way a group or collective becomes aware of all its different parts. Lived with awareness, conflict serves to create community: even the polarization of divergent views and the division into opposing sides, can be ways of allowing all the voices to be heard, so that the society can grow and develop. Making room for the diversity of voices in society constitutes what Mindell terms "deep democracy"; as he explains,

If violence is admitted and addressed, it is less destructive than if it is repressed. Going consciously into battle is an intense experience, but one that revitalizes everyone. You are renewed in hope. You find not only solutions to issues, but something more precious. You find that a battle does not mean the end of the world, but the beginning of the river called community. (1995)

Mindell's approach is itself intercultural, influenced by Jungian psychology, theoretical physics, and the philosophy of Taoism, which sees seemingly opposed

positions as being in constant dialectical interplay (see also Li, 2006). This perspective, and in particular its application in the Arab-Israeli conflict (Reiss, 2004), does not render conflict any less painful, nor guarantee a reduction in violence, but it does suggest that there may be some purpose to conflict, and that working consciously with conflicts as they arise may not only be a way of preventing violence, but may even serve to enhance the development of community. Here I draw on this approach to gain a deeper understanding of my experience prospective teachers.

After my early experience with the "coexistence workshop described above, I developed a course in which students were asked to write the life story of a person who had influenced them. The students were then organized into heterogeneous groups and spent a significant part of the semester working together to analyze and learn from the stories produced by their group members, leading up to a presentation in class and to a consideration of ways that life stories might be used in school curricula to teach pupils about the multicultural nature of Israeli society. The course was designed around personal stories with two main purposes in mind: facilitating the process of students getting to know one another and understanding one another's cultural backgrounds and life situations; and short-circuiting some of the conflict that may arise when social and political issues related to the wider conflict are treated head on. Life stories have the advantage of dealing honestly with the concrete situations lived by people in Israel and in the region, yet framing issues in terms of a life lived usually makes it easier to read and relate to the experience of someone from a different group without immediately calling into play the preconceptions, stereotypes and grievances held by each side. I hoped to ensure that students would have an opportunity to make personal connections with fellow-students from the 'other' group before the eruption of a difficult issue put in question the very possibility of dialogue.

Life stories serve both purposes well, but of course conflicts still came up. Here, I want to consider what actually happens when conflict erupts. How do students respond? What may be learned from such instances of conflict? Some examples will facilitate the exploration of these questions.

Conflict promotes engagement. Almost immediately, conflict brings people out of their shells; some of them, at least, become too upset or angry to remain on the sidelines. They may be led to share personal information or do something active to make a genuine connection with people from the ‘other’ group. One example of this occurred a few years ago, when in the heat of an argument around Israeli military action in the territories, someone used the term “primitive,” seemingly in reference to Arab culture. The comment immediately raised very strong feelings accompanied by many people talking at once, and it was not immediately apparent who had made the comment or why. After a few moments, the student became quiet and one Jewish student, Dana, acknowledged that she was the one responsible. She went on to tell the class that her parents had immigrated to Israel from Iraq, and that her father in particular still held to the traditional culture in which he had been brought up. Her parents’ roles in the family were clearly: her mother took care of all household duties, served her husband and attended to his needs, while her father worked to provide for the family. When Dana wanted to study at university, her father insisted that higher education was unnecessary for a woman, and refused to pay for her studies. Dana saw her mother as deprived of any status in the home, and this, she insisted, was what she had in mind when she used the term “primitive.”

The class was quiet after this story; gender issues are still problematic in all sectors of Israeli society, but it is rare today that women are actively discouraged from obtaining higher education, and it could not have been easy for Dana to make this

public confession. However, she went on to say that during their childhood her father had been warm and loving to her and her siblings, and spent hours playing with them when he came home from work. When, towards the end of her studies, she had difficulties paying her tuition fees, her father did help cover her expenses. It seems that the conflict which had erupted in class sparked Dana's motivation to contribute something of herself. Her story, spoken from the heart, was immediately effective in cutting through the polarized discussion.

Conflict brings out the best in people. It usually seems that conflict brings out the worst in us, leading to the escalation of arguments, to extreme positions, intolerance, inability to compromise and, of course, violence. Despite this, conflict may sometimes help connect people to their 'best' selves; people often express more compassion and concern for social justice during conflict situations. They reach out to one another. They search for common ground, and often, they find it. In a class some years ago, a few students proposed a group project which was enthusiastically accepted by about two-thirds of the class, but a small group of Jewish students seemed unwilling to participate; from a conversation with one student after class I learned that these students felt unable to express their right-wing views in the class where most students appeared to belong to the left.

Once the nature of this conflict became apparent, I suggested that the group look for several different projects rather than trying to agree on one project for everyone. Following this, a Moslem student became involved in a discussion with several of the Jewish students and invited them to visit her home; the Jewish students were curious and accepted the invitation, even filming their visit and showing the video to the class. Later, one of them wrote that she would never have had this experience outside the setting of the course, and that it had been very meaningful for

her. Watching the video was a moving experience for many in the class; for me, the scene that evoked tears was seeing the Jewish visitors not only enjoying a meal with their hosts but feeling comfortable enough to help clear the table after lunch.

Conflict raises awareness. Dealing openly with conflict can help people become more aware of those areas that are not in conflict, as well as those that are. One conflict that occurred repeatedly in the course was around the group assignment. Because instruction is in Hebrew, the Jewish students have an advantage when it comes to writing and submitting assignments. On one occasion, two Jewish students came to complain: Betty and Shira were in different groups, and both felt that they were doing more than their fair share in preparing the group project: they were the ones to gather all the students' contributions, write the summary and edit the overall product to ensure that it was written in correct Hebrew. Both said that they would have preferred to submit an individual assignment; they planned to go on to graduate study and high marks were important. However, when I suggested developing a format for differential marking of the group assignment, with each student stating how much he had contributed, they rejected this idea immediately: "We have become good friends," they said. They did not want to jeopardize the friendships created during the course. Both acknowledged that the group work had been interesting and meaningful: they had learned from the group interaction, had not only developed friendships but become aware of interests and values shared with the members of their groups. And they could see that this would have been unlikely to happen without the requirement of working together on a shared assignment.

Unsolvable conflict promotes learning. The conflict around language that came up in my class reappears frequently in different forms, and reflects the basic inequality of the situation in which Jewish and Arab/Palestinian students find themselves; this

conflict is difficult to resolve in the classroom as in society. The example illustrates that it is not always necessary to resolve a conflict fully in order to reach a place of reconciliation. However, in the course of my teaching there have been a number of striking episodes when conflict could not be resolved, episodes clearly labeled as “failures.” Recently, for example, a Jewish student dropped the course when he was assigned to a group together with an Arab student who had expressed strongly anti-democratic views in class; he chose not to grapple with the difficulty, and I was unable to help because he did not respond to my mails .

On another occasion, a group of students seemed to be working well together, but at the end of the course it turned out that Dina, the only Jewish student in the group, had done most of the work on their joint project; Dina—whose close friend Carol was a Christian Arab—was so discouraged that she concluded that it was not possible for her to relate to the Moslem students. Because the course had ended, there was little to do but listen and empathize with her disappointment. These are situations, which on the face of it had no apparent positive outcomes. Could I have rectified these situations? What did I learn from them?

The eruption of conflicts in the classroom has taught me a great deal about my own personal limitations in situations of conflict. In one class, during a highly controversial military operation in the West Bank, Shireen—a Druze student whose father and brother serve in the Israeli army—told her group that she believed the Israeli soldiers were committing murder in the territories. Her inflammatory statement was unacceptable to the Jewish members of her group, who asked her to leave political matters aside, while the other group members chose not to get involved in the discussion. Shireen’s language seemed deliberately provocative, and she obviously had strong feelings; the group’s discussions sometimes degenerated into brief

shouting matches (disturbing the rest of the class) followed by tense silence. In this group the two Jewish participants had written about close family members while the others had chosen to write about public figures. I wondered if personal stories, involving less personal disclosure were simply not powerful enough to engage the students in a way that could avoid the confrontational public discourse, and their involvement with the group work and with one another had remained more superficial. I had tried hard to listen to Shireen, but I could not be neutral, and after a while she infuriated me too. However, this experience made me much more aware of my own position; I realized what views I can listen to and engage with easily enough, even when I don't agree, and where my personal edges are—i.e. the points at which one's identity feels threatened by the views of the other. This difficulty will come up differently for teachers in different situations, but as long as we are dealing with controversial and deeply felt issues, in diverse, multicultural settings, we will encounter difficulties in listening to one another, and we shall have to keep working on ourselves, knowing that working on ourselves is always also working in the world (Reiss, 2000).

Most recently, since retiring, I taught the course again on a volunteer basis, and discovered that being retired has given me a sense of new freedom. About 15 students registered for the course, and given the small number (relative to what I'd been used to in the past) I felt able to give the students a say in how the course would be organized and what activities would be most useful for them. They wrote wonderful and touching stories about people from a similar background to their own and every person in the class learning something new from the stories. Instead of working in small groups, they ultimately chose to hear and read all the stories together in the large group, to give feedback, ask questions and discuss the question of how

our engagement with one another's stories might be taken further into the wider society.

In conclusion, I have learned that the dynamic nature of life's processes does not skip over the field of education: things change, and will continue to change. We want to believe that once the conflict is resolved all will be beautiful; this is rarely the case. But the skills we develop while trying to manage conflict situations stay with us and remain useful. For Jewish Israelis, as the privileged side in the conflict, it is difficult to accept and take responsibility for our privilege, and the need to do so sometimes makes us angry: it is, after all, not our fault that we have an advantage—or so we reason (see Reiss, 2004). And as a teacher, I am not always able to get it right. So this challenge helps me to remember the need for humility .

My initial story was one in which conflict is an interruption to proper functioning. Over time I have come to see that conflict can lead to a greater sense of connection and community among students from diverse backgrounds; and the encounter with conflict keeps me grounded in the immediate details of the concrete situation, makes me more attentive to students, to pedagogy and to the moment. It is only right that we aspire to end conflict: the Israeli-Arab conflict is one of the most painful being experienced around the world, and causes almost unbearable suffering. However, the usual definition of conflict as a disruption may not be useful for our efforts at fostering dialogue and understanding. Perhaps we can begin to see conflict in the classroom as evidence of the pot coming to a boil which is just the beginning of the cooking process. Conflict may indicate that people are finally “coming together” and beginning to relate to one another. I believe that if we continue to pay attention to the ways in which conflict plays out in the classroom, it will continue to teach us and accompany us on the path to mutual understanding.

Conclusion: next steps

In this essay I have highlighted the connections between the ideas of process-oriented psychology and narrative inquiry in education that underlie the work in the book, *Autobiography and Pedagogy: Memory and Presence in Teaching*. Connections and interactions are evident in relation to both individual and community work. To summarize the contribution of my project, I would like to highlight three main points.

First, on the individual level the ideas of processwork can contribute to narrative inquiry, and to work in education generally, by enriching our view of who we are, of how we are 'entangled' in stories, and of how our bodies, dreams and marginalized experiences play a part in our stories and can help us to understand them. Since narrative inquiry pays attention to teachers and learners as persons seeking to live out meaningful lives, the ideas of process-oriented psychology are highly relevant to teacher education and the study of teaching. The book offers an extended example of how processwork ideas can be applied in education, an area that has not been given a lot of attention by processworkers up to now. The close connections between processwork and narrative inquiry also suggest the use of writing as another way of working with clients, adding the tools of personal writing, storytelling and story analysis to the process-oriented framework. I am interested in offering writing workshops to explore what this mode of work can contribute.

Second, processwork is an embodied perspective that interrupts the marginalization of body experiences and sensations which has characterized conventional psychology. This marginalization of the body has been reproduced in education, through the over-reliance on conventional psychology; most educational systems feature a 'hidden curriculum' that teaches children to be cut off from bodily experience. The harm this does to children later has to be undone by therapists. Many

educational theorists have noted this, and have proposed radical new ways of looking at education and alternative schools to schooling, but change is very slow. Bringing a processwork perspective to education could be a positive and corrective influence.

Third, deep democracy, the idea of making space for many voices in any group or community endeavor, is absolutely vital for education, particularly in a multicultural society. Processwork ideas around community and conflict in groups have a lot to offer education. My work has been with teachers, and it has been indirect; but group process could be taught directly to teachers, as well as to high school students as part of a program of skills for community development. The ideas of deep democracy also support the importance of enabling students as well as teachers to tell their own stories and to learn to listen to the stories of others. And conversely, the skills of narrative research (interviewing, analyzing and writing the stories of others) might also be adapted and applied to the work of educational and community development: telling their stories and giving them concrete form in texts can be a way of helping members of marginalized groups to participate more fully in the wider community.

I came to processwork because of my interest in worldwork, particularly in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which is part of my daily life. But my deep interest in watching how life unfolds and in gaining awareness had begun much earlier and still continues. Given my background in work with narrative and life stories, and my new skills and training in process-oriented work with conflict, I feel that there is much to be done, and many ways of bringing the processwork perspective into the world and of living out my personal story of processwork in the future.

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