With a new introduction by the author

Black Sheep and Kissing Cousins

How Our Family Stories Shape Us

Elizabeth Stone

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For my mother, Aurora B. Stone,
and in memory of my grandmother—
in Sicily, Annunziata Bongiorno, here, Nancy Bonney

CONTENTS

TRANSACTION INTRODUCTION

Stories have to be told or they die, and when they die, we can't remember who we are or why we're here.

—Sue Monk Kidd,
The Secret Life of Bees

...each of us must possess a created version of the past.... If we refuse to do the work of creating this personal version of the past someone else will do it for us.

—Patricia Hampl,
"Memory and Imagination"

It's been twenty-five years since I first scrutinized my own family stories, realizing just how potent—and invisible—a presence they were in my life, and yes, learning a lot about myself and why I was here. In 1988, *Black Sheep and Kissing Cousins* was published. Now, the book's republication by Transaction gives me the opportunity to survey from up close and far back how well traveled family stories have become in the intervening years, and how at home they are wherever they've gone.

As I noted at the book's initial publication, folklorists had long offered family stories a special place in their oral history tradition, and clinicians had long understood that for those with whom they worked, to change one's story was to change

oneself. Now, family stories are a resource in history, sociology, social work, education, and nursing, and in interdisciplinary studies—African American, documentary, gay and lesbian, immigration, family, storytelling, and women's studies. In some databases, the phrase "family stories" has achieved Keyword status, delivering citations amply without so much as a Boolean operator in sight. Elsewhere "family stories" answer to the name "family narratives" (and more on that in a bit).

Family stories, from the quirky to the tragic, are a staple of popular culture as well. As our fascination with genealogy has grown, family stories have become even more precious because they reveal an ancestor's humanity, from a limp to a dimple, in a way that the Social Security Death Index never can. In fact, a subsequent researcher found what I'd found and chronicled in chapter 9: that people can feel connections with—get guidance, inspiration, and strength from—ancestors they'd known barely, if at all. As we look back, we also look forward: in childrearing magazines, articles appear informing parents that family stories about their children, for instance, should be used with care: it's fine to celebrate family connections but not fine to label a child negatively (as in "Jennifer's the one with the awful temper. Remember the time she...?").

Meanwhile, people share their family stories in online blogs (a Google search linking the two phrases yielded a list of several thousand) and other forms of mass media. On his television program, Charlie Rose has talked about his own family stories. Once, alerted by the *Kissing Cousins* in the title, Montel Williams sent a white stretch limo to take me to his studio because he was doing a show on cousins who marry. Taping was so many hours behind schedule that I had to leave before Montel got to me, but it was the thought that counted.

Films and videos showcasing family stories abound, among them most recently *My Architect*. The master builder in question is the renowned Louis Kahn, and the acclaimed documentary was a labor of love and more, by Nathaniel Kahn, the elder Kahn's son by one of his mistresses, only six when his father died. When I interviewed Nathaniel Kahn once, he told

me he'd always known who his father was, but their relationship wasn't part of the public record. When Lou Kahn died, Nathaniel was not mentioned in any of the obituaries. As he came of age, his need to document himself as his father's son, as well as his need to know his father, drew him to the project. Years in the making, the film not only allowed him to make pilgrimages to Kahn's buildings but gave him the opportunity to hear what amounted to family stories about Lou Kahn by family members and others. In another realm entirely, at the end of *Schindler's List*, Steven Spielberg added footage of Holocaust survivors telling their family stories, stories very much like those in chapter 6, told to Irene Goldstein by her survivor father.

Recently, National Public Radio documentarian David Isay set up an audio booth in Grand Central Station where pairs of family members sign up for a forty-five minute session, generally the younger ones planning to interview their elders, later leaving with a CD in hand. Eventually digitized copies of the stories will be archived at the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress.

Family stories have gone commercial, too. Professional videomakers who shoot weddings will now also direct their video cameras on a grandparent who gazes back, while telling the family stories, often with appropriate images and music included. How-To books on harvesting your family stories abound and so do elegant leather-bound volumes where the yield can be displayed. Consultants to family businesses may look to their clients' family stories the better to understand the childhood dynamics that get in the way of what should be adult business relationships.

In the literature on family stories, half a dozen or so distinct concerns prevail. Interest in the "truth" of these stories continues. One of the most fascinating developments, though hardly limited to family stories, is psychologist Elizabeth Loftus' demonstration that false memories can be created. It remains to be seen if we remember stories differently—More accurately? Less accurately?— from the way we remember experience, but neu-

rologists already know that auditory memory is different from visual, and that we remember our own childhood experiences better if we've heard them reiterated. Putting aside questions of "truth," academics in fields ranging from literature to psychology have explored the nature of narrative itself, wondering how existing genres affect what can be told at all. Michael White is a leader in the field of "narrative therapy," helping his patients change their lives by "reauthoring" their narratives. Psychologist Barbara Fiese and her colleagues have developed a rubric for "coding" family stories as tool in evaluating a family. Using family stories diagnostically is not altogether new, but in recent years, there has been a marked increase in such explorations, often to assess relations between parent and child, or to look at the impact of the teller's and/or listener's gender in how family stories are told. Clinicians use family stories to make predictions and diagnoses and to examine relationships among other family members as well.

I have not made any changes in the pages ahead, but I'd like to offer a few updates about the stories, along the way indicating evolutions in my own thinking. Though I always believed in the emotional and moral truth of family stories, I assumed that their claim to historical truth was modest at best, and I said as much in an adapted excerpt from the book that appeared shortly before its publication in the *New York Times Magazine*. I recounted a story from chapter 6—about my Italian-born grandmother who sang operatic arias while, scrub bucket at her side, she washed the stairs on her hands and knees. At the time, the early 1920s, the family lived above Mr. Petersen's grocery on Vanderbilt Street in Brooklyn. "As the story goes," I wrote in the article, "Mr. Petersen would invariably stop whatever he was doing and hush his customers in order to listen to her without interruption."

"I wonder about these stories now...." I went on to say. "Did Mr. Petersen really stop everything to listen?" My question was answered soon after: The *Times* forwarded a letter to me from Mr. Petersen's daughter, assuring me every word in that story—

by then almost seventy years old—was accurate. Maybe the transmission of family stories from one generation to the next wasn't as much like the game of telephone as I'd thought? But the next letter I received renewed my caution. My mother's first cousin, Mary Milea, a woman I'd never met, wrote to tell me that my grandmother hadn't come from Messina, Sicily at all, as I'd always believed, but from one of the Lipari Islands, also known as the Aeolian Islands, just off Sicily. She'd been back there herself so she knew what she was talking about.

How could my whole family get that fundamental a fact wrong?! It's hard to imagine that my grandparents never told their children where they came from. When I asked my mother, she told me she didn't remember being told her parents were Sicilian. It was just something she knew. As we talked on, she recalled the letters my grandmother had always written to her own mother back home. Walking to the mailbox, my mother always noticed the words *Messina per Salina* written in my grandmother's old-fashioned spidery hand on the envelope. My mother assumed that meant the city of Messina in Sicily, but what I subsequently learned was that it actually referred to the *province* of Messina, which included the Lipari Islands. One of those islands is Salina, the lushest and most verdant. Another family story had described my great-great-grandfather as an olive oil exporter. Salina, as it turns out, even now includes olive groves.

I didn't return to the question of the truth of family stories until just a few months ago. One of my much younger cousins, Marie Bonney, the daughter of my first cousin David Bonney, had become interested in genealogy. We'd always known the shameful and painful story I retell in chapter 6, about how my grandmother had had to register as an "enemy alien" during World War II because there was no record of her arrival at Ellis Island, and therefore no proof that she had entered this country legally. My grandmother always said she had come in November 1905, and while I believed she came legally, I attributed the inability to find the ship's manifest both to bureaucracy and what I characterized as "a lapse in my grandmother's memory."

Knowing not much more than my grandmother's name, Marie let her fingers do the walking and wound up on the web page for Ellis Island. I'd looked there once myself, and finding no record of the arrival of Annunziata Bongiorno in November 1905, I'd shrugged and moved on. Why would I persist in looking for what I already expected not to find? Not Marie, though. Undaunted, she began fiddling with the spelling of the family name that would have been hers, too, had it not been anglicized fifty years earlier. "Buongiorno" did the trick.

In moments, there on her screen was the manifest for the SS *Hamburg*, and in that spread of pixels was a small exculpatory treasure. It confirmed, just as my grandmother had always said, that she had arrived in New York in November 1905—on the 4th to be exact—having set sail from Naples thirteen days earlier on October 22. Her journey began, we learned once and for all, with her departure from Lipari. We hadn't known about the $20 my grandfather had in his pocket, but the other details on the manifest exactly matched the details our stories had so accurately preserved now for an entire century. My grandfather, Gaetano, was thirty-one, and he'd already lived in this country for a number of years before going back home to bring back his fifteen-year-old bride, Annunziata. The new couple would be living on Union Street—#155 we now learned—in Brooklyn. The manifest noted that they would be moving in with my grandfather's two brothers. But the story as I always heard it was that the two brothers they lived with at first were my grandmother's and, having learned my lesson, that's the version I'm sticking with.

Up until recently, the power to document one's stories, sometimes even one's own family stories, has been in the hands of the powerful—institutionally, racially, ethnically, sexually—while the oral tradition, no more palpable than the breath of utterance, has been the medium, and sometimes the only one, of the most disempowered families. The fact of documentation alone is no index to truth, and historically, documented *un*-truth—my immigrant grandmother on record as an illegal enemy alien—has publicly triumphed over the barely whispered

truth of a family's experience, for no other reason than stamina, for decades, or even centuries.

Sometimes, untruth taints the family's own perspective as well. As I look at my own story of my grandmother's enemy alien status, I can't help but recognize that I, too, was one of her detractors, blaming her for a "lapse in memory" that in fact never occurred. What I draw from this is the recognition that even as I wrote this book, in some small corner of my heart, I succumbed to the very denigration of my grandmother that I was explicitly deploring.

As the heirs of the disempowered have moved into positions of power, in academia and elsewhere, we have brought these perspectives along, galvanizing scholarship in many realms—for instance in relation to the tradition of family storytelling among African Americans. When Essie Mae Washington-Williams came forward seventy-eight years after her birth to tell the world that Strom Thurmond, the late senator and former governor of North Carolina, was her father, Brent Staples, in the *New York Times*, linked her experience to the now well-known fact that a member of Thomas Jefferson's family, and possibly Jefferson himself, fathered one or more children by a slave woman named Sally Hemings. "The big lesson for historians in the Hemings-Jefferson case was that oral histories passed down by slaves and their descendants were more reliable than the official written record," he wrote. "This put historians on notice that they should give the oral tradition more credence, especially when working on issues of interracial intimacy." An historian who has already taken this to heart is Henry Wiencek who, in his book, *An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves and the Creation of America*, takes seriously the possibility that a member of the family of George Washington (whose will stipulated the emancipation of all his slaves) was the father of a slave named West Ford. "If the descendants of West Ford had not come forward with their family's story," writes Wiencek, "Ford would have remained an obscure, probably forgotten figure."

In chapter 6, Marian Glover, an upper-middle-class attorney with an Ivy League degree, recounted a family story at least

150 years old, the details of which eerily parallel those Essie Mae Washington-Williams made public, since her ancestor, too, is characterized as a former governor and senator from North Carolina. Worth noting is that part of Marian's story reveals—and satisfies—exactly the yearning for acknowledgment that prompted Williams-Washington's disclosure (as well as Nathaniel Kahn's film). The earlier senator in Glover's story is depicted as offering his child precisely the public recognition Thurmond withheld. He takes his young son to a Washington D.C. hotel, and when the bellboy treats the boy as if he were a servant, the senator speaks up without hesitation. "No," the senator tells the bellboy, "this is my son. He's going to be staying with me."

When Marian told me this story, I was more focused on its poignant emotional function than its historical truth, so I didn't even try to locate a name that Marian herself didn't have. Recently, though, I went looking and found that during the 1800s, no fewer than seven North Carolina governors also served as United States senators, though not surprisingly none is on record as the father of a biracial son.

New nomenclature articulates new understandings: Family stories such as Marian Glover's are now characterized as counternarratives—a term Henry Louis Gates, Jr. defines as "the means by which groups contest...dominant reality and the fretwork of assumptions that support it." In the academic literature, counternarratives entered the conversations in the early 1990s, shortly after family "narratives" became interchangeable with family "stories" and largely referred to collected ethnographies or case studies. In 1991, the first issue of the *Journal of Narrative and Life History* appeared (later renamed *Narrative Inquiry*). In 1993, *Narrative* began publication.

What's the difference between a narrative and a story? To my ear, "Narrative," now associated with "narratology," directs us to scrutinize rather than engage with stories, drawing our attention away from content alone, to include awareness of form operating according to literary and/or social rules, and in so doing, reminds us that content is neither interchangeable

with experience nor inevitable in its presentation. Narrative genres—whether Alcoholics Anonymous testimony, a medical chart, or a confession to one's priest—shape and control what can be said. Anyone who's ever stood up to deliver a wedding toast knows it should be a funny, affectionate story about bride, groom, or both. If you're passionately in love with one of them, or certain the marriage is doomed, you mustn't say so in a toast, though you should have already said so in your therapy session.

In the last ten years especially, the authority of the personal private familial voice telling its story has increased enormously. In 1997, the Authors Guild sponsored a symposium entitled "The Memoir Explosion," prompted by James Atlas' *New York Times Magazine* article on the subject. The genre of autobiography, once largely reserved for the public triumphs of presidents and military heroes, has accommodated itself to a pluralistic culture, widening to include counternarrative memoirs, and the family stories that go with them. If one can speak of counternarrative classics, they might include memoirs by ethnic minorities, immigrants, gay and lesbians, the mentally ill, the physically ill, and incest survivors. This development doesn't focus as much on "truth" (although a faithful rendition of one's experience is expected) as on the awareness that as the self creates the text, the text in turn creates both the self as well as a place in the world for the self.

This reciprocal relationship between story and self is what I had in mind when I included in chapters 9 and 10, admiringly, family stories of those who had customized and adapted them for their own use, and what I believe poet and essayist Patricia Hampl has in mind when she ruminates about her need to write down her experience. "Why write memoir?" she asks, in an essay called "Memory and Imagination." "[B]ecause each of us must possess a created version of the past. We must live with a version that attaches us to our limitations, to the inevitable subjectivity of our points of view. We must acquiesce to our experience and our gift to transform experience into meaning. You tell me your story, I'll tell you mine."

And if we don't?

"If we refuse to do the work of creating this personal version of the past," she warns, "someone else will do it for us. That is the scary political fact."

Luckily, at least for the moment, we live in a culture that has to some degree cast its support with *pluribus* rather than *unum*, and so in popular culture a whole chorus of previously unheard voices are volunteering their own stories rather than being the "other" in someone else's. At the time I wrote *Black Sheep*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *Woman Warrior*, published in 1975, stood almost alone as a widely-read ethnic memoir, the author half-enthralled with the liberating possibilities of assimilation, half insistently asserting difference.

By now dozens of books, fiction and non-fiction, have emerged to chronicle the experiences of those who have come to this country primarily in the second half of the twentieth century, all with family stories, and nearly all invested in maintaining their ties to their home culture. Several years ago, I began to teach a course called "New Wave Immigrant Literature," reading the stories of families and the family stories by writers such as Richard Rodriguez, Amy Tan, Edwidge Danticat, Eva Hoffman, Cristina Garcia, and Jhumpa Lahiri, and watching a movie or two, such as *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. Last semester, in my class were students whose families had emigrated from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Italy, Haiti, Russia, Albania, Poland, the Philippines, Korea, Japan, and Greece. As we read the literature, the students often contributed their own family stories, demonstrating their capacity to meet any and all agendas, personal, familial, social, and political.

Among my four Greek students—three of them born in this country, and all of them bilingual—identification with Greece ran strong. All four were certain they would marry a Greek man, and one showed me a "Greeks Only" dating page—http://www.greekconnection.com—to prove the point. One young woman didn't need the page. She had found herself the right Greek groom and was already planning her wedding.

"I've always known I would marry a Greek," she told me. "There was no other way." Did she happen to have any family stories that ran along the lines of, "See, Uncle So and So *didn't* marry a Greek, and look how see how badly *that* marriage turned out?"

"As a matter of fact," she said, "I do."

NOTES

ix *...folklorists had long offered family stories:* See note for page 64.

...clinicians had long understood: See note for p. 73.

x *...people can feel connections with:* Sidney Eileen Miller, *Women's Experience of Power*, Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, 62 (8A), March 2002, p. 2883.

...in childrearing magazines: A recent search yielded a dozen or so articles, all recognizing the shaping power of family stories. Two were articles I had been asked to write when the book was first published—"Why We Label Our Kids, *Parents Magazine,* January 1990, pp. 49-53 and "Generations: Stories Worth Retelling," *New Choices,* February 1989, p. 89 and ff. The additional articles appeared between 1994 and 2002, most recently, Julie Tilsner, "How to Navigate the Holidays—With Kids," *Parenting,* December 2001/January 2002, pp. 116-120.

xi *As he came of age:* Unpublished interview with Nathaniel Kahn, Summer 2000.

Eventually, digitized copies of the stories: See http://storycorps.net; also http://www.loc.gov/folklife.

Elizabeth Loftus' demonstration that false memories can be created: Elizabeth Loftus, *The Myth of Repressed Memory: False Memories and the Allegation of Sexual Abuse* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

xii *...auditory memory is different from visual:* Science has demonstrated that echoic, or auditory memory, is distinct from iconic, or visual memory, in both duration and the neuroscience involved. Also, children's memories of experiences that occur after the age of four are stronger if those experiences have been preserved and reiterated by "external sources." See JoNell Aair Usher and Ulric Neisser, "Childhood Amnesia and the Beginnings of Memory for Four Early Life Events," *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 122 (2), 1992, pp. 155-165.

Michael White is a leader: See his book, a collaboration with Daniel Epstein, *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990).

Fiese...a rubric for "coding": See Barbara H. Fiese, Arnold J. Sameroff, and Harold D. Grotevant, "Observing Families Through the Stories That They Tell: A Multidimensional Approach," in Patricia K. Kerig and Kristin M.Lindahl, eds., *Family Observational Coding Systems: Resources for Systemic Research* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001), pp. 259-271.

Using family stories diagnostically is not altogether new: See, for instance, Phineas Kadushin, Caroline Cutler, and Sheldon E. Waxenberg, "The Family Story Technique and Intrafamily Analysis," *Journal of Projective Techniques and Personality Assessment*, 33 (5), 1969, pp. 438-50; Phineas Kadushin, Sheldon E. Waxenberg, and Clifford J. Sager, "Family Story Technique Changes in Interactions and Effects During Family Therapy," *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 35 (1), February 1971, pp. 62-71; Robert Kelly, "Measuring Children's Reactions to Divorce," *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 34 (1), January 1978, pp. 215-221.

...to assess relations between parents and child: This list represents only a fraction of work published relating to family stories in the last dozen or so years. G. Downey and J. Coyne, "Children of Depressed Parents: An Integrative Review," *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, 1990, pp. 50-76; Michael H. Sherman, "Family Narratives: Internal Representations of Family Relationships and Affective Themes," *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 11 (3), Fall 1990, pp. 253-58; Phoebe Kazdin Schnitzer, "Tales of the Absent Father: Applying the 'Story' Metaphor in Family Therapy," *Family Process*, 32 (4), December 1993, pp. 441-458; Rise Van Fleet, "Strengthening Families with Storytelling," in Leon VandeCreek and Samuel Knapp, eds., *Innovations in Clinical Practice: A Source Book*, 12, 1993, pp. 147-154; Jenny Macfie et al., "Effect of Maltreatment on Preschoolers' Narrative Representations of Responses to Relieve Distress and of Role Reversal," *Developmental Psychology*, 35 (2), March 1990, pp. 460-465; Barbara H. Fiese, *Narrative Coherence, Narrative Interaction, and Relationship Beliefs*, Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 64 (2), 1999, pp. 1-162; Kathleen Mackey, Mary Louis Arnold, and Michael W. Pratt, "Adolescent Stories of Decision-Making in more and less authoritative Families: Representing the Voices of Parents in Narrative," *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 16 (3), May 2001, pp. 243-268; Timothy F. Page, "Attachment Themes in the Family Narratives of Preschool Children: A Qualitative Analysis," *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 18 (5), pp. 353-375; Barbara H. Fiese, Mary Giliberti, and Judith Katz-Leavy, "Research in the Service of Policy Change: The 'Cus-

tody Problem,'" *Journal of Emotional & Behavioral Disorders*, Special Series: Children's Mental Health Policy, 11 (1), 2003, pp. 36-44; Timothy Page and Inge Bretherton, "Representations of Attachment to Father in the Narratives of Preschool Girls in Post-Divorce Families: Implications for Family Relationships and Social Development," *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 20 (2), April 2003, pp. 99-122; Michael W. Pratt and Barbara H. Fiese, eds., *Family Stories and the Lifecourse: Across Time and Generations* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004); John H. Grych, Tanya Wachsmuth Schlaefer, and Laura L. Klockow, "Representations of Family Relationships," *Journal of Family Psychology*, 16 (3), September 2002, pp. 259-272.

...impact of the teller's and/or listener's gender: Elaine Reese, "Conceptions of Self in Mother-Child Birth Stories," *Journal of Narrative & Life History*, 6 (1), 1996, pp. 23-38; Chris Chance and Barbara H. Fiese, "Gender-Stereotyped Lessons About Emotion in Family Narratives," *Narrative Inquiry*, 9 (2), 1999, pp. 243-255.

...among other family members as well: James A. Hyde, *Story Theology and Family Systems Theory: Contributions to Pastoral Counseling with Families*, Dissertation Abstracts International, 50 (2-A), August 1989, p. 469; Merry M. Black, *A Phenomenological Case Study of Family Stories and the Relationship to Identity*, Dissertation Abstracts International, 51 (12-B, Pt. 1), June 1991, pp. 6139-6140; K. Buehlman et al., "How a Couple Views Their Past Predicts Their Future: Predicting Divorce from an Oral History Interview," *Journal of Family Psychology*, 5, 1992, pp. 295-318; Mary Anne Sedney, "'The Story' of a Death: Therapeutic Considerations with Bereaved Families," *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 20 (3), July 1994, pp. 287-296; Barbara H. Fiese, Karen A. Hooker, and Lisa Kotary, "Family Stories in the Early Stages of Parenthood," *Journal of Marriage & the Family*, 57 (3), pp. 763-770; Timothy Nichols and Cheryl Jacques, "Family Reunions: Communities Celebrate New Possibilities," in Steven Friedman, ed., *The Reflecting Team in Action: Collaborative Practice in Family Therapy*, Guilford Family Therapy Series, 1995, pp. 314-330; Lori Ann Byers, *Telling the Stories of Our Lives: Relational Maintenance as Illustrated Through Family Communication*, Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities & Social Sciences, 58 (4A), October 1997, p. 1150.

..an adapted excerpt from the book: "Stories Make a Family," *The New York Times Magazine*, January 24, 1988, pp. 28-30.

xiii *..."a lapse in my grandmother's memory":* See page 113.

xiv *...web page for Ellis Island:* http://www.ellisisland.org

xv *...tradition of storytelling among African Americans:* Barbara A. Seals Nevergold, "To be an Instrument for Their Voices: Finding, Writing and Sharing Family Histories: A Case Study of One Woman's Search for Family Identity," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History 2001*, 25 (2), 99-113. In the last decade there has been renewed interest in the oral histories, recorded at the time or taken down by hand, of former slaves gathered in 1930 by Federal Writers Project interviewers. See Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, and Steven F. Miller, eds., *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk about Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation*, a Book-and-Audiotape Set. The New Press published it in conjunction with the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian Institution, 1998.

...Brent Staples in the New York Times*:* "Senator Strom Thurmond's Not-So-Secret Black Daughter," *New York Times*, December 18, 2003, p. A42.

...a slave named West Ford: Henry Wiencek, *An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves and the Creation of America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), p. 295.

xvi *...counternarratives:* Some counternarratives come from marginalized groups: Cheryl Muzio, "Lesbians Choosing Children: Creating Families, Creating Narratives," in Joan E. Laird and Robert-Jay Green, eds., *Lesbians and Gays in Couples and Families: Handbook for Therapists* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), pp. 358-369; Mary Romero and Abigail J. Stewart, eds., *Women's Untold Stories: Breaking Silence, Talking Back, Voicing Complexity* (Florence, KY: Taylor & Francis/Routledge, 1999); Sofia Villenas, "Latina Mothers and Small-Town Racisms: Creating narratives of Dignity and Moral Education in North Carolina," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 32 (1), March 2001, pp. 3-28; Ken Corbett, "Nontraditional family romance," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 70 (3), July 2001, pp. 599-624. In some cases, ethnographies are gathered to facilitate cross-cultural communication. See, for instance, Sylvia Y. Sanchez, "Learning from the Stories or Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families and Communities: A Sociohistorical Lens," *Remedial and Special Education*, 20 (6), November-December 1999, pp. 351-59.

...Henry Louis Gates, Jr.: See "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man. African American Leaders React to the O.J. Simpson Trial and the Million Man March," *The New Yorker*, 71 (33), October 23, 1995, p. 56.

In 1991: Jerome Bruner, in "Notes," *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), dates the interdisciplinary fascination with narrative to a 1981 "landmark" book edited by W.J.T. Mitchell, *Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981). He speculates that the interest is perhaps "a response to the enormous personal suffering

and dislocation of the most destructive century in human history," page 111.

xvii *Narrative genres–whether an Alcoholics Anonymous testimony:* All cultures have any number of casual narrative genres whose rules are understood operationally. For more on this, see Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, eds., *Getting A Life: Everyday Uses of Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), a text containing essays on "genres" such as medical charts, resumes, daytime TV, and AA recovery stories. Using AA stories just as an example of a kind of family story that is subject to formulaic reshaping for public presentation, see Robyn R. Warhol and Helena Michie, "Twelve-Step Teleology: Narratives of Recovery/Recovery as Narrative," in Watson and Smith, *Getting a Life,* pp. 327-350. Also see M. G. Swora, "Narrating Community: The Creation of Social Structure in Alcoholics Through the Performance of Autobiography, *Narrative Inquiry*, March 2002, 11 (2), pp. 363-384.

...prompted by James Atlas': See his article, "The Age of the Literary Memoir is Now," *New York Times* Sunday Magazine, May 12, 1996, p. 25 and ff.

The genre of autobiography, once reserved for: The notion that the particular nature of the genre of autobiography, and even its existence as a genre, can't be discussed without reference to the culture it rests in, is explored in Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," 1956, Trans. James Olney, in Olney's *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 28-48. Also see Jerome Bruner, *Making Stories*.

...counternarrative classics: It is impossible to even give a representative sampling of the huge number of counternarrative memoirs, but some of most well known are Gloria Andalzua's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Press, 1987) about growing up Latina, Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation: Life in a New Language* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990) about the experience of being an immigrant, Paul Monette's *Becoming a Man: Half a Life Story* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992) about growing up gay, Susanna Kaysen's *Girl Interrupted* (New York: Turtle Bay Books, 1993) about her experience with mental illness, Lucy Grealy's *Autobiography of a Face* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994) about her disfiguring illness, Kathryn Harrison's *The Kiss* (New York: Bard/Avon Books, 1997) about an incestuous father-daughter relationship, and Dave Eggers *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000) about his parents' death within months of one another when the author was in his early

twenties and, with two other siblings, became responsible for raising his eight-year-old brother.

...as the self creates the text: James Olney, "Some Versions of Memory, Some Versions of Bios: The Ontology of Autobiography," in Olney, *Autobiography*, pp. 236-248.

...Patricia Hampl: The essay in question appears in *I Could Tell You Stories: Sojourns in the Land of Memory* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 1999), pp. 21-37.

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BLACK SHEEP
AND
KISSING COUSINS