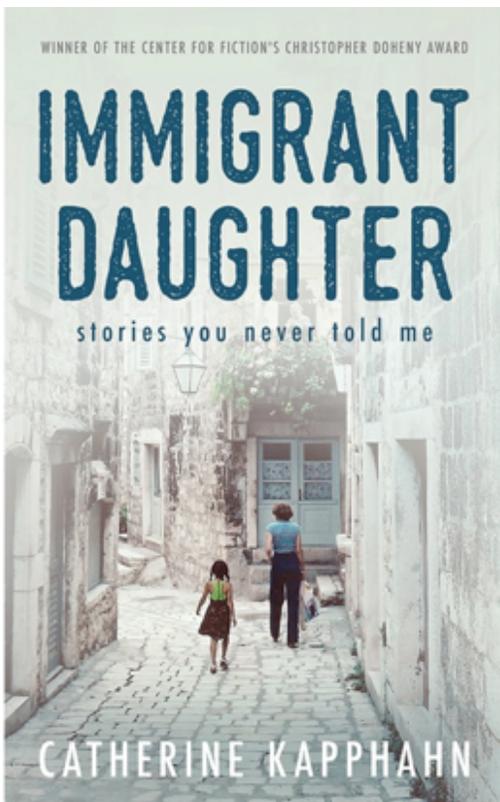




Cathrine Kapphahn

Catherine Kapphahn's *Immigrant Daughter: Stories You Never Told Me* received The Center for Fiction's Christopher Doheny Award. It was also shortlisted for a Del Sol Press Prize. She has received artist grants from the Queens Council on the Arts. Her writing has appeared in *Astoria Magazine*, the *Feminist Press Anthology This is the Way We Say Goodbye*, *CURE Magazine*, and *SalonZine*. She earned an M.F.A. in writing from Columbia University and B.A. from Hunter College. Catherine is an adjunct lecturer at City University of New York at Lehman College in the Bronx, where her students' brave stories continue to inspire her. Catherine also is a yoga teacher. She grew up in near the mountains in Colorado and now lives between two bridges in Queens, New York with her husband and two sons.

24-29 19th Street Astoria, NY 11102



Winner of The Center for Fiction's Christopher Doheny Award

Shortlisted for Del Sol Press Prize

American-born Catherine knows little of her Croatian mother's early life. When Marijana dies of ovarian cancer, twenty-two-year-old Catherine finds herself cut off from the past she never really knew. As Catherine searches for clues to her mother's elusive history, she discovers that Marijana was orphaned during WWII, nearly died as a teenager, and escaped from Communist Yugoslavia to Rome, and then South America. Through travel and memory, history and imagination, Catherine resurrects the relatives she's never known. Traversing time and place, memoir and novel, this lyrical narrative explores the collective memory between mothers and daughters, and what it means to find wholeness. It is a story where a daughter gives voice to her immigrant mother's unspoken history, and in the process, heals them both.

One-sentence Description:

Immigrant Daughter: Stories You Never Told Me, is a story where a daughter gives voice to her immigrant mother's unspoken history, and in the process, heals them both.

Brief Description:

Immigrant Daughter: Stories You Never Told Me, traverses time and place, memoir and novel, exploring the collective memory between mothers and daughters, and what it means to find wholeness. It is a story where a daughter gives voice to her immigrant mother's unspoken history, and in the process, heals them both.

Social Media for Immigrant Daughter: Stories You Never Told Me

Twitter: @cvkapphahn

Facebook: Immigrant Daughter@catherine.kapphahn

Link to book:

Immigrant Daughter: Stories You Never Told Me

Website: <http://catherinekapphahn.com>

Sample Quote from Immigrant Daughter: Stories You Never Told Me

“Returning to the familiar and re-creating it makes us into who we are. This was something my mom didn’t really have. She had lived in so many countries, the meaning of home had disintegrated. For her, returning to Croatia was walking through a minefield, her parents wasting away to tuberculosis, the violence of WWII, her own battle with TB, surviving and escaping communism... Perhaps that’s why my mom didn’t feel the pull homeward. But strangely I felt it for her.”

Key Subjects that the Book Covers:

Love & Loss; Grief & Loss; Cultural Heritage Fiction; Literary Fiction; Memoir; Literary Saga; War Fiction; Women’s Biographies; Eastern European Travel; Death & Grief; Grief & Bereavement; Biographical Historical Fiction; Traveler & Explorer Biographies; Bosnia, Croatia & Herzegovina Travel; Parent and Child relationships, Motherhood; Mother and Daughter relationships; Illness Memoir; War and Childhood; War Stories; Immigration; Family Memoir; Coming-of-age Memoir; Teen & Young Adult Grief; Autobiographical Novel; Medical Fiction; Respiratory diseases; Women’s Studies; South American Travel; Personal narratives, Croatian Mothers and daughters- Biography

Praise:

“What if we could learn the stories our mothers didn't tell us? Through the powerful magic of love, grief, imagination, and the grit that her mother instilled in her, a daughter brings her mother's untold journey to life in cinematic detail. Readers will be transported and deeply touched.”

–**Elizabeth Seay**, author of *Searching for Lost City: On the Trail of America's Native Languages*

“Immigrant Daughter: Stories You Never Told Me is a search for a mother's traumatic history and a daughter's cultural identity. As Kapphahn takes the reader on her mother's harrowing experience in WWII Zagreb and escape from Communist Yugoslavia, she digs into her grief with searing language that illuminates the emotional impact of war and upheaval on the body. Such an engagement with her history and culture gradually unfolds intricate layers of love and acceptance. This memoir's brilliance lies in its overlapping narratives that amplify universal experiences of loss and longing, transforming pain into transcendence.”

–**Nancy Agabian**, author of *Me as Her Again*

“The memoir crackles with imagination, raw feeling, and the kind of stark empathy we come to literature precisely to experience. The two key threads of the book—the author's and her mother’s—play off one another with a delicate harmony I've rarely seen in memoir, showcasing Kapphahn's ability to use both her personal experience and her mother's unique, striking narrative to build an intimate story about longing, identity, and how the imprints of our family histories can echo, strangely, through the actions of our present.”

–**Mike Scalise**, author of *The Brand New Catastrophe*

"In this moving study of her mother's past, Catherine Kapphahn has shown how traumatic historical events can enter a family’s bloodstream. The bond between mother and daughter – forged in a new world so full of promise, marked by the darkness of times past – sings with tenderness and urgency."

–**Courtney Angela Brkic**, author of *The First Rule of Swimming* and *The Stone Fields*

“By braiding together her own, present-day journey of discovery with her mother’s, Kapphahn shows us how we can be cosmically linked to those we love – across physical and temporal barriers – and emerge whole, through the will of our imagination.”

–**Brenda Lin**, author of *Wealth Ribbon: Taiwan Bound, America Bound*

"Kapphahn weaves together a book that is both a memoir of a fascinating woman and a history of a remarkable time period, all while meditating on questions of illness and grief with a quiet and honest grace."

–**Michelle Bailat-Jones**, author of *Unfurled* and *Fog Island Mountains*

Speaking and Teaching Engagements

Catherine Kapphahn loves working with groups of people and is available to speak at events, book clubs, and take part in readings. For many years, she has led writing workshops that explore creativity and mindfulness. She has taught extensively on how writing about trauma can be a means of processing experience.

Here are two workshops that Catherine often teaches:

“Cultivating Wonder: the Art of Noticing” is a workshop that allows students to define “Wonder” for themselves. In the course, they travel across stories from wildly different perspectives, while nurturing their creative selves. Students go on urban adventures to museums, botanical gardens, historic places, and performances, and then share their experiences with the class. Within the workshop setting, students create community and art, as they stretch the meaning of intelligence for themselves. They honor what has shaped them and how they learn. Students find new ways to become their own teachers who will cultivate wonder beyond the course.

“Writing the Mind and Body: Translating the Physical Experience” carves out the space for students to write about their own personal history. In a dynamic workshop setting, students explore the language of movement and stillness, pain and healing, curiosity and wonder. They dive into their own stories with the support of a writing community, and they read stories that will sustain them throughout the writing process. Finally, they examine how crafting a story is one powerful means of processing experience and finding resilience.

Available from:

- Amazon.com
- Barnesandnoble.com and other booksellers.
- For Booksellers: Ingram Spark

Forms:

- Paperback: 15.99
- Ebook: 5.99

Forthcoming

- Audible.com (To be published by Audible)

Sample Q&A: The Journey of Writing this Book

What surprised you about writing this book?

The road to writing this book has been long and hard, like running a never-ending marathon where there was lots of laughter and tears. There were years when I did not write at all, and there were years when I found my way back to my mother’s story and was completely absorbed once again. Each time I began working, I was astonished how my mom’s story kept giving me gifts. It pushed me to learn new things, gave me courage to talk to strangers, challenged me to dig into complex impossible-to-write-about history, revealed insights that I never considered, forced me to ask for help over and over again, and connected me with wonderful people, who so generously gave their time.

How did you start writing this book?

During my second attempt at college, I signed up for my very first writing class. A fierce and generous Italian American professor by the name of Louise DeSalvo taught my memoir writing class at Hunter College in New York City. Our desks were in a circle and we sat in awe of Louise, who made every single one of us feel as if we deserved to write. She treated us like we were already writers, each with an important story to share. I had never considered writing before I took that class. In fact, writing had always been extremely difficult for me and I was terrified to even attempt it. (Years later I would find out that I have dyslexia.) Yet in that class, I wrote the first draft of a chapter called “Sundays”, which is in my book. And Louise wrote about me; I appeared in her book *Healing as a Way of Writing*. I took several more classes with Louise and she changed the course of my life. Without realizing it, I began working on this book. At first, I believed that I would write about the loss of my mom, instead her story sent me on a journey that lasted over twenty years, a search for an elusive cultural identity, resurrecting the family that I never knew, a love-adventure story about a family of three, and somehow, I was able to find the words, for myself and my mom.

Sample Q&A: The Journey of Writing this Book Continued

You used memoir and fiction to write your true story, Can you explain?

This book definitely identifies as memoir. But while I was in the early stages of writing it, I discovered that if I stayed with memoir, I couldn't reach my mom's real history, I couldn't get to what things felt like for her, and that's what I needed the most as a daughter and storyteller. So eventually, I took the leap into fiction in order to get to the truth of her past, so that I could embody my history. I had rules for myself: I had to follow the geography of her journey, I tried to base everything on something that I knew or had discovered. As much as possible, I had to capture the time period. I did many interviews with my dad and he knew much more than I did. Also, once I knew more about my mom, things arose from my own memory. While I was doing my research, my dad did this incredible thing: he made a timeline that traced the bigger events for all three of us, from birth onward, moves, different places we lived, schools, years things happened to us. Those timelines helped me tremendously. (Every parent should do it.)

My process was to use a specific place and one thing I knew from my mom's history, and spin a story outward that could interconnect the different chapters. On this journey, in order to excavate those historic details, I read memoirs, novels, history books, and some travel books that hadn't been checked out in 40 years; I listened to audible books about Croatia; I watched documentaries, films, interviewed Croatians, looked through photo albums and historic photographs.

When did you know that you were finished with the book?

In some way, I could have kept writing this book for the rest of my life because it continued to give back to me in unexpected ways. It became my teacher and family; it kept revealing new things about my history. But, at the end, I knew that if I stayed with it any longer, I would miss writing the stories that I haven't yet written.

I endured many years of rejections from literary agents and independent presses. I tried so hard to fit into this literary world because I thought that would make me a "real" writer. As a dyslexic, all my life I looked to the outside world for clues on how to be. For my final steps with this book, the opposite was true. Instead, I had to look within myself, summon courage, stop waiting, and come up with innovative ways to bring this story to the world.

How did you come up with the title?

When I finished graduate school, I taught in an after school program for New York City middle school students. My friend gave me this writing exercise for them, where you write a poem answering the question: Where Do You Come From? I did the exercise with my students, and one of the lines in my poem was: I come from the stories you never told me. So for a long time stories you never told me was the title.

Then in the final year of trying to find an independent press, I entered a book contest that was for the children of immigrants. I read all the guidelines and it seemed to fit me perfectly. I submitted my book and my husband submitted his book too. That night as I was walking up to teach yoga, I felt euphoric. I spent so long searching for a cultural belonging, and finally I did feel like the child of an immigrant in a wonderful and proud way.

When I got home, my husband broke the news that you had to have two parents who were immigrants to be considered. I felt like this elusive identity that I fought so hard for, once again, just slipped away. My response was to change the title of the book to: Immigrant Daughter: Stories You Never Told Me. It was a reclaiming of a word that meant a lot to me. It's true my mom is really the immigrant daughter, but the phrase felt like it belonged to me too; I worked so hard for that identity.

That phrase also arose from bearing witness to many of my students' stories about the complexities of being the children of immigrants, Dreamers, undocumented, worrying about their parents being deported and being left behind to care for siblings on their own, being carried in their mother's arms across the border, being left alone when a

Sample Q&A: The Journey of Writing this Book Continued

father was arrested and sent back. I had spent years thinking a lot about why people leave their countries when it's so painful to lose your home, your language, your culture, your family, and community. For my mom, it was illness. And in many cases people flee their countries because of hunger, lack of health care, oppression, violence, and war. After all these years of teaching, it seems to me, oftentimes, it is the second generation that carries the weight of their parents' losses and memories.

Some themes that the book deals with are “searching for cultural identity” and “loss of mother”. Can you talk about them?

I think at the age of twenty-two, the age I was when my mom died, is difficult because there is part of you that naturally wants to pull away, to figure out who you are without your mom. Eventually, you would complete the circle and return to your mom as an individual, and she would be there. My mom was gone, so I couldn't complete the circle. As I was writing, I discovered that in some way you can do that within the world you are creating on the page and that it can help you move through grief. You can ask the questions that you never had a chance to ask. You can shed light on something you might have ignored before. You can cry the way you never had a chance to in the moment, or laugh with your characters, you can literally change your history through writing about it, and it feels real and healing.

When I started this book, I had no idea that I was searching for cultural identity, but with time, I realized that the history that I sensed, but did not know, was a huge part of my mom's story. I began to recognize that my mom had suffered trauma as a child. I realized that unprocessed grief and trauma can silence you. In writing this, I had to fight to find the words for her and myself.

What was the easiest chapter to write?

In Colorado, I sat in this empty Chinese restaurant with my dad and interviewed him about his time in Caracas, Venezuela when he first met my mom. I think halfway through that interview, I got goosebumps; I had this immediate feeling this would be an incredible story. Then a month later, I was back in New York City, and I opened some mail from my dad; I realized that he had sent me their actual love letters. He had entrusted me with them. When I worked on that section, I felt as if those chapters “The Letter” and “New York City” were almost writing themselves. My dad was mostly a factual person, extremely detailed, logical, but not necessarily a story person. But he handed over those details and I just ran with them. Afterward, when he read early versions of it, he turned to me, his eyes wide and teary and said, “How did you know what it felt like? It was just like this.”

What did it feel like to win The Center for Fiction's Christopher Doheny Award?

A couple days before, I'd gone to this reading at the Astoria Bookshop, and there were these two writers, one dyslexic and one who had dyslexia and ADD. They both wrote books about how to help children with learning differences and their own experiences with learning. They had started their own non-profits. I was blown away by their experiences. They seemed so evolved and articulate, and for them having a “learning difference” was so different than it was for me. One of their parents would read the text books aloud and record it for his son. It would have never even occurred to me to ask for that kind of help, or that I even needed that. In one generation things had changed. I remember walking home thinking, “Wow, am I always going to be unfulfilled potential? Will I ever finish this book?”

Then the next day, I was on the N train, riding the subway home, and I glanced at the email subjects listed on my phone. I saw a “Congratulations!” I thought, it's probably an advertisement. For years I had been entering book contests and I was determined to not enter anymore. In fact, my husband and my friend Nancy, had to convince to enter one more, and I had forgotten about it. So I opened that email and I couldn't believe it! I had to read it several times. I'd won The Center for Fiction's Christopher Doheny Award for manuscripts dealing with serious illness. The contest was started to honor the life of Christopher Doheny, who cared about literature and did meaningful work at Audible in its early stages as it began to take off. Tragically he died of cystic fibrosis as a young man.

Sample Q&A: The Journey of Writing this Book Continued

Of all the contests in the world, this one fit me completely, not just my book, but who I am, what I believe, and how I teach. I have spent so many years thinking, reading, exploring the stories that our bodies hold, and asking what is resilience? When life knocks us down, what helps us get back up? I create spaces for my students to write these stories. Before I was born, my parents had to cope with TB and polio, and those illnesses changed the course of their lives. Even though I had no idea what they went through until I was older, I now realize that it was a force that propelled me on this particular writing path.

What kept you going at the end?

During the end of working the manuscript, I had many overwhelming feelings because the book has been a part of my life for so long. It had become my refuge. Yet, there were many times that I would fall into insecurity, wondering if my writing was good enough. Sometimes I would wake up in the middle of the night in a writer's panic. In that final year, I found this inner voice just beckoning me forward, step by tiny step.

There is this book called *The Brain that Changes Itself* by Dr. Norman Doidge that I've used often with my students. And there is one chapter about a young woman who was born missing half a hemisphere of her brain, but somehow she has managed to live a meaningful life. Her brain did incredible things to compensate through neuroplasticity. And the title of that chapter is: "More than the Sum of Her Parts". So suddenly during my final revision period, when I would walk somewhere, that mantra would start going in my head: "You are more than the sum of your parts, you are more than the sum of your parts." It was this chant-whisper that would echo in me.

During the final months, during my deep dive away from the real world into my writing world, it felt isolating and wonderful and scary. I was alone in this vibrant world that I made and yet I felt terrified to move beyond it. And gradually, my writing consciousness transplanted a new pronoun in my mantra. Suddenly I began to hear "We", "We are more than the sum of our parts. We are more than the sum of our parts." When I walked anywhere and I felt that rising fear, I would also hear the collective voice, calming me down. It wasn't just my voice anymore, it was many voices saying, "We are more than the sum of our parts."