

IN MEMORIAM TO GRACE PALEY:

“That eye with which any artist looks at life is really dumb in a lot of ways,” Grace Paley told Paul Wilner of the *New York Times* in 1979. “Some people prefer to call it innocent because that makes it classier, in a little way, but it’s really just dumb. I’m an ear believer. I think the ear is smarter than the eye.”

Edges is a work of fiction. But it was drawn from a very personal center within me. My Jewish great grandmother, grandmother, and mother were all born in the ancient city of Jerusalem in a multicultural Palestine of Muslims, Christians, and Jews before the state of Israel was formed.

The news about Israel and the wars were constant throughout my lifetime, but after the first Intifada in the 1980s, bombings and death were graphically shown on TV in monotonous, bloody, relentless and repeated reportage. I phoned Grace daily, telling her stories I remembered as a child, sharing the intimate scenes of sitting around the dinner table in 1963, in an earlier Jerusalem when my mother took me there to visit as a child.

Grace was the master of telling stories about the marginalized, so good that "marginalized" became for me not an awful word, but a special place of privilege. The door to my room of childhood memories had become unhinged by an increasing loss of visual reference points in the press, among the people who might receive my work. And within myself.

Grace Paley changed the turbulence of my existing at the edges of land and family and history into telling a story. She was my guide, my editor, and my literary light.

It is my privilege to dedicate this book to her now. And to know that, for me and for so many others, she will continue to teach us that our ears are smarter than we think.

—Leora Skolkin-Smith
September 2007