When I was ten I wrote: “To begin with I am a girl. Chapter One.” And then reported on what I saw in my class at PS 6. There never was a chapter two, but my natural tendency later on was to write books with chapters, not short stories. And to be observing and direct. It was my early life that drew me so quickly to Europe after World War II. My father, a scout in the first World War, was mustard gassed in the trenches and spent considerable time recovering in an American Army hospital in France. If he had been killed in France, I reasoned as a child, I never would have existed. Despite his later worldly success, I knew that this experience defined him. My mother, an artist, was in England when the Second World War was declared, and it was hard to get her passage home. To further complicate things, our nanny who raised my brother and myself, was German and her boyfriend was killed on the Russian front. This was during the Holocaust and I was Jewish. I had to figure things out. When I was old enough, but barely, I set out for Europe. And I felt free.

Barbara Probst Solomon