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This dissertation takes the form of memoir and weaves three narratives together: (1) the story of my travels through Greece in search of my father's family, (2) the examination of my father's crimes and suicide and their effect on my life, and (3) the retelling of portions of my abusive childhood. In merging these stories, the memoir raises a number of questions, but perhaps the primary is regarding the lies we tell others and ourselves. After finding my father's two sisters in Greece, I lied to them about how he died out of fear of bringing them sorrow and because of their suggestion that they didn't want to hear the truth. Only later did I find out that they knew of the murders he committed before killing himself, which left me reeling and questioning if it is simply human nature to prefer a lie to the truth when the truth is too difficult to face.

The title of the work, *Beyond the Family Lies*, takes on multiple meanings here, though it functions on three levels predominately: first, in the chapters that deal with my childhood and develop the family dynamic that fluctuated between mania and volatility, the lies explored are both the ones my father told us and the ones the rest of the family told ourselves to try to make sense of living with a sociopath, the denial necessary to persevere and function in that space. Second, upon going to Greece and finding both of my father's elderly sisters, I lied when asked how he died, unable to show up unannounced and break such devastating news to people who so clearly wanted to lie to themselves in the same ways my immediate family did when I grew up. The psychological difficulty in balancing what I've done—told the greatest of lies with best intent—has only further complicated my relationship to this twisted family history, and the questions it has raised (am I more like my father than I admit?; who was I protecting?; is that trip to Greece, a mission to make peace with that family history, undermined by the guilt I now feel?) are the axis on which the book spins.

Third, *Beyond the Family Lies* is an exploration of identity, as many critics have argued all literature is, and the question the text raises is what does lie beyond the history and genetics we inherit? If what we are exposed to is dangerous and abusive, how do we then come to define ourselves? Is it only through our history? The answer I posit is a resounding "no," and it is this aspect of the text that moves away from the simple detailing of my life alone to the broader cultural context of how victims of trauma and abuse share the common ground of a necessary redefining of self. The manuscript moves asynchronously in time, beginning with the first trip to Greece in search of my estranged family and then moving, like Mary Karr does in *The Liar's Club*, back in time to childhood, teen years, and present day. A chronological telling of the story wouldn't do the subject matter justice as there is simply too much ground to cover, but the asynchronous allows me not only to freely slip into necessary flashback for character development, it also permits a fuller understanding of this complex history. Additionally, the manuscript has four experimental half chapters in the second person that bear some of the most emotionally weighted material of the book. Because each of those sections contains the material that caused trauma, the second-person remove mimics the disassociation experienced by victims of abuse.