

## The “Family Unconscious” and the “Family Instinct” as reflected in the bibliotherapist work

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### Abstract

The family serves as a common thematic thread linking mental health therapy and literature. This connection underscores the importance of exploring familial themes within bibliotherapy, a therapeutic approach that integrates literary works into psychological treatment. Literature, by portraying various aspects of family life, provides valuable insights into familial dynamics and unconscious processes. By examining how different literary genres depict family relationships and norms, bibliotherapy can enhance our understanding of these dynamics and their impact on individuals. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of how family themes are reflected in literature and how they can be utilized to address psychological issues in therapeutic contexts.

The article is divided into two main sections: the theoretical discussion of bibliotherapy and the family, and a practical case study of a decade-long treatment of a mentally ill, childless Holocaust survivor, referred to as Yitzhak Meir. This case, submitted as a case study in a competition for treatment descriptions at the Tamir Institute, is analyzed alongside David Grossman’s novel *One Horse Walks into a Bar*. This analysis illustrates how working with a person’s life narrative and literary texts can aid in emotional processing and therapy.

The paper argues that both literature and psychoanalysis explore family themes, though literature often does so indirectly. Literary works offer reflections of cultural and familial unconsciousness, analogous to the therapeutic process of dream interpretation. Psychoanalysis and literature are interwoven, with psychoanalytic concepts frequently derived from literary phenomena.

**Keywords:** bibliotherapy; family therapy; Open Studio model; biblio/poetry therapy; Holocaust survival; life story therapy; severe mental illness (SMI)

### Introduction

The family serves as a central theme in both mental health therapy and literature. This thematic connection highlights the potential of exploring familial issues within the framework of bibliotherapy—a therapeutic approach that integrates literary works into psychological treatment. Literature, in its diverse forms, provides significant insights into family dynamics and the unconscious processes that shape individual lives. By examining how literary texts portray family relationships, bibliotherapy allows for a deeper understanding of how family structures and unconscious family influences shape the psyche of individuals.

This article is divided into two key sections: the theoretical discussion of bibliotherapy in relation to family dynamics and a practical case study of a mentally ill, childless Holocaust survivor named

Yitzhak Meir. This case study, which was recognized in a prestigious competition for therapeutic treatment descriptions, will be examined alongside David Grossman's novel *One Horse Walks into a Bar* (2017). The analysis of these two works allows for an exploration of how working with a person's life narrative and literature can facilitate emotional processing and therapeutic healing.

This article posits that both literature and psychoanalysis address themes of family, though literature often does so in an indirect and metaphorical manner. Literary works reflect unconscious family patterns, paralleling the therapeutic process of uncovering unconscious material, such as through dream analysis (Kichli, 2014). The interplay between psychoanalysis and literature is not coincidental; many psychoanalytic concepts have been shaped by literary traditions. Furthermore, bibliotherapy is a way of integrating literary texts in therapy, offering patients an opportunity to explore family themes and address unconscious issues within the context of psychological treatment (Berman, 2007; Sagi, 2009).

In conclusion, the integration of literary analysis and psychoanalytic principles provides a profound understanding of family dynamics and individual psychology. This interdisciplinary approach offers therapists valuable insights into unconscious family influences and enhances therapeutic practices by considering the role of family narratives in shaping personal identity and emotional well-being (Sagi, 2006).

### **Theoretical Framework – “Family Bibliotherapy”**

Family is an essential component in psychoanalysis, not only as a real-world social unit but also as a vital part of the individual's unconscious world. In psychoanalytic literature, family dynamics and their impact on the individual's psyche are frequently explored, particularly through the lens of transference and projection. As patients bring unconscious family dynamics into their therapeutic encounters, they often recreate relationships with their parents and others within their current experiences. Bibliotherapy, which utilizes literary works as therapeutic tools, parallels this process. Through literature, individuals can engage with their own unconscious material, including family patterns, without direct confrontation with family members themselves.

The concept of the family unconscious, a key theme in this article, is a core idea developed in my doctoral research. Along with related concepts such as the family instinct and the couple unconscious, these terms delve into how individuals internalize family dynamics and carry these influences into their lives. These ideas will be further elaborated in my forthcoming book, to be published by Carmel Publishing.

Literature and psychoanalysis share a symbiotic relationship, where literature often precedes and influences psychoanalytic theory. Many psychoanalytic ideas, such as the Oedipus Complex or the concept of the family unconscious, were inspired by literary motifs and symbolic narratives. By engaging with literature, patients can identify family-related conflicts and address these issues within the context of therapy. Through bibliotherapy, patients are given the opportunity to explore their inner lives, access unconscious material, and work through unresolved family-related issues.

## **“Open Studio”: How to Access the Family Unconscious Through Bibliotherapeutic Group Work**

After a brief explanation of the common outlines between the fields of literature and therapy, and between bibliotherapy and family therapy, participants are introduced to work materials placed in front of them on the table. The presentation of the writing materials follows the approach of art therapy, specifically the Open Studio model (Orbach, 2020). On the table, there will be various types of paper, torn sheets, pages with framed edges, papers of different thicknesses ranging from thin paper to parchment paper. Pens, markers, glue, staplers, feathers, ink, as well as charcoal and drawing markers will also be provided. Participants will be guided to choose a sheet and a writing tool for each family member, based on the language of their connection with that person. For example, if my mother was fragile and would scream, I might choose parchment paper and a red panda ink pen, as for me, parchment represents delicacy and the red panda color represents rage, and so on.

Participants will be given the means to glue and change the size of the page according to what they write. After selecting the sheets for each family member and for themselves, the participants will write a few spontaneous and automatic sentences by hand, in their mother tongue. Family members can be connected as one work on a single page after writing, or remain separate, or some can be connected while others are separated, depending on the writer's choice. In a single workshop, this work can be presented. During the presentation, participants can receive a reflection of how they perceive their family members and the relationships between them. In a longer workshop, after the family members are selected, the family story will be written week after week on papers with different writing tools. This will create a 'family journal' written in the unique way shared by the creating family member and the family's character as perceived by them.

One can also add the extended family, family fantasies, the family the person has created, and so on. In addition, the “Bibliotherapeutic Open Studio” can be used for general therapeutic writing work, unrelated to family. Handwriting is gradually disappearing in modern times, but it is tied to early childhood and using it can connect to both early and later childhood, to the handwriting of mother, father, grandparents, etc. Working with different writing tools and papers of various textures can help unblock familial creativity and connect individuals to their family's creative powers.

In the second part of the workshop, the participants select one of their patients. They select a page and write a few spontaneous sentences about the patient. They then select additional pages and appropriate writing tools for the characters from the chosen patient's family life for work. They then arrange family relationships as they understand them from their sessions with the patient.

The third part of the workshop is related to examining the transfer relationship between the therapist and the patient through the family and the therapeutic writing work. The fragments written on notes have become a narrative, and the narrative of the patient and caregiver's family are openly written. The family correspondence, hidden until that moment, receives a place and possibility to interpret, find the similar and different and make the necessary separations.

An examination of the similarity and difference between the family concepts of the therapist and the patient can shed light on the therapeutic relationship, the implications of the patient and expand the place that the therapist can give the patient through awareness of different and similar concepts between them. The family is an entity that connects the individual to society, like language. This connec-

tion to the family through spontaneous writing can illuminate personal family processes that constitute the therapeutic relationship and illuminate unconscious shades of it. This enlightenment can help the patient become aware of past patterns and help him establish a benevolent relationship that relies on the strengths of his family ties and process the difficulties of complex family bonding.

### **The “Family Unconscious” and the “Literary Unconscious”: Mutual Influences and Interactions**

The overlap between family themes in psychoanalysis and literature is striking, as both disciplines delve deeply into the unconscious. The family unconscious, as I conceptualize it, operates beneath the surface of daily life yet profoundly shapes how individuals experience relationships and understand their world. Literature often mirrors these unconscious family dynamics through overt or symbolic representations, providing a unique avenue for patients to confront hidden influences in a therapeutic setting.

Bibliotherapy enables patients to explore these dynamics through literary characters and narratives that may resonate with their own familial histories. For example, David Grossman’s *One Horse Walks into a Bar* and the life story of Yitzhak Meir provide two such narratives. Both delve into the family’s ongoing presence in the psyche, even when physically absent, making them powerful tools for uncovering and processing unconscious conflicts.

### **Monologic and Dialogic Forms: Literary Monologue and Therapeutic Dialogue**

*“The temptation that is so hard to resist – the temptation to peek into the hell of the other”*

(Grossman, 2017, 85)

*“Advantage and disadvantage in all, good and bad in all”*

(Yitzhak Meir)

This discussion focuses on two forms of monologue: the literary monologue of Dovaleh, the protagonist in David Grossman’s novel *One Horse Walks into a Bar*, and the monologue within the life story of Yitzhak Meir during therapy. Despite the absence of their families in their current lives—Dovaleh’s parents are deceased, and Yitzhak Meir lost his family in the Holocaust—the family remains an active presence in their consciousness. This underscores the enduring influence of the family unconscious.

Drawing on psychoanalytic theories such as those of and family therapy approaches (Boszormenyi-Nagy et al., 1991; Bowen, 1974 etc.), this article explores how internalized family figures, or an “internal family,” influence an individual’s behavior and psyche. These influences become particularly evident during moments of emotional or psychological significance, highlighting the role of the family unconscious in shaping individual experiences.

The discussion below will focus on two types of monologues from two different types of discourse: Alongside Dovaleh’s literary monologue, the hero of David Grossman’s novel *One Horse Walks Into a Bar*,

the discussion will revolve around the parts of a monologue in the life story of Yitzhak Meir (pseudonym), a childless, severe mentally ill holocaust survivor, during psychological therapy. In both cases, we are dealing with two individual speakers describing themselves as alleged; the family is no longer present in the reality of their lives in the present – both of Dovaleh's parents are not among the living, and Yitzhak Meir lost his entire family in the Holocaust – but it remains in their consciousness, memory and experience.

The trauma of the Holocaust and its consequences are shared by Meir and Dovaleh in Grossman's book, *Son of Parents of Holocaust Survivors*, and the subject of the Holocaust connects the two stories openly and covertly. The monologue nature of the texts makes it possible to examine the intensity of the hold of the family unconscious in the soul life of the individual and the degrees of freedom of the individual in the face of the power of the family. The discussion will move between the conscious and unconscious individual, his dreams and fantasies and his conscious and unconscious family: its existence in reality and in his imagination. In *One Horse Walks into a Bar*, Dovaleh recalled his trip to the funeral as a child, not knowing which of his parents had died, and all along his anxiety increased when he tried to guess. Meir described during the treatment, every meeting, his family members who had been separated from them seventy years earlier.

Both stories make it possible to test and demonstrate the theory of the existence of the family unconscious, and the realization of the innate mental family potential in the face of the family living reality. Both according to psychoanalytic theories, for example by Bowen (1974), and according to theories from family therapy, the individual assimilates in his soul the characters of his parents and creates unconsciously any inner family. These are internal voices that have been assimilated, experienced as family objects, and they affect the conduct of the individual in his adulthood. This influence of assimilation of the parents' figures is expressed in central junctions throughout the life of the individual, in his observation of himself in his consciousness and in his reference to his choices, his actions and life events.

First-person reporting and the family unconscious In order to examine the inner family, it is necessary to separate the perceptions assimilated by the individual from the actual family. This requires a reporting style that is closest to what represents the individual's soul world. Such a writing style is first-person writing – monologue and internal dialogue; these forms are closest to a direct description of the human experience, and have great value that helps to understand how much the individual assimilated his family, why and for what purpose. Ostensibly, the genre of the monologue is far from dealing with the family dimension; however, I claim that the individual's family instinct – the part that is represented in his consciousness even when his actual family is absent – may exist even when in fact the family ceases to exist, allowing the family to be treated even in texts that it is not their main interest. I shall examine this both through the long monologue in Grossman's book and through the words told by Yitzhak Meir in the treatment.

The “family instinct” is an innate structure that exists in the depths of the definition that the individual defines himself. The conscious and unconscious family scenario affects the individual. The private unconscious, which is extensively discussed in psychoanalysis, by its very nature is not exposed, as is the family unconscious in the individual psyche – it is also invisible and is revealed, as Freud believed, in art, humor, oral exhaustion, dreams, fantasies and more (Freud, 1967). All these serve as a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious. The humor side is indeed prominent and blatant among the comedian in Grossman's book, and it is also evident in Meir's developed humor, whose discourse was full of aphorisms and complementary in an unplanned or semi-planned manner. At the height of both monologues is a catharsis experience: it appears with Meir when he exposes in therapy the burning of his father and brother in

the synagogue in his native Romania, and in Grossman's book – when the trauma of the boy's ignorance is exposed, which of his parents died. In both cases this stage of the monologue is an important tier for the individual in familiarity with his family unconscious.

The depiction of Dovaleh's gigs in front of his mother as a child, behind his father's back, and their relationship to his appearances as a stand-up comedian in adulthood, demonstrates the influence of the inner family on him. He describes how in his childhood his mother would laugh when he would appear to her in the dark, in the light of the electric boiler lamp, and how she would suddenly stop the show. As an adult, he puts on a comedy show designed to be funny, as he used to make his mother laugh; he performs in a dark club, and the bulk of the audience also “stops” the show – people get up and go out in disgust at different stages of the show. The offensive outing of the audience is also a reconstruction of the abuse Dovaleh underwent as a child by a group of his peers.

His current stand-up show is a subversive sideshow in relation to the prevailing relaxed laughing culture. The world outside the show is the Father's Voice, representing authority and boundaries. Dovaleh's show is a show in the company's backyard, a unique fringe show, similar to the show held at Dovaleh's house behind his father's back. Both occurrences move through the dark expanse of humor, taking place in a dark atmosphere in a dim red light. In his appearances before his mother as a child there is a grotesque aspect. He uses everything in the house to make her laugh. Dovaleh also uses everything he encounters on stage in a method typical of a stand-up show. Both in the stand-up show and in the show at his home in his childhood it is unclear who is the object of humor or ridicule.

The whole situation is grotesque and peculiar and the line between the laughing and the laughing, between the audience and the performer, blurs: “ 'What about some red-headed jokes?' Reading something, and another man growling, 'We came here for the jokes!' And a woman who answers to the snorting sound of the two men yells, 'Can't you see that today is itself the joke?' ”(Grossman, 2017, 79). Dovaleh himself testifies: “I do not know where it came from, and in fact do know, I did a show for my mother, where it began, I would sketch her like this in the evening, before Figueroa would return home and we would become state” (Grossman, 2017, 78–79). Thus, the family of origin, the family in which the family instinct was developed, accompanies the individual throughout his life, even in situations of family conflict, as with Dovaleh, and even in extreme situations in which no trace of his family remained in reality, as with Yitzhak Meir (Kichli, 2020).

## **Conclusions**

Grossman's book, along with the case description, both illustrate a “family-end” scenario: a person who has lived his life without a family. The patient's focus on his family, and the family history depicted in Grossman's work, demonstrate the profound role that family plays in shaping the individual psyche. Naturally, a person whose life is accompanied by a family will also define his identity in relation to that family. This work aims to clarify why the family is so essential, even for someone who lost their entire family in youth. What is the mental and neural structure of family that prevents a human story from being told without reference to family?

The work leaves the reader with significant questions: Is the family a brain structure, perhaps hinted at by the concept of a “family instinct”? Is the family encoded in various regions of the brain and human



psyche—spanning from sensory experiences and memory, to the language of history, human geography, and physicality? This would help explain why it is impossible for a person to exist without it. These extreme examples—those of Grossman, Yitzhak Meir, and Shelly—reveal the centrality of family in individual life, both consciously and, more importantly, unconsciously, as both a couple and as a familial unit. Much of this remains hidden from view.

Through the use of family bibliotherapy workshops, therapists can explore the nature of their own families, as well as the families of their patients. This exploration allows for an investigation of unconscious family dynamics, including the roles of the couple, siblings, and the family as a whole. Such an investigation can deepen the understanding of the unconscious roles of the family in therapy and healing. Further research into family bibliotherapy is needed to uncover the family genome, which, for now, remains largely in the dark.

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## APPENDIX

### No Free Containmentment

#### A case study written by Tamar Kichli Borochofsky

The Japanese believe in multiple gods and that ordinary people can become gods after death. They maintain a shrine for their deceased family members at home and maintain prayer relationships with them. If Yitzhak Meir had set up a shrine for his deceased, he would have needed more than his small room in the shelter for mentally affected Holocaust survivors, which he shared with another resident, Rami. He was born into a family of rabbis with numerous uncles, nephews, cousins, and children, but upon reaching the age of eighty-three, when he departed from this world, Yitzhak Meir had no living family member from his family of origin, and he left no children to carry on his fathers' name. Such an asymmetrical fate, that a person carries his fathers with him and maintains a daily conversational relationship with them, but not a single person remains to set up a shrine for Yitzhak Meir, or to cherish him in their heart. Even his roommate, who lived with him for ten years, said after his departure that Yitzhak Meir ate like a pig, opening a jar of pickles and taking them out with his hands while standing. "Those whom God loves, he doesn't kill," said the roommate, "and our God doesn't love pigs." With this, he sealed the fate of commemorating Yitzhak Meir as a person in his heart. "This is not a story of individuals, it's a story of a generation," Yitzhak would remark to me when I tried to begin and probe how a person experiences such a burning asymmetry of the living and the dead in his life cycle.

I treated Yitzhak Meir for over a decade and was a friend to his emotions. From his stories, I knew his family, from birth to strange death, to the last of the distant relatives who perished. I heard about their customs so that I could accompany his family thoughts as if I had been with him in joys, sorrows, and community life. The journey without leaving traces left me to carry in my heart and mind the path descending from the village, and his mother calling to him in her voice, for the last time before he left, which was lost. When he passed, he remained in my shrine of the dead, along with his family members and other deceased.

His height was over one meter ninety. His eyes were slanted and small like a mole's, and like it, his other senses were sharp. His aquiline nose was prominent on his face, and together with his narrowed eyes, the viewer felt as if he was beholding a giant, a combination of the ruler of the permeating earth and the king of the heavens. A satiated and bat-like bird of prey. His legs and arms were thin, his face elongated, his belly and cheeks round with satiety from when we met until he fell ill. His cheeks were permanently flushed, and he exuded a plump old age, relaxation, and a slow, confident step.

When Ehud, the shelter manager, would call me on Friday or Saturday, I didn't want to answer, and all the names of my friends of the hour passed before my eyes as if moments before death. I thought about who might be hospitalized or dead. My first terrifying thought was that it might be Yitzhak Meir. After all, I had last seen him at the Masad Ledach Hospital a few days ago, and he had said goodbye to me with a sudden embrace that I wasn't prepared for and hadn't happened before or after that outburst. I erased the thought that he could die; a protective thought said he was excited that I came to visit him, after all, he had been very healthy until the disease was discovered. Potzner? I thought to myself. May-



be Clara? Just not Rina. Thus, images of each of them passed before me as I had seen them in their typical behavior before I called them to the room, week after week, year after year. A decade. "Are you sitting?" Ehud asked. He knew I was more attached to Yitzhak Meir than I knew myself. "If I sit, he will rise," I answered. In the evening at friends' house, I started crying and had no consolation. When he lay on the stretcher in the cemetery, his happy belly distinguished him; one could identify the body without seeing the face. Even together with the women, there wasn't a minyan. Only I knew Yitzhak Meir, and therefore only I cried over his corpse. I wanted to approach and hug, maybe now the rules of ethics, on the border of the world, stretch like a womb.

I called him Yitzhak-Meir for the purpose of this treatment description, a pseudonym that corresponds with his name, and I collected from the names of my grandfathers: Yitzhak Bar Abba and Meir Boruchovsky. It seems to me that the choice to add him to the names of my fathers will be explained later. Supposedly for reasons of confidentiality, I cannot write Yitzhak Meir's real name. But the truth is that I cannot write his name because I cannot bear the fact that I will write his name and no one will recognize him, except perhaps a few strangers who treated him over the years like me. I feel an urge to write his name and thus give the right to whom at least half of this treatment description belongs. Perhaps my desire to commemorate him in this description also stems from my own desire to free myself from being a shrine of the dead myself, carrying the memory of a person and family that was erased. If I were to write his name, in my fantasy, I could supposedly perpetuate what was lost forever, to correct the distorted. But the distorted cannot be corrected. I knew Yitzhak Meir and as he would say again and again, this is a story of a generation, and the true story is of a generation from which individuals and families were erased without a trace or memory left.

Yitzhak-Meir was a resident in a shelter for mentally affected Holocaust survivors. I treated him from the first hour I received payment for my work, after finishing my studies, until he passed away a decade later. Hence, I conducted novice experiments on him, and he, with all the flaws of the relationship he carried as if his limbs were separated to the point of disassembly, did not give up on our shared hour, and neither did I. But even when he arrived, it wasn't he who held the organs of the generations that exist in capsulation and emerge as spirits in the treatment room, accompanying my nights. He, unlike me, could erase, and so he did every meeting. After he filled me with quick and dense words about synagogues burned with their inhabitants, children's swollen and hungry bellies, green potato fields, a circumcision and great joy for his barren sister Pnina who gave birth after fifteen years of infertility and named the son Samuel, and then the war broke out, the babies were taken first. Samuel the prophet, his mother gave up, for the sanctification of God's name, his sister said. And after all these stories, always before he stepped with a heavy step with his back to me, he turned and did not give up on the traditional sentence he said. Lifting his leg before the flat silver strip of the entrance to the treatment room's shelter as if it were a step, turning his gaze to me in slow motion and saying, this time slowly, word not meeting word, 'It's not important, why are you listening to all this, it's not a story of individuals. It's a story of a generation.'

Through Yitzhak Meir, I came to know a Holocaust without resurrection, a kind of Holocaust that is not related to me. I thought then that I was really talented and successful in my omnipotent ability to contain, as an act of altruism. I didn't know my family then as I know it today... Forgive me, my readers, for the misinterpretation, if it had remained alone this case description would not have been worth reading, a description of a young and ignorant therapist. I won't spare you, and in the next paragraph you'll read that I thought Yitzhak Meir was a Holocaust without resurrection and I was with the resurrection,

meeting at the intersection of the Holocaust and parting in the selection, he to death, I to life. Maybe I can teach merit about myself and say like Yitzhak Meir that this is a story of a generation, my generation, generation X, Y, Z, the generation that is diminishing, finishing the letters and after it the flood, disconnected and self-centered simultaneously. But Yitzhak Meir didn't let me stay protected, from him and thanks to him I learned my lesson on the subject of containment – the unconscious speaks to the unconscious and there are no free containments.

Nevertheless, for the sake of honesty, let's return to the consciousness from which I treated Yitzhak Meir. The Holocaust in my family, as I separated it, was a Holocaust with resurrection. From the age of sixteen, I researched and obsessively turned over every stone in the field of my family's Holocaust space like a snake catcher. To know what to ask, I read the Holocaust book cabinet in the school library, in my grandfather's library, and in the city library. I remember that during Book Week in the year of my trip to the camps, I returned with bags full of new Holocaust books that came out that year. I went on the Holocaust trip in 11th grade to photograph my grandfather's house, Grandpa Yitzhak. He left Poland at the age I was when I photographed his house and had not set foot there since. As if he had thus destroyed the land that took that family who sat shiva for him when he left with the pioneering training. On the train, the rich uncle gave him money to buy land in Israel, my grandfather bought books with it. The uncle said to him, "Yitzhak, I think you were right," and he replied, "I think you're too late." "Maybe I exaggerated in my answer, it's good for a person not to know his end," my grandfather told me in one of our conversations on the subject. Then he wiped a tear for the uncle whose money the murderers inherited, and told me, "It's not good to awaken the dead," but I couldn't do otherwise.

The journey to Poland ended with the delegation that was supposed to pass through Lodz, the city of my fathers, not passing through there. My arguments with the tense guide and the Bible teacher Eti who broke her arm didn't help me get to Lodz. The five free hours in the Warsaw market did help. I took a taxi to the gray city and photographed the pants-shaped house at Piotrkowska 88. I returned late and no one knew where the earth had swallowed me. I lied and said I had gotten lost. My grandfather identified the pictures of his house, and called me a personality, and so to this day they call me in my family with humor. When I returned, I told Zeev Degani, the legendary school principal, and he told me that if it doesn't come out, he turns a blind eye. To this day I don't know who snitched to the Bible teacher. The pleas of Shimon Ahara z"l, the great history teacher who educated me, didn't help, she forced the principal and I lost two grades in behavior.

Yitzhak Meir's passive acceptance of the Holocaust was foreign to the family resurrection I knew at that time. With us, we do, we don't sit and cry. There's no time to waste, we need to prove to the Nazis. My grandfather started a family and despite the guilt of the survivors lived a full life, and my grandmother who was a Holocaust survivor herself functioned emotionally better than him and me and was full of action, joy of life and inner fullness more than many non-Holocaust people I knew. Her children would cry at the stage when she told about her parents being taken from home, but I continued to listen to the sound of gunshots heard from inside the house, to the gaze that froze in front of the two bodies, to the moment when she realized that the hand in the snow would no longer embrace and the mouth lost its words. To work in the factory, to the brother who was shot in the ghetto, to the death march and the rape after the war, all these were known to me. And yet, when my grandmother and I sat, after the last time I dragged her to see the sea, she looked at the orange tree visible from the kitchen window where she spent most of her days and said, how the oranges will turn orange and I won't see. I didn't

see at all that there were orange blossoms and only her green eyes showed me the circles that grew to orange and I placed on the soil of her grave instead of flowers.

Yitzhak Meir would always say before he explained his desire for a Holocaust without resurrection, that "A satiated lion sleeps. In the Jewish state there are enough children, mine are not needed" and once he added "and I couldn't." "Did you want to?" I asked. Sometimes we had the same conversation over and over again, week, month, year. He doesn't remember that we talked and I listen to what occupies him without interrupting. Thus, I thought, I am with him in a Holocaust without resurrection, in reconstruction without repair. In alpha materials without processing. "In the streets in the orchards she wanted," he answered, "but before we managed I was hospitalized and those who don't provide for their children are hungry, and hungry children I knew. Not for hunger should one make children." The hungry children arrived and filled the room. Two infant sisters for whom the mother had no milk left in her breast, they didn't have time to scream, they had to be silenced. The child who saw from the forest sneaking to the pasture and drinking milk from the udder. The neighbor's child, the fat one, was the first to go. The girl who stole from the field and a German officer shot her, and then stepped with his boot on her face and spat. "Her hair was yellow like an Aryan's, at first I thought he would come to help her, but when he approached he saw a Jewish nose by the torn clothes, he cursed in German that he just dirtied the boots for nothing, he could have shot her from afar like a rabbit." He added and said, "The children came to pray in the synagogue, it was before the war, I was sick that day, the food was already burned and father didn't return, he remained the father of these children in heaven when the synagogue burned in the pogrom and for me and my five sisters mother remained. To bring hungry children – it's not worth it."

Sometimes he would tell me "There's an advantage and disadvantage in everything. Good and bad in everything." I thought this was a classic sentence to describe the depressive position, and I was surprised then in my arrogance how well he phrased it, for he hadn't read Melanie Klein's writings... It seemed to me that he was translating the words from Yiddish. The comfort in this sentence, round and funny from his mouth, sounded to me as if spoken in a language that had been emptied of its speakers. He would always say the same sentence with the same smile that managed to calm me anew each time, as if consoling me for the fact that I'm hearing stories of another generation, the generation of the desert. Of another family, a family from Holocaust to Holocaust.

My grandmother also wanted to protect me, and said "I wanted to take this (the rape she went through in the Holocaust) to the grave," when I asked her if she had a secret she hadn't told anyone, because I read that you get cancer because of secrets and she had ovarian cancer. I wanted to save them and I didn't succeed. Shame on Ferenczi for the false hope he planted in my wounded heart, for salvation. I was a girl when grandmother's cancer started, she underwent chemotherapy treatments and I slept next to her in the hospital to support her. But once she got up to vomit at twelve at night, didn't want to wake me up and fell. I lifted her from the floor and there was such closeness between us, body to body, the smell of my sleep and the chill of my split dreams mixed with the sound of the air conditioner, my grandmother's vomit and the vapors of cleaning materials from the shower. I said to her "Grandma come" and put my shoulder under her hand. I grabbed the side and with some strength I lifted and when she lay in bed I told her Grandma, it's not your fault. A million and a half he raped, the Holocaust. "You won't tell," she answered. "Scout's honor" I said and she smiled, but after she died, forgive me my grandmother, I told. I didn't want to be like her, sick because of secrets. I remember some words that fell apart from the sentences or that she added afterwards, when she cried that she wanted to take it

with her, to the grave. The things that have shame in them. "He came at night." "I was really like (stressed on the first syllable) a stone." "Blood. Virgin." "Pregnancy. Abortion." "In an apartment of brothers after the death march and when the Germans fled we worked in cleaning, a friend from home, from our shtetl, we gave him a bed. I told him that at least he should marry but he decided - for abortion. It's good this way otherwise you wouldn't be. I wouldn't have compromised on grandpa, he was half a portion." And then she started crying. And I heard for the first time that there is good in bad and that we too are from Holocaust to Holocaust.

Valentine's Day, said Yitzhak Meir as he entered, and the scent of flowers filled the expanses of the connection. You asked once, so here now I'll tell you in answer, "Twenty years after the wedding that was cancelled because I couldn't provide, there was another one, there was once a woman here, Manya." He said. "Manya Boruchovsky. A good friend. Twenty years have passed since she left and I still see her wandering to my room in a nightgown. Hair like yours, yellow and curly, and a nose like yours and mine, French. We would sit together. She would embroider and I would look at her fingers and at the thought she put into the threads she connects. I was a mensch, opening the door for her, pulling out the chair, buying her chocolates and cigarettes. Close." The unknown strikes the known and bypasses logic. I skipped over the name. Coincidence. Surreal. Perhaps my name was mentioned before the wedding and Yitzhak Meir connected what doesn't connect. My father's mother was called Manya Boruchovsky, she died when he was five. It took me a few months during which I was sick twice, and every arrival at the shelter was accompanied by fatigue and a blatant and uncharacteristic lack of desire. I brought up in guidance with Bruckner that I want to leave Beer Yaakov. That I'm tired of all the Holocaust stories, I want to work with children and not with mentally affected people and start living and not be buried in Holocaust stories. I don't know how she did it but Bruckner connected the dots and sent me after the guidance to call my father and for him to give me a photocopy of his ID card and a waiver of confidentiality for the hospital archive. He said it's not worth digging and that 'they murdered my mother there'. The truth destroyed the place of imagination. "It's a pity, we didn't keep a picture," she said, and "The archive burned down. Doctor Weiss, the deputy director, wants to talk to you about what to do with such sensitive information, maybe you should see him first?" "Well, it will only cost you eighty-three shekels, not much left, three pages and a referral for surgery, a medical summary after she returned, yes a common surgery then, lobotomy. Here's another page left but you don't need to pay, it's a few lines of consent from the husband, Meir Boruchovsky who signed consent in Russian."

I left the archive dizzy and called my father. A few words and a lot of silence were enough. My soul was shaken and I thought I had lost my sanity and he vomited and had a high fever for a few days. In meetings with Yitzhak Meir after the unknown became known, I refrained from asking about Manya, but he told about her again and again the same things from that meeting until he passed away a few months later. Perhaps he saw some resemblance between her and me and waited until I was ready to know and then he could part. Yitzhak Meir turned from a stranger to whom I throw a few altruistic coins to a harbinger, who gave me the reason why I insist on coming there, walking unknowingly in the footsteps of my grandmother in an attempt to stitch the lobes into a clear insight. I learned that there are no free containments and no connection without explanation to place and person. There are only landmarks on the way that were lost and there is no other way but to discover them.

*(This story is dedicated to the memory of my father's mother, my grandmother, Manya, whom I did not know, but the injustices of her life seeped into my childhood.)*