The contaminated analyst and transgenerational trauma in Abkhazia après-coup

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic lockdown and restrictions imposed on freedom of movement in Georgia and the economic collapse as a result, evoked psychotic anxieties in society and revived a traumatic not-too-distant past that has not actually been worked through. Fear of an unknown virus and danger has turned into a feeling of war, which was so familiar and constant in the immediate past of Georgian history: the Soviet-Union, the 1991–1993 Civil War, the constant threat of Russia which occupied two regions of Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In this paper, I try to explain how the current traumatic situation in Georgia related to Covid-19 gave après-coup a new meaning to the transgenerational trauma. I presented the material of two of my patients, whose childhood was affected by the war in Abkhazia (1992–1993), the conflict that followed the declaration of independence of Georgia and led to the Russian occupation of its territories. Because of my contamination with Covid-19 in transference–countertransference, the Covid turned into an inner conflict. The need and inevitability of informing patients about my infection caused a countertransference acting out with paranoid-schizoid splitting, projective identifications, unbearable pain and guilt, fear of starvation, and reparation.

KEYWORDS
Abkhazia, contaminated analyst, Covid lockdown, fear of starvation, Georgia, pandemic, paranoid-schizoid splitting, transgenerational trauma après-coup
“The pleasure of personal responsibility to take care of one’s condition and that of those who depend on oneself is an antidote to fear, because it allows one to discover unknown energies and to use them to make oneself and others safe.”

Anna Ferruta, Coronavirus: A Sphinx of Our Time (Ferruta, 2020)

1 INTRODUCTION

Since having started to write this article, to my surprise, I decided to address in my mind all my internal gods who put on a mantle of the psychoanalytic idols I trust. My actions resembled a prayer: “Give me the strength to identify with you, channel to me some of your abilities and make me mentally fertile...” I spoke to them in English, as for me it is a language of psychoanalysis. My personal analysis was conducted in Russian – the language of a country which for me and my Eastern European analyst was historically associated with a permanent threat of totalitarianism as a psychotic organization and invasion that could happen again and again. It has happened repeatedly throughout the history, most recently in 1992–1993 (breaking away two regions of Georgia) and in 2008 (when Russia recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states). However, it used to be the language that made it possible for an analytical process to exist then and there. I wrote the emotional part of this story in Georgian. One of the great gods I spoke to leaned toward me and said: I know about your “urgent need to communicate and the still more urgent need not to be found” (Winnicott, 1963).

Like the rest of the world, Georgia reacted to the first Covid lockdown of spring 2020 with disorientation, panic attacks in the supermarkets, emptying the shelves of pasta and toilet paper. Everyone tried to respond to an invisible threat through regression, swinging “between panic and indifference, catastrophism and skepticism” (Schinaia, 2020). In the new era of queues for medical facial masks (at the beginning of the pandemic) and vaccines (at the beginning of 2021), next to the powerful, rich countries, small and poor Georgia once again appeared at the end of the line. Our economy suffered a huge blow leaving a large share of the population without any income. It was clear that people would not be able to survive on the hope for small amounts of compensation. Georgia switched to a survival mode. Lockdown, restrictions imposed on the freedom of movement and the closed sky started to be associated with the Iron Curtain.¹ The closed borders and airports have revived a constant tension and made it clear that our fragile security could be breached leaving us once again in a state of disaster beyond our control. Fear of an unknown virus and danger turned into a feeling of war, which was so familiar and constant in the immediate past. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, this feeling is permanently present being symbolically represented by the barbed wire that envelopes the occupied territories of Georgia—Abkhazia and South Ossetia—guarded by the Russian soldiers who prevent Georgian people from returning to their homes. Something very precious has been taken away at the expense of survival. The fence and the border turn into biblical Abraham’s knife that hangs above the head of a living child who disappears and gives place to a sheep.

Elliott Jaques was one of the first scholars to note that social phenomena show a striking correspondence with psychotic processes in individuals. Institutions are used by their individual members to reinforce individual mechanisms of defense against anxiety and the mechanisms of projective and introjected identification operate during linking of individual and social behavior (Jaques, 1953, 1995a, 1995b). He argued that the primary cohesive element that binds individuals to institutionalized human association is that of defense against the psychotic anxiety. Projective and introjective processes form the foundation to the most complex social events and happen to be located at the bottom of our dealings with one another (Williams, 2010, p. 115).

In this context I would like to present here material about two of my patients whose childhood was affected by the war in Abkhazia (1992–1993).² The conflict followed the declaration of independence of Georgia and resulted in Russian occupation of its territories. The present traumatic situation related to Covid gave après-coup a new
meaning to the transgenerational trauma in Abkhazia. In the transference, COVID-19 turned into an inner neurotic conflict due to my infection with the virus.

I consider it necessary to mention here the events that followed the breakup of the USSR, when destruction of the customary homeostasis happened through splitting, where the conquering object (Russia) was labeled as "bad" and the conquered freedom-loving countries were proclaimed to be "the good ones" who appeared to become victims of the regime. Now the evil was perceived as an inward phenomenon which exists within one's own boundaries. Aggression justified by a so-called protection of a good object leads part of the society into destructive behavior in the name of a moral imperative. As a result, part of the ego fights for return of the old homeostasis and ascription of the evil to the parts within the new boundaries. Preventing spread of danger contributed to a new split when 20% of the country has been cut off. The Covid era has echoed with old traumas provoking rekindling of a new spiral of tensions and triggering return of old defenses and new attempts to reunite or isolate.

During the lockdown of the spring of 2020, restrictions imposed on personal meetings forced psychoanalysts to find a solution in Skype meetings. However, with improvement of the situation, we were allowed to go back to our offices and work from there. On one of the Mondays when I was working with patients in my consulting room, I received a message that one of the persons I had been in contact with the previous Saturday had been infected by COVID-19 and I needed to quarantine myself. I immediately warned all patients I had seen on Monday about this fact. When response to my test returned "positive", I decided to inform all those that I had seen subsequently. I thought that warning only some of my patients--even though obligatory--and leaving another cluster out of the loop would place them in unequal categories. Therefore, I contacted them and made them all aware of the reason for transferring to the online sessions for the next two weeks. However, even though I had no choice but to tell my patients that I was infected, it would be understood by them as a counter-transference acting out, seduction or threat, as we can see below.

After that the patients were given a choice to continue the sessions in a setting of their liking: online or in a usual mode on a couch.

Patient #1 is a 30-year-old young man who started therapy three years ago because of emotional outbreaks and relationship problems. He believed that maturation—a university diploma, marriage, and having offspring would lead to his death, that is, he would finally lose the opportunity to find the essence of his existence. He imagined himself to be watching the humans from another side of the river but did not want to cross it. He visited me once a week making it clear that he could not afford to pay for two weekly sessions. In reality, this was nothing else than an act of taking a look at me from a safe distance. He could give me exactly as much as was necessary to maintain my existence in survival mode. He was a Georgian refugee from Abkhazia. The question "Hey, who are you, boy?" disclosed his inability to identify with anyone and, maybe, referred to his Oedipal crime. He said: “This is the moment when I get furious, lose balance and control because I don't know myself—who I am. I am an alien here. I don't remember Abkhazia. I have no home.” The patient was two years old when the Georgian army got defeated in Abkhazia and his mother was forced to flee through mountain passes with the baby in her hands. The patient's father, who at that time worked in Russia, had died when the boy was eight years old. Soon after these events the family had lost its house in Tbilisi. However, by the time the patient came to me, he had already managed to become financially stable. He had a fiancée and mentioned her as "his second half." He invested his hopes in her. The patient called his mother several times a day and lost control if she did not hear and respond to the call immediately. The patient was in the process of constructing a house. He was obsessed with the ancient world of the Jews and the Torah principles, of revenge. Over and over, he talked about the return of the promised land and was proud of the Jews, though he never mentioned his personal promised land – Abkhazia. His imagination nourished a frozen image of a cruel father – biblical Abraham who swings a knife at his only child following the orders of God. The image depicted how Abraham's hand is stopped in the air by another message from God. The patient himself was frozen in this moment sharing Isaac's feelings and realization that the father is going to kill him. What can a child feel at times like this? Nothing. His feelings are frozen and recovery from this state means to allow the fear to transit through the soul like a knife. His father traveled to Tbilisi to celebrate the patient's eighth birthday together with the family.
but died of a heart attack on his way home in a Russian train (his body was not found for a long time) which made the patient guilty about what had happened. In parallel, he felt abandoned by him two times: once when he and his mother had to flee Abkhazia alone and for the second time, when the father perished. Emotional petrification that stopped the knife from hitting the patient’s heart, as well as his personal grief over the loss of a parent, got mixed up in his head in a vague and frightening manner. He killed and revived me from one session to another in a fatherly transference establishing in this way control over his fears.

After three years of therapy, his Judaic schizo-paranoid universe started to retreat: “One of my uncles who is a very religious Christian told me, that I haven’t managed to reach the level of Christianity where revenge is replaced by justice. The way it works in Christianity is: if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. According to the Torah: If the enemy kills one of your sheep, you are allowed to destroy his entire flock.” His grandiose fantasies welcomed a new figure – a German pilot, a descendant of a former SS officer, who inherited an orderly and reliable character. His fantasies introduced an image of a dependable male, whose aircraft would never go down. He was not afraid of flying anymore and informed me about how he started to cross the imaginary river. According to him, he tried to walk on the ice which seemed to be thick enough not to break under his feet. It could not have been the Psou – a river at the border of Abkhazia as it never gets frozen. It had to be some great Russian river with a strong and reliable ice surface that was connected to his father.

When I recovered from Covid-19 and returned to work, the patient did not attend the session in person. He connected via Skype and seemed to be very scared. His screen was shaking so much that I told him in my opinion he turned into a Spiderman who was running up and down the walls. He said: “Ever since you contracted the disease you became a mutant.” In his imagination, I developed myself into a major alien from the film X-Men; the one who could penetrate other people’s thoughts. He told me about his favorite childhood movie X-Men in which the abandoned parentless children were turned into mutants and awarded unnatural power. The patient was the one, who while being angry, could shoot out knives from his hands. He manifested a reborn, omnipotent narcissism—a state, thanks to which, he was able to continue attending the face-to-face sessions at the same time taking extreme precautions against infection.

“In psychoanalysis we can see, that that current fantasies of a person which represent a way to solve present conflicts, more or less are impregnated by primitive fantasies, which at the time represented solution of early developmental conflicts. For example, paranoid fantasies that arise in response to real danger are based on early concerns about security issues. These archaic fantasies determine our character, goals and behavior, even violence…” (Campbell, 2011, p. 7)

The patient shared a dream in which he looked out of a window of an unfamiliar house. He saw two doctors entering a house on the other side of the street. They were dressed in Covid suits and were holding cases. One of them wore a blue and another one a white gown. The patient was trying to hide from the scary doctors. His associations were focused on the doctor in the blue gown whose case displayed a sign: “Danger. Radiation.” This was a poisoning KGB agent, a scary mutant physician who was going to kill. In parallel, the patient has faith in the therapist who in his dream is represented by a doctor in a white gown.

The patient worked in a field that has been affected by the lockdown. His savings gradually dwindled down to a dangerous threshold. It was not clear if he would be able to manage his life with the remaining amount until the lifting of restrictions. He compared himself to a drowning man from the picture hanging above my armchair. I thought about a way out of the situation: to offer him postponement of payment and elaboration of a specific schedule versus waiting until he suggested something on his own. I told him there was an option to postpone the payment in case the isolation continued. He stayed silent. It was December 22, the anniversary of a civil war followed by the breaking away of Abkhazia – a huge trauma in the contemporary history of the country. The patient told me about a photo that was disseminated on social media the day before. Reaction to the photo was overwhelming. It depicted a father and a boy, both whose faces were desperate and scared—two slum dwellers who watched the demolishing of the illegal housing of their neighbors. It was horrible to see the despair of the father, who suffering from the same fate, would not have been able to protect the small boy that was clinging to his
hand. Reaction to the photo was so overwhelming that the mayor of the city decided to give the family an apartment.

Since humans began to engage in agriculture, Earth became a breastfeeding mother, literally and symbolically, representing life (fertility) and death (starvation). However, the symbol of motherland is often a woman with a sword in her hands—a phallic figure, not a feeding woman. The motherland, in need of protection, turns into a bad archaic maternal object—a ruthless Goddess, pushing for castration by a narcissistic father of the Oedipal triangle. The patriarch with a knife turned into a matriarch. The only possibility of avoiding castration is the recognition of a totalitarian psychotic organization. Here, the mother-goddess lowered her sword and took pity.

We talked about the fact that people were too shocked precisely because of the masterful shooting of the picture. During the session, the patient recalled the story of how he left Abkhazia. This was the first time I heard and felt what happened to his mother when she decided to follow a stream of people running away from her house with a child in her arms while meeting an unexpected September snow. The weakened and frozen people were robbed along the way. The mother occasionally came across the bodies of her frozen neighbors. She had gotten lost on the way, and it was not until the ninth day that she reached the city where his mother and her child were given a small portion of food. When a female relative saw them alive she started to scream.

I told the patient that, in my opinion, he was rejecting my offer to postpone the payment because of being afraid that I would die of hunger along the way, like this could have happened to his fugitive mother in case they did not share food on the way out of Abkhazia. He was scared, in that case, I would not be able to rescue him. He did not say a word about this, and after the session was over transferred the payment as usual.

The next day while getting ready to leave for work, I accidentally discovered that it was one hour too early. It was still dark, and I understood what happened. It was December 23, the second day of the Tbilisi war. I decided to use an extra hour and lay down again. Step by step, an unbearable pain crawled into my heart as if a sorrow started to take it apart. But I completely allowed it in, trying to combat the feeling. I knew that it would pass and leave me without being killed. I would go to work and manage to do my job. Twenty-eight years earlier on the second day of the war my husband, “my second half” had been killed in street battles; that morning, I felt the same fear. I managed to stop the pain then but there was nothing that could have erased it. Pain of all those who survived but were left with frozen hearts. Now I reached out once again to my gods. This time, these were the goddesses I am connected to through emotional bridges which give me the feeling of unity and strength behind the nets and barbed wire to overcome emotional storms during the Covid loneliness.

One day the patient told me that the bank took all the money he had in his account. The patient: “...I don’t know what to say, or where to start, but... That was not necessary. But they lost (he refers to his beloved football team). This is what always happens. I know why they lost. It could not have happened otherwise. It always overlaps with my mood. Later I found an Israeli series about Mossad and started to watch it. They are not much different than the terrorists. At the end of the movie the Mossad agent stays alive and this is the most important thing to happen. The truth about right and wrong is lost. No one is interested in it anymore. Mossad is immortal, but its agents are not any different than the terrorists.” This meant that he did not have any more bread he would be able to share with me and he was forced to treat me like a terrorist. Following the talk, I told him that I would not charge him as in order to continue my existence as a therapist I needed not to “lose” patients when they were left without financial recourse because of a situation beyond their control (i.e., the pandemic). This was the reason why I could make an exception which was not against the rules. He would have to start paying for the treatment after a certain period. The patient asked about what I meant by that and agreed.

The patient: “It is interesting that a German pilot disappeared. I can’t explain that. Can you? It’s weird. Why did Israel and Mossad come back again?” Israel is associated for him with a schizo-paranoid universe. A retreat protects him from a fear of annihilation. He becomes Mossad simply to survive.

Later the patient told me about a dream in which he suffered because of a wounded bleeding thigh and went from one hospital to another to ask the doctors for help. But he had neither the money nor insurance. He continued to look for a hospital where his insurance would have been acknowledged as being valid. He was bleeding from his
narcissistic wound. I explained to him that this dream might have been connected to the sessions he did not pay for as he did not have insurance. Associations of the patient focused on Bruce Willis and his character in the movie Die Hard where he walks around in a wounded and bleeding state but finally still celebrates a victory. “My mother is a really tough one,” – he said. The same life path repeated itself in the transference relation with me. We were still far from the rescuing border at the river Psou.

Patient #2 is a 35-year-old woman in her sixth year of treatment. She attends sessions four times a week and consults me for a variety of problems: panic attacks, issues connected to her love and family relationships, fantasies of self-injuring. Since her clinical history is long and complicated, I will omit this part except for the period when I informed her about contracting Covid in October, 2020. Her childhood was marked by a tragic incident. When she was six, her mother’s parents were tortured and shot in front of their house by a group of Abkhazian looters. The patient’s mother lost her parents, their graves, and all her family property there. Soon after, the patient’s parents divorced because of her father’s love affair with a woman he married afterwards. As a result, the mother suffered severe depression and was treated with antidepressants. During and after the war turmoil occurred, which left the family in poverty, and the father rarely visited or supported the patient and her younger sister. However, as a child, the patient still perceived her father and his new family as a beam of the light that could take her away from a hopeless and uncomfortable world and secure prosperity and a carefree life. She was tortured by guilt toward her mother as she idealized his second family which provided her with a narcissistic balance. As a grown-up, she rebelled against her father and blamed him for leaving them in misery. After four years of treatment, the patient got married to a dependable loving man and gave birth to a baby. She was afraid that her female happiness would end as abruptly as it happened in her childhood, and hoped she would not become an unhappy woman like her mother. To get rid of her harsh superego, she tormented herself with masochistic fantasies. After the spread of the pandemic, the patient became very anxious, as the universal invisible danger connected to the war from her childhood left her with feelings of death and loss.

When I informed her about me being sick with Covid, she got scared and angry with me. She said: "In case of your death, everything that has been achieved as a result of analysis will stay unfinished and I will have to live with my fears forever." Her childhood memories about the mother’s tragedy left her emotionally bound to the mother’s depression. “It is strange, but I have a feeling that maybe because of you I also wanted to contract Covid. It is so weird… Sometimes I think that if you had it, I must have it too. This is how I feel. As if we should share the same fate.” When she was a little girl, her vivid mother turned into a black mourning woman who lost her husband. The patient’s guilt toward me repeated her guilt toward the mother. Contamination would lead to her redemption. She had a dream about adultery. In her mind, COVID appeared as a castration related to the desires of adultery. She needed me as a mother figure, however my coach seemed to become a dangerous place in this regard.

When I went back to my consulting office after the quarantine, she started calling me on the phone. Some time later, she requested of me to move to Skype sessions instead. According to her, it was different than the phone communication which she saw more as an imitation. The Skype calls felt more like the real sessions. It sounded like an unsatisfactory relationship of a mother and a child in the transference. She said that there were many people around her who contracted the virus. Some of them died. In my consulting office, she was able to touch this danger in the transference. “As if something was stopped after Abkhazia but took a new start once again…” The patient lost her old paternal grandmother to death. This was the first death of a relative that she witnessed. Passing of an old woman in a natural way gave après-coup a new meaning to her childhood trauma: “Our family suffered a great tragedy, which I thought would suffice for the rest of our lifetimes… All this pain was over. It stopped in my mind. But now everything starts from the very beginning—people die.” On my coach she experienced this process in the transference. This is what made the transference somehow even more dangerous than a virus. She read all world news, talked to me about the local dramatic events, mentioned the facts that hospitals were overcrowded, emergency vehicles came too late, taxis could be contagious, and she had gotten tested when she had fever. “Everything is mixed up now. It is difficult to differentiate between the flu and Covid.”
On the other hand, the patient realized that people acted differently in relation to the pandemic. She tried to be optimistic to deal with depression. “Some people are indifferent towards COVID; some are even more concerned than I am. And I think that years pass by, my life runs away, and it is stupid to be nervous because of the pandemic.” The patient reversed back to my image from the very beginning of the treatment when she thought of me as a strict archaic mother figure from the schizo-paranoid world, who governed her destiny. She would have been glad to have established total control on her thoughts like one exercises over the virus in China, but it was an impossible task to realize. She started complaining that her sexual libido became weak: “It is very bad that couples are affected by problems as such. What do you think about that?” By saying this she referred to our analytical couple in the transference. She stopped thinking and asked me to think instead of her as this was what she was paying me for. She herself was only able to think about superficial things like a haircut or correcting her eyebrows, and skin care products. She was pretty and her narcissistic gloss allowed her to move toward the surface of her father’s world to get liberated from the depths of her mother’s depression. “Several of my friends are pregnant now,” – she said.

COVID and pregnancy became synonyms. The patient’s next dream demonstrated her fear of intrusion, conflict between Ego and Id: a maniac dentist sent her to a sexy doctor to drill a tooth channel. “This clinic resembled an old Soviet psychiatric ward, where people were tortured to make them mad.” The primal scene for her became a mad disheveled woman in a nightgown escaping from the terrorist-guards who followed her to capture and torture her. “I am scared to death of a tooth filling procedure. I know that it will not be a painful process, but still.” This was about the remembering of pain in the transference. Her fear of Corona turned into a fear of penetration by interpretations; there emerged fear of the homosexual transference with me.

**Analyst:** You are afraid of being driven crazy because of the pain. You want to avoid drilling and spend your time on the couch instead.

**Patient:** Definitely (she thinks). I am thinking of the binding straps in the operation rooms. All movies tell the same story of a person who is tied up to drive her crazy.

**Analyst:** Well, if you don’t come to me, I will not be able to tie you up here on my couch.

**Patient:** I am scared of every act which may happen against my will. I hate it when someone compels me to do something...

The patient was talking about the danger of re-infection; her past traumatic history and the bedridden mother with closed eyes, which were enacted there and then. Most of the lockdown, the patient spent lying in bed dressed in a gown. Despite being passive she was able to take care of her child, however, not without the help of a nanny. “I think, I need better romantic treatment from my husband: some surprises and presents. Fridays are quite boring nowadays (separation anxiety during the weekends). We are not having fun the way we used to. We are not laughing much either. We are in constant need of relaxation as we are experiencing tension all the time.”

She worked online from her bedroom and made long job-related phone calls. In the meantime, the analytical process turned into something “half dead” -- the sessions were not giving insight any more. The patient started to miss the meetings, called me too late, answered other calls during the sessions: “I can’t ignore a call from my boss. It is impossible to refuse him; he will not understand.” The boss was kind of a father who demanded absolute devotion. In regression, the patient returned to her father’s archaic image and dreamt of him as Hitler. On several occasions, in the middle of our session, her son woke up in his room and began crying and calling for his mother. She left me to comfort him. In the transference, it was the same as when I would have emotionally abandoned her in times of danger. “Poor kid, my son does not understand what Covid is. Sometimes he thinks that it is hiding in a glass of water -- sometimes, for him, it is sitting on the buttons of an elevator. A child does
not understand what makes his mother cry, or why she suddenly feels unhappy. Covid is a destiny, a punishing Superego."

It was a usual Skype session. The patient was alone and depressed. She continued to talk about her friend's baby who died because the doctors could not help her. She asked me: "Why do little children die? Why should a mother suffer the death of her offspring?" At that moment, the question sounded like a riddle of a sphinx to me. The patient demanded the answer, the interaction from me. There was silence. One could only hear squeaks and strange noises which came from her empty apartment through the computer. These noises reminded me of the play "Mitra," in which an Iranian psychoanalyst writes Dr. Miller letters about her being harassed by intelligence agents and asks for help. Her neighbors declare her to be mad, refer to her strange behavior and ceaseless irritation because of a noisy child who walks around in the flat above hers. According to neighbors, the child is an imaginary one. In the play, Mitra's cries of distress are translated into music intertwining reality, madness, and sexual excitement. I had a fantasy that some invisible souls were moving around the patient's house making the noise.

Patient: "It is so nice to be alone. It is not a good thing to say that. As soon as I say something like this, I immediately feel scared that I will get punished and end up as a lonely person because of these thoughts." A person who is left alone is bothered by the sounds of the past, they follow her and persecute.

She starts talking about an impressive image from a movie where a three-year-old girl whose mother died covers her still warm body with a blanket to prevent it from getting cold. I was stunned by the efforts of the patient to wake me up. My eyes opened. I used that film to interpret the transference and see my counter-transference reactions as an impressive image of a dead mother, as I had felt during the last sessions.

Analyst: What does this three-year-old child do? She tries to control the warmth of her caretaker. She wants to make her alive again in her fantasies in order not to stay alone. This is her way to control her own fears. She becomes her mother.

Patient: I need to be well. I must be able to get pleasure from everything I have. My friend A has severe depression. She is skinny and her daughter sees that. Despite the fact, that A lives together with her mother, the mother does not realize that the daughter is depressed and needs help.

Analyst: A is kind of a dead mother. You asked me why is it that little children die. You asked me: What does the mother do wrong? Maybe the mother's fault is that she left the child alone; it has gotten very angry and killed herself for revenge? Maybe I too was a dead mother as I didn't hear your question. Like it happened during the previous session.

Patient: I turned on the music and started to dance with my child. My stepmother did this quite often. She listened to music starting from the morning. My mother never did that.

After several sessions, the patient told me about the new series where a young nanny is hired by a family to take care of a doll instead of a child who died. The mother forgot a baby in a car seat and he choked. The nanny replaces the doll with a real child. It was a sign that the instinct for life had returned which was a painful process. She remembers the story of her mother forgetting her at the seashore. When she returned, the girl was sitting the same way and at the same spot where she was left. She entertained herself with throwing pebbles in the water, which reminded me of the "Fort-da game." It refers to a repetition of abandoning and returning: Throwing away of an object so that it was "gone" might satisfy an impulse of the child, which was suppressed in his actual life, to revenge himself on his mother for going away from him. In that case, it would have a defiant meaning: "All right, then, go away! I don't need you. I'm sending you away myself... This, then, was the complete game – disappearance and return. As a rule, one only witnessed its first act, which was repeated untiringly as a game in itself, though there is no doubt that the greater pleasure was attached to the second act" (Freud, 1920).
When a child throws a pebble into the water, he assumes that it will come back to him again.

Was man nicht erfliegen kann, muss man erhinken.

Die Schrift sagt, es ist keine Sünde zu hinken.4

... Again, Georgia on my mind.

2 | SUMMARY

In this paper, I tried to describe how the current traumatic situation in Georgia related to Covid-19 gave aprèscoup a new meaning to the transgenerational trauma. Regarding this situation, I presented the material of two of my patients, whose childhood was affected by the war in Abkhazia. There are three levels in this paper:

1. The social Apocalypse and the reactivation of the traumatic past that has not really been worked through. The threat from abroad (Russia), longing for Western Europe and disappointment.

2. Life/psychoanalysis goes on: the pandemic, and an economic collapse as a result, have evoked psychotic anxieties in the society, triggering omnipotent defenses and aggression, paranoid-schizoid splitting, the depressive position and then again: unbearable pain, guilt, and reparation.

3. The threatening collapse when the analyst got infected: the inevitability of informing patients about my infection triggered counter-transference acting out, seduction or threat, unbearable pain, fear of mutual starvation, envy, and paranoia.

ENDNOTES

1 An imagined barrier separating the former Soviet bloc and the West prior to 1989.

2 A total of 13,000–20,000 ethnic Georgians and approximately 3000 Abkhaz were reported killed, more than 250,000 Georgians became internally displaced or refugees and 2000 are considered missing during the Russian Georgian War in Abkhazia (1992–1993).

3 Dramaturgy by Isabelle Dumont (Belgium); Dr. Jacques-Alain Miller tries to free his Iranian colleague from a psychiatric hospital in Teheran. The play presents a genuine cry from the depths of imprisonment and isolation.

4 The last lines of “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”- “What we cannot reach flying we must reach limping” by Rückert of one of the Maqâmât of al-Hariri, p.63.

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