

**After the Violence:
The Internal World and Linking Objects of a Refugee Family**

By

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There are numerous variables to consider when speaking of the immigrant experience. One factor to take into account is the amount of choice an individual has in the immigration process. Levels of dislocation appear on a spectrum, ranging from forced immigration, associated with violence, to voluntary immigration, associated with the hope of finding a better life. Newcomers also differ in respect to their ages, their internal psychological organizations, and the support systems that are available to them. In addition, the unconscious fantasies that are linked to traumatic events vary from one individual to another (Parens, 2001).

The following presentation describes the drastic effects that forced migration has on refugees' identities and explores their difficulty in mourning. In order to illustrate the aftermath of forced migration, I will describe the internal world of members of a refugee family who were driven out of their homes after massive ethnic violence. It took nine years from the time of their dislocation experience for them to be able to "re-libidinalize" their self-representations. The re-libidinalization process allowed them to resolve their sense of helplessness and humiliation. After working through these feelings, they could tame the derivatives of their aggression, bring the mourning process to a practical end, and improve their abilities to test reality and adapt to their new environment. During the course of my presentation, I will especially focus on their utilization of *linking objects* as one expression of their difficulty in mourning.

A Brief Review of the Psychoanalytic Literature on Immigrants

Psychoanalysts have not extensively studied the psychology of immigrants and refugees. This is surprising given that many psychoanalysts, especially in North and South America, were immigrants themselves after World War II. There are exceptions of course (see for example Ticho, 1971; Garza-Guerrero, 1974; Volkan, 1979; Grinberg and Grinberg, 1989; Wangh, 1992; Akhtar, 1999; Parens, 2001). Most of these studies depict emigration as a traumatic experience. The trauma is of course more likely and more severe in cases of forced immigration. The aforementioned immigrant studies explored various types of anxiety, “culture shock” (Ticho, 1971; Garza-Guerrero, 1974), and guilt, as well as the mourning encountered during and after dislocation.

Initially, an immigrant experiences anxiety and “culture shock” due to the sudden change from an “average expectable environment”—as described by Hartmann (1939)—to a strange and unpredictable one. Most often, he or she activates a fantasy that the past, the time before the immigration and the violence, contained all “good” self-images coupled with gratifying internal links to “good” object images. When the reality of dislocation begins to set in, such positive images are felt to be missing. At this point, the immigrant feels disconnected from his or her “good” self and object images and experiences an internal discontinuity.

Anxiety and culture shock are accompanied by feelings of guilt over the loss of what was left behind. Following Kleinian terminology, Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) describe how the guilt an immigrant or refugee suffers from may be “depressive” or “persecutory.” The immigrant or refugee who has “depressive” guilt can recognize the loss of his or her past life intrapsychically, can acknowledge pain, and can exhibit sorrow and nostalgia. He or she can also discriminate between past and present and develop perspective on the future. The immigrant or refugee with “depressive” guilt is better equipped to go through the mourning process and adjust to a new life.

On the other hand, when the guilt is “persecutory,” the individual driven by it expects internal punishment and his or her principal emotions are “resentment, pain, fear, and self-reproach” (Grinberg,

1992, p. 79). Such an individual will have a complicated “work of mourning” (Freud, 1917). In cases of forced immigration following violence, the individual’s own psychological organization—even if it is cohesive—generates more “persecutory” guilt than may be found in the individual who immigrates by choice. The refugee’s guilt is reinforced by the knowledge that family and friends remain in danger even after he or she is in relative safety. If either the immigrant or the refugee faces discrimination within the “host” society, there then becomes a correlation between internal expectations of punishment and ill treatment in the external environment. Thus, persecutory anxieties are kept alive and/or may be rekindled as demonstrated by Wangh (1992).

If the dislocated person still feels accepted in the country or region left behind, upon completion of mourning, he or she may possess a genuine sense of biculturalism, a sense of belonging to neither culture at the exclusion of the other. In fact, he or she will belong “totally to both” (Julius, 1992, p. 56). This coexistent cultural identity reflects a constructive adaptation. Writing about his own experiences, Julius, who is Greek-American, states:

I slowly came to an appreciation of the importance of intrapsychic cultural complementarity and, more significantly, to an acceptance of the vast cultural differences of the two countries [Greece and the United States]. I began to accept certain psychological paradoxes and to feel myself truly bicultural (Julius, 1992, p.56).

Akhtar (1999) presents a new theoretical conceptualization regarding the adaptation of an immigrant. He calls it “the third individuation,” which occurs after the first one in childhood and the second one in adolescence. Originally described by Mahler (1968), the separation-individuation process and the first individuation is completed by a young child, for practical purposes, around the age of 36 months. Blos (1979) characterized the second individuation as the time when an adolescent undergoes an obligatory regression and reexamines and modifies his or her emotional investment in childhood self and object images. According to Akhtar, an immigrant must go through a third individuation to successfully adapt.

Many determinants complicate the first and second individuations, and the same is true for the

third individuation. Factors such as forced dislocation accompanied by violence and survival guilt add to the complexity of the third individuation. I (Volkan, 1993) suggest that many refugees, who are subjected to life-threatening violence at the time of exile, cannot fully adapt, or in Akhtar's words, achieve a third individuation. Instead they became what I call “perennial mourners” who chronically and exaggeratedly utilize linking objects. The members of the family who I will describe here were perennial mourners during their first nine years in their new environment.

Perennial Mourners and Linking Objects

Mourning is an inevitable reaction to the actual loss of or the threat of losing meaningful objects. This subject has been studied considerably in our literature. In this part of the presentation, I will only concentrate on the adult type of mourning and focus on a prototypical example of loss—the loss of a family member to death—in order to explain perennial mourning and linking objects. My later discussion of the refugee family will apply these two concepts but will include other types of loss that refugees often experience.

When a loved one dies, an adult goes through various phases of mourning, which can be divided into two categories (Pollock, 1989; Volkan, 1981): (1) the *initial* mourning and (2) the work of mourning. The *initial* mourning includes responses such as denial, shock, bargaining, pain, and anger, which eventually lead to the beginning of an emotional “knowledge” that the deceased is gone forever. Under normal circumstances, the initial mourning process lasts for about three or four months. Before it is completed, however, the “work of mourning” (Freud, 1917) begins. This second category of mourning involves a slow process of revisiting, reviewing, and transforming the mourner’s emotional investment in the mental representation of the lost object. In other words, the work of mourning refers to an internal encounter, and its effects, between the images of the lost object and the corresponding self-images of the

mourner. There are three major avenues (or a combination of them) that the work of mourning can follow: “normal” mourning, depression (melancholia), or perennial mourning.

1. “Normal” mourning: After the initial acute grief, mourners examine a host of different images of the deceased. Slowly, within a year or so, they tame the influence of these images on their self-representations. The mourner no longer utilizes these images as if they would still respond to his or her wishes or perform certain tasks for the mourner. Tähkä (1993) states that the images of the lost object eventually become “futureless.” The “normal” mourning comes to a practical end after the mourner experiences the anniversaries of meaningful events without the deceased (or lost person or thing). Only during certain occasions, such as the annual observance of the death, religious holidays, weddings, or other funerals, do the mental images of the deceased become temporarily “hot” again. A significant aspect of the “normal” mourning process is the mourner’s selective and unconscious identification with certain enriching functions of the lost object. This, of course, influences the mourner’s existing self-representation and modifies his or her sense of identity and ego functions to a certain degree. A young man who had been a rather irresponsible person before the loss of his father, for example, can become a serious businessman like the deceased. After “normal” mourning—a painful process—we enrich ourselves. In a sense, “loss” is balanced with “gain” and changes occur in our identities and ego functions.

2. Depression (melancholia): If an adult had a complicated and ambivalent (love or hate) relationship with the now deceased, he or she ends up identifying *totally* (Ritvo and Solnit, 1958) with the mental representation of the lost object. In simple terms, we can say that the mourner makes “unhealthy, not enriching” identifications with the images of the deceased, who was both loved and hated. The struggle that the mourner had with the one who is lost now becomes an internal struggle between him or her and the mental representation of the deceased. Such a mourner’s internal world becomes a battleground. The mourner wants, unconsciously, to destroy (hate) the lost object’s representation and feels guilty. At the same time, the mourner feels obliged to hold onto (love) it because he or she still feels

dependent on the representation of the lost object, as if it still has a “future.” The mourner experiences depression (melancholia) and may even become suicidal due to the guilt and self-punishment that arise from his or her wish to destroy the mental representation of the lost object. He or she also feels exhausted and withdrawn from the external world because of the constant inner struggle between these competing processes.

We have known about the two avenues above since Freud’s (1917) work, *Mourning and Melancholia*. A third avenue has been much less studied and was the arena of my research during the 1970s and 1980s (Volkan, 1981; Volkan and Zintl, 1993). In this presentation I will concentrate on this third avenue, perennial mourning.

3. Perennial mourning: Some individuals are involved in psychological processes that lead them to postpone completion of their “normal” mourning process or prevent them from evolving melancholia. In a sense, these individuals put the deceased person’s mental representation in an envelope (in the old days, we technically called such an envelope an *introject*) and carry this envelope in their minds. They have an illusion that the deceased’s images in this envelope can be brought back to life. However, if the envelope is never opened, the deceased stays “dead.” An introject is an “object-image” that strives to be assimilated into the mourner’s self-representation. This assimilation (identification) does not actually occur, but the introject remains as a specific object-image that constantly relates to and stimulates the mourner’s corresponding self-image. I have seen some individuals who actually conduct conversations with their introjects as they drive to work, for example. Even when it appears on the surface as if such individuals suffer from hallucinations or delusions, in fact they are not suffering from a full-blown psychosis; they are simply perennial mourners.

It is the adult perennial mourners who chronically utilize linking objects. A linking object is a tangible, externalized version of the introject, a mental meeting point between the mental representation of the deceased and the corresponding self-image of the mourner. When I began my research on complex mourning processes, I noted that many individuals who suffered from complications of losing someone

“symbolize certain objects which belonged to the dead one,” and how “through this process, they are able to control a tie with him” (Volkan, 1970, p. 242). There were other clinicians who had also briefly mentioned such objects, but none of us had studied their meanings carefully. I became intrigued by these objects. One of my patients would isolate himself in a room with a photograph of his dead father and look at it closely until he began to feel that his father was coming back to life toward him through the frame. Another patient was attached to the clothing of his brother, who had been shot and killed in a holdup, for eight years. He was obsessed with the idea that he would grow to a point where these garments would fit him. Still another patient kept his deceased father’s dirty handkerchief and treated it as if it were the most important thing on earth.

In a 1972 publication, I coined the term “linking objects” to describe these symbolic items and began to examine them descriptively and theoretically. A wide variety of items could be described as linking objects. I have seen the following used as such.

1. Personal possession of the deceased: One kind of linking object is a personal possession of the deceased, often something he or she used routinely or wore on his or her person, like a watch. Usually the mourner chooses an item that requires repairs. For example, if a watch is chosen, it is most likely broken. The mourner becomes preoccupied with fixing it, but he or she never finds the time to have the watch repaired. It stays in a state of limbo, if you will, between being repaired and being broken.

2. Gift or symbolic farewell note: Another type of linking object is a gift or a symbolic farewell note to the mourner from the deceased before his or her death, such as something a husband gave his wife before perishing in an accident, or a letter from a war zone written by a soldier before he is killed.

3. Something the deceased used to extend his/her senses or body functions:
Also seen is something the deceased used to extend his or her senses or bodily functions, such as a camera (an extension of seeing). Again, the mourner has a tendency to choose a broken camera rather than an operating one as a linking object.

4. Realistic or symbolic representation of the deceased:

A mourner often chooses a realistic representation of the deceased, the simplest being a photograph. A symbolic representation might be used instead, such as an identification bracelet.

5. “Last-minute object”: Some mourners become attached to an object that was at hand when the mourner first learned of the death or saw the deceased’s body — what could be considered a “last minute object.” For example, a patient was about to play a stack of his favorite records when the phone rang with the news that his half-brother had drowned. The records became his “last minute objects.” Telegrams received by relatives from the military informing them of the death of a son or husband also serve as “last minute objects.”

6. Created linking objects: Finally, mourners may also *create* linking objects that did not exist before the loss. For example, the mourner paints his or her memories of the deceased and the painting becomes a linking object.

I also observed in my patients what I call *linking phenomena*: sensations, songs, and behavior patterns that perpetuate the possibility of contact between the mourner and the one he or she mourns, without reference to anything tangible. One example of linking phenomena involves a young woman whose father had committed suicide by shooting himself in the head. While attending her father’s funeral, the young woman stood in the rain. The song “Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head” came into her mind during the funeral, and this song functioned as her linking phenomenon for years.

Slowly, I came to understand that the linking object is more than a simple symbol. A symbol is something that represents something else. Linking objects, on the other hand, are protosymbols (Werner and Kaplan, 1963) or at least an amalgamation of symbols and protosymbols. In other words, for mourners, linking objects essentially become what they represent. Unconsciously these linking objects, or protosymbols, are an “actual” meeting place between the mourner and the dead.

To understand the function of linking objects, I will give you a brief clinical vignette. A woman in her early 30s named Judith devoted herself to caring for her ill mother. Judith had not achieved a full

separation-individuation in her childhood. During her mother's illness, which lasted for years, Judith became almost like a slave to her mother. She slept in her mother's room, responding to the sick woman's every demand. Once, a few months before her mother died, Judith took a short vacation, during which she bought a pink nightgown. When she returned home, her mother ordered Judith to give the nightgown to her. The daughter was obliged, and soon after, the older woman died while wearing the pink nightgown. After the funeral Judith took the nightgown, put it in a paper shopping bag, and tightly twisted the bag so that the garment was secure inside. The nightgown became her linking object.

Judith was preoccupied with her linking object for the next two years. She had to know where the nightgown was at all times (usually in a closet), and it had to be under her control. When Judith became my patient I learned that she had an illusion. She believed that if she opened the bag, her dead mother would come back to life. She could not get rid of the nightgown, because such an action would mean that she would be "killing" her mother. Thus, she kept control over her linking object, which externalized and froze her mourning process.

When I wrote a great deal about linking objects in the 1980s, I naturally focused on their pathological aspects. After all, I was observing them among patients experiencing complicated mourning. Over time I became aware of the "progressive" or beneficial aspects of these items. While linking objects are utilized to postpone and freeze the mourning process, they can also be employed to initiate future mourning. When circumstances are right, the mourner may go back, if you will, to his or her linking object, internalize its function, and begin his or her mourning process as if the loss had just happened. For example, a woman had a daughter who died in a car accident when a college student. This woman kept her daughter's bedroom unchanged as a linking object for twelve years. The daughter's bedroom was locked except on Saturdays. The daughter, when alive, attended college in a nearby city and would return home on Saturdays. She was killed while driving home on a Saturday. After her death, her mother would open the deceased girl's bedroom door on Saturdays and clean the room. During the rest of the week, the room would remain a locked-up "secret."

Twelve years after her daughter's death, the woman was driving on a highway and saw a number of people gathered around a smashed car. She stopped to see what had happened, and saw two dead individuals in the crashed car. She later recalled thinking at the time, "Yes, there is such a thing as death. Death is a reality." After this incident, the woman allowed herself to grieve over her dead child, particularly by using the linking object, her daughter's "magical room." She opened the door of the room, went in, and for many weeks recalled images of her daughter and cried. Slowly she removed the furniture and gave away the daughter's clothes. After experiencing an acute grief, she initiated a successful work of mourning and the room lost its "magic."

Now that I have described how individuals use linking objects or phenomena after the death of their loved ones, I can turn my attention to the internal world of a refugee family, the Kachavara family, and describe their various types of losses, including aspects of their identities. I will also discuss their mourning process, which I identify as perennial mourning, including their creation of linking objects and phenomenon. Finally, I will describe their eventual adaptation to dislocation. The Kachavara family is Georgian, and I will begin their story by explaining the events that forced them to become immigrants.

Events in the Republic of Georgia

The Republic of Georgia, with a population of 5.3 million, is located in the Caucasus region.



When the Soviet Empire began to collapse, Georgia broke away and declared its sovereignty on March 9, 1990. They then adopted a declaration of independence a year later on April 9, 1991. Georgia's independence was followed not only by conflict amongst Georgians themselves, but also between other groups within the state's boundaries. Discord arose between Georgians and South Ossetians as well as between Georgians and Abkhazians. Abkhazia and South Ossetia are within the legal boundaries of the Republic of Georgia; both declared themselves "independent."

The Kachavara family lived in Gagra in Abkhazia. When the war broke out between Abkhazians and Georgians, the family moved to a former resort location called Tbilisi Sea, on the outskirts of Tbilisi, the capital of the Republic of Georgia. Officially, they are not called "refugees" but "internally displaced people," (IDPs) since they migrated from one location within the legal boundaries of a state to another within the same state. They are also among Georgians, their own ethnic group.

There are 300,000 internally displaced persons in Georgia today. They have been living as IDPs for the last nine years.

The local Georgian sentiments toward IDPs, even if they are Georgians themselves, is that "refugees should go home." The IDPs felt that they were being discriminated against by the locals, despite the fact that the locals were fellow Georgians. IDP children go to school in the late afternoon, after the local Georgian children have left the school for home. Thus, segregation is practiced in the schools.

Of the 300,000 IDPs, 3,000 of them have been living at Tbilisi Sea for the last nine years. Tbilisi Sea consists of three once-luxurious hotels surrounding a man-made lake. One of these hotels is called “Okros Satsmisi” (“Golden Fleece”). This former luxury hotel looks as though it has been hit by a devastating tornado; some walls have been obliterated, windows are covered by plywood or plastic sheets, stairways have become treacherous, paint is long gone, and hallways are cluttered with junk and dirt. Some of the IDPs have become beggars due to poverty.

The Kachavara Family

The Kachavara family lives in two former hotel suites on the fourth and fifth floors, one on top of the other, at the far end of the Golden Fleece, closest to the lake. In 1998, there was only one telephone for the 3,000 IDPs at Tbilisi Sea, and it was in the Kachavara family’s “apartment.”

I have visited the Kachavara family since May 1998, an average of once every five months through 2001. Each time, I spent many hours in their cramped “apartment” conducting in-depth interviews with each member of the family, either alone, one member at a time, or with others present. I collected data about their activities, thoughts, wishes, fantasies and dreams, as well as their anxieties and their defenses against their anxieties. When I thought it would be useful, I also shared my understanding of their psychological states with them. A female Georgian psychologist accompanied me each time I visited the Kachavara family and functioned as my interpreter since I do not speak Georgian.

Dali, who is the mother of the family, was formerly a teacher when the family

lived in Abkhazia. She has been the primary source of my information. Dali, her husband Mamuka, their two sons (presently in their twenties and recently married), their teenage daughter Tamuna, and Dali's parents live together in the two former hotel suites.

Before their forced exile to Tbilisi Sea, Dali and Mamuka, then a soccer star and policeman, had a house in Gagra. Building and owning their own home during communist rule had been an almost impossible dream come true for them.

Dali's father, Nodar, is a well-known novelist, and Dali is his only daughter. When a heated ethnic conflict broke out between Georgians and Abkhazians in 1992, Mamuka left the house to join other local Georgians to fight against the Abkhazians. Mamuka knew that his family and other Georgian families in Gagra were in danger. He arranged for a helicopter to fly into the soccer stadium where he used to play and carry some Georgians, including his wife, children, parents, and in-laws, to safety in Georgia proper.

Dali and her three children (at the time, in 1992, the boys were in their early teens and Tamuna was a pre-teen) had only 15 minutes to escape; they ran to the stadium under great peril and were able to evacuate. When the helicopter that had taken them to safety went back to rescue more Georgians, it was shot down, killing its young Ukrainian pilot. Dali and her three children were the last people brought to safety by this dead pilot. On the way to settling in Tbilisi Sea, Dali and her children saw dead bodies and immense destruction in the border region (Gali region) between Georgia and Abkhazia. "So many people got killed, thank God we are alive," she told me. Eventually all the family members, including Mamuka, joined one another at Tbilisi Sea. One day, while watching Russian television, Dali saw their home in Gagra burned down by Abkhazians. She also

thought that she had a glimpse of “Charlie,” the family dog that was left behind when they escaped.

The Kachavara family had been IDPs for six years when I first visited Tbilisi Sea and met them. I head the Center for the Study of Mind and Human Interaction (CSMHI), which had a grant to study the ethnic conflict and refugee problems in Georgia. Upon arriving at the Golden Fleece I first saw Mamuka, dressed in a paramilitary uniform, getting ready to drive with younger IDP men from Tbilisi Sea to Gali where renewed fighting had arisen. They were setting out to take part in a mini-war with the Abkhazians—such mini-wars between Georgia and Abkhazia have continued for many years, and this particular skirmish has ceased only within the last two years. As soon as my colleagues and I interviewed Mamuka, the men entered paramilitary vehicles parked near the hotel and left. We later learned that one of them was killed in the fighting, and the rest returned about a week later.

I also interviewed Dali for the first time as her husband was getting ready to go to war. I met with her again two days later while her husband was still away, and a third interview took place after Mamuka returned. During my initial contact with Dali, I noted that she was a very intelligent woman. She was also psychologically minded; for instance, while Mamuka was away taking part in the mini-war, she dreamt that someone else’s husband had died and his widow was in grief. When she reported this dream to me, she quickly realized that she was displacing her own expected predicament onto others. Her ability to understand some of her own psychological reactions was one reason why I chose to study Dali and her family. Furthermore, it seemed that the Kachavara family were perceived as leaders by other IDPs at Tbilisi Sea. Their

"apartment" was an important meeting place in the settlement, since they had the yellow telephone. After my initial contact with this family in May 1998, I visited them about every four or five months until 2001.

Observations from the Kachavara Family

In order to show the effects of persecution and migration on the Kachavara family's identities, I selected some stories and assessments to relate from my involvement with them over three years. I will especially focus on their perennial mourning and their creation of linking objects that impeded and assisted their adaptation to dislocation. I will also illustrate how they used their relationship with me to “re-libidinalize” their internal world. Finally, I will describe how the “verification” of their identities assisted their work of mourning and their satisfactory adaptation to their refugee status, by achieving third individuation.

It should be recalled that when I met the Kachavara family, they had been refugees for six years, and their mourning process was frozen. Mamuka’s sporadic returns to the Gali region for mini-wars kept their belief that the Georgians would recapture the Gali region and that they would return home. Each mini-war, however, re-traumatized the family members. Their grief would then become acute, “we have a wound that will remain open forever,” Dali told me. These shared feelings then would be reflected in their political attitudes. Nodar, who began writing poetry only after becoming a refugee, wrote one poem a day describing the conditions and emotions of the IDPs. The following is one of Nodar’s poems:

I feel there is betrayal in my motherland

Dishonesty wins
I am leaving all that I have here
And I am coming to you, the sun.

Everything around me is in darkness
I do not see a thing
A snake is biting me bitterly
And, is achieving its betraying aim.

We could not realize what was happening
Everything appeared to be confused
But, I know the enemy is in Tbilisi
Oh! Oh! Let my enemy's life be short.

I see my motherland's suffering from betrayal
Oh, the devil wins
Depression conquers my soul
I pray you, the sun, help us.

This poem, written after a mini-war, reflects the re-traumatization as well as its political aftermath. The following poem is a reaction to the agreement made between the Georgian government (Tbilisi) and the Abkhzians to stop this particular mini-war. The agreement shattered the refugees' illusions that if the war went on, they would win and the families would return home. Out of anger at the perceived loss of such a possibility, they turned against President Shevardnadze for a while.

Outside of these retraumatizing events and the resulting acute grief, the family members remained perennial mourners, preoccupied with controlling "links" to their past lives. If a present symbol did not have a connection to a symbol of the past, the use of the contemporary symbol was rejected. Tamuna, for example, refused to swim in the man-made lake, Tbilisi Sea, because the lake water did not look like the water in the Black Sea where she swam as a child when they lived in Gagra.

The first aspect of the Kachavaras' perennial mourning I would like to discuss is

their need for someone whom they considered significant to recognize and acknowledge the trauma they underwent. As I became involved with this family as a “participant observer,” I noted that the very fact of their being “recognized” regularly by someone coming from so far away had a significant impact on their lives. Soon they began calling me “our Vamik,” the one who “tolerated” their regressions to orality and anality. Being realistically deprived and needy stimulates the oral wishes as well as defenses against them. Such wishes, and especially the defenses against them, were directly expressed in many of Nodar’s poems. In one remarkable poem, for example, Nodar rails against the IDP beggars in Tbilisi:

Children Beggars

When I see your hand begging
My dignity suffers.

I cannot give you my soul (suli)
Since it is impossible to give one’s soul to someone.
But, I have nothing left except my soul.

I am pressing against prison bars
If you need my life,
I can give it to you.

In this poem, refugees from Abkhazia (like Nodar himself) are expressly communicating their oral needs by begging in the streets of the capital city. Nodar wants them to stop begging, to disappear, because it is so humiliating to see them. Unconsciously, he connects his own helplessness and need to be fed emotionally, if not physically, with theirs, and cannot bear to see it.

I have observed increased orality as well as anality among members of traumatized societies in a variety of locations. As the rage is turned against the rejecting

“mother earth,” the traumatized people, including various types of refugees, literally dirty their communities, creating ruin and decay (also see Šebek, 1992). They also become “collectors” of junk. Even though what they collect may one day be useful, the aim is to clutter their environment as though they live in an “anal” field of garbage. In other words, they regress not only into oral preoccupations, but also turn their anal sadism against the area in which they live. Of course, I do not mean to minimize the reality of their financial deprivation and their lack of means to clean up and protect their environment; I am simply focusing on the psychological aspects of such behavior patterns. In the case of the Kachavara family, I noted during my initial visits that they piled their collected junk on their balcony.

People like Dali and the other members of the Kachavara family need to move up internally from oral and anal regression to the genital/oedipal phase in order to start fully accepting their dislocation and find an adaptive solution to their refugee status. I came to realize that their third individuation requires a “regeneralization” or “re-oedipalization” of their internal worlds. Their attempts to resolve reactivated genitalized/oedipal themes are necessary and accompany the refugee’s efforts at more adaptive living.

My interviews with Dali and other members of her family included efforts to understand their dreams and daydreams. Soon after my work with the family started, Dali began dreaming about me; I appeared most often in her dreams in an undisguised fashion when she had been informed of my upcoming visits by my Georgian contacts. When we met she would recite these dreams. I now have a collection of Dali’s dreams, which evolved from referring to gratification of oral and anal wishes to gratification of oedipal wishes. Obviously, Dali was not my analyzand, and I could not understand her dreams

without the benefit of a transference neurosis within the frame of an analytic setting. Nevertheless, the manifest content of her dreams was sufficient to suggest the nature of her transference (non-analytic of course) to me. While in the initial dreams I brought her goods that would satisfy her oral needs or accompanied her in creating explosions (anal sadism), she later began to dream of me (undisguised) as someone who would sleep in her bed next to her and her husband. She was embarrassed to tell me this. Interestingly enough, her daughter, who was 16 when I first met her, exhibited the same pattern in her dreams. Tamuna's dreams slowly changed from my bringing her food to my bringing her a baby.

As Dali said, since, in reality, it would not be proper for me to sleep in the same bed with her and Mamuka, the family should do something else instead. So, in late 1999, they began to build a room for me. They walled off a section of the hallway adjacent to their suite of rooms and turned it into living space. It took almost a year to complete this addition to their "apartment." Dali worked with Mamuka and the children on building and finishing the room; they called it, "our Vamik's room." The members of the family were involved in a "therapeutic play" (Volkan and Ast, in press), repairing their external world and their corresponding inner world. Solnit (1987) has suggested that "play" is "better described by its functions" (p. 205) and Neubauer (1993) considered that play to be an attempt at a solution of conflicts, of the establishment of ego mastery. The Kachavara family "played" together as they constructed their new room. As they name it "our Vamik's room" my image was with them as they "played." In contrast to most of its surroundings, this room would be clean and inviting. They even decided to add a fireplace and finish the floors with beautiful wood. Dali dreamed that I would sleep

there. “Our Vamik’s room” was like a jewel in the middle of a garbage pile; it would be the external expression of what I call their “re-libidinalization” of their internal world.

I will return to Dali's process of re-libidinalization through the building of "our Vamik's room," but first I would like to discuss another significant aspect of the Kachavaras’ perennial mourning, their use and creation of linking objects and linking phenomena. When I first met the Kachavara family, I observed something that, on the surface, did not make sense. As an IDP, Dali was eligible to apply for assistance from authorities in Tbilisi, and by doing so she would receive about five dollars per month to support the family. I must add here that five dollars was a far more substantial sum for the IDPs than it might appear to outsiders. What seemed odd to me was the fact that Dali, then an IDP for 6 years, refused to do what was necessary to receive this money. Yet, every night she would have a hard time falling asleep as she worried about how to feed her children and her husband. Put simply, Dali seemed to be “paralyzed” and unable to take action to secure the much-needed funds. I considered her inhibition a sign of an internal conflict and slowly understood that her inhibition was connected to her identity issues.

To explain Dali’s dilemma, I will go back to the escape from Gagra made by her and the children. During their flight Dali “lost” her “internal passport” (identity card), which symbolized the loss of pre-refugee identity. During Soviet times, Soviet citizens had “internal passports”—a person was not free to move from one location to another without permission. Individuals' ethnic identities were written on their passports; one was, for example, Estonian, Kazak, Armenian, Abkhazian, or Georgian. Since the Communist ideology specified “equality” among people, the Soviets were free to keep the

citizens' ethnicities alive to demonstrate that communism was capable of uniting people from different ethnic backgrounds. As the Soviet Empire began to collapse, people in different locations began to ask, "Who are we now?" Ethnic sentiments increased, and in Abkhazia, they took a malevolent turn in Gagra where the Kachavara family lived. Dali and her three children were flown out by the helicopter secured by her husband on September 20, 1992, before the fury of war between Abkhazians and Georgians swept Gagra. Dali did not even have time to collect her jewelry, but she took her identity card. As she and her children began to run toward the stadium to board the waiting helicopter, Dali had second thoughts about carrying her identity card. Along with her ethnicity, her husband's name was inscribed on her internal passport. She thought that if she were captured by Abkhazians, her captors would know who she was, since everyone knew that Mamuka, a famous soccer player, had married Nodar's daughter. Nodar had, in his writing, protested Abkhazian treatment of Georgians for some time before this event and at this time was in hiding. Dali knew that Abkhazians were looking for her father and indeed had once wrongly captured and tortured an older man thinking that he was Nodar. Dali was afraid that if she were caught, the captors would torture her until she revealed Nodar's whereabouts. Dali was sufficiently scared into concealing her identity. She ran back to the house and left her internal passport there before taking the helicopter ride. It is assumed that the passport was destroyed when their house was burned down. Fortunately, Nodar and his wife were eventually able to escape and join Dali at Tbilisi Sea, but it is clear that Dali's fears were legitimate.

Eventually Dali arrived at Tbilisi Sea without an identity card, a document that had also indicated, she emphasized to me, her birthplace. She was a "daughter of Gagra."

IDPs had to show their identity cards in order to receive monthly assistance money from Georgian authorities. Dali no longer had hers, but she could go to an office in Tbilisi and register for a new one. However, the new one would not have a statement indicating that Abkhazia was her home. For Dali, it was more important to retain her former identity as a Georgian from Abkhazia than to obtain the needed money. Dali used her internal passport, though destroyed, as a symbol of her personal identity as a Georgian born and raised in Abkhazia. Since it was no longer existent, it became a kind of linking phenomenon. Getting a new identity card would mean symbolically eradicating her identity as a Georgian from Abkhazia. It would solidify the loss of her “old” identity, which she could not accept.

Like other linking objects and phenomena, which I will describe shortly, the image of the lost identity card acted as a hindrance and an aid in the healing process. After this story came to light and Dali and I discussed it extensively, she waited at least one more year before allowing herself to get a new identity card. She did finally apply for one, and in so doing she became a model for other IDPs at Tbilisi Sea who, like her, had refused to replace their lost cards. For all of them, this bureaucratic step was a true and drastic “new adjustment,” and it enabled them to receive the funds to which they were entitled.

The entire Kachavara family also utilized poems written by Nodar as linking objects. After becoming an IDP, as I mentioned earlier, Nodar began writing one poem every day. He ritualistically shared it with the other family members every morning and Dali habitually filed the poems in a special place. These poems became concrete symbols of the loss of their former lives in Gagra as well as their hope to return home. Their pre-

refugee identities and refugee identities were linkined. They could not commit themselves fully to any of these identities, so they remained in an indeterminate state.

Another linking object employed by the family pertained to their dog, Charlie, who had been left behind when they fled. Dali, through considerable effort, had learned his fate. She found that after their house was burned down, Charlie had been hit by a car and killed. During their second year as IDPs at Tbilisi Sea, Dali found a black dog that looked very similar to the original Charlie. She brought the dog to live with them in their miserable quarters and named him “Charlie” as well. I remember this dog very well from my first visit to the Kachavara family’s “apartment.” The new Charlie was always present during my later visits as well. He would lie under Dali’s feet, and everyone there was to some extent conscious of his psychological significance. The dog was a “living linking object,” a “created” type of linking object that I had described earlier. Through the new Charlie, the old Charlie was kept “alive,” and through this mechanism the illusion of bringing the images of lost objects (home, dead friends, Gagra, and the Gali region in general) back, psychologically speaking, was possible. Thus, the Kachavara family first made plans to return to Gagra and rebuild their house in three years. When I met them for the first time, they were still holding onto their three-year plan even though six years had passed since they had left Gagra. When Dali obtained a new identity card, it was a sign of her and her family members doing some work of mourning. Then, they began to speak of a five-year plan.

The completion of “our Vamik’s room,” by coincidence, took place just before the second Charlie died of natural causes. The two events became connected and ushered in, in early 2000, a period of “illness” for Dali. She lost weight and withdrew from her

environment. A Georgian doctor was called and diagnosed her condition as a cerebral stroke. I was in the United States when this happened and had received no information about Dali's condition. When I arrived in Georgia a short time later, my Georgian contacts told me of the diagnosis and declared that, unfortunately, there was not much that I could do. They told me that Dali was having a hard time speaking.

After hearing the news, I rushed to the Golden Fleece and indeed found Dali looking like a ghost, wasting away. Her mind seemed sharp, however. I began to realize that she had not had a cerebral stroke, but rather she was suffering from severe depression and suicidal behavior. She was able to talk with me. I spent some hours with her during which I interpreted the meaning of Charlie's death for her. I explained that without her living linking object, she could no longer postpone her mourning—in her case a melancholic type of mourning. She was fully facing both her sadness and guilt over her beloved Abkhazia, her home, the first and second Charlie, the pilot who had saved her life, and her own survival. Dali's severe melancholia was complicated not only by the loss of the new Charlie, the living linking object, but also by replacing the dog and becoming herself a living linking object for the other family members. The following explains how she became this living linking object.

Around the time of Charlie's death and the completion of "our Vamik's room," Mamuka, Nodar, and the three Kachavara sons experienced other events that also assisted them in adapting to their refugee status. The process that I call the "verification" of the refugee's new identity as a continuation of his or her previous identity by psychologically significant others is a substantial element in the refugee's adaptation to the new environment. Soon after the second Charlie's death, Mamuka received symbolic

verification from others that put his pre-refugee identity on a continuum with his identity as a dislocated person. The Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs organized a soccer match between local soccer players from Tbilisi and IDP soccer players from Abkhazia to honor the memory of a Georgian soccer player from Abkhazia who had been tortured and killed by the Abkhazians. Mamuka took part in this soccer match and scored two goals, establishing himself as a hero among the spectators. More importantly, he was given a trophy by the authorities, inscribed with his name and the date of the match. As “our Vamik’s room” was almost complete, Mamuka put his trophy on the mantle.

At this time Mamuka was working as a policeman in Tbilisi, in command of lower-ranked policemen, all of who were IDPs from Tbilisi Sea. His local boss treated Mamuka with respect, restoring his self-esteem and verifying and extending his pre-refugee identity as a policeman in Gagra. He changed his five-year plan to return to Abkhazia to a ten-year plan, indicating his further acceptance of the loss of his pre-refugee identity, his home and Abkhazia in general.

Nodar also received verification of his continued identity as a vital literary figure. His poems that he began writing when he became an IDP were published in book form, and it was recognized as an important piece of literature. Nodar was given an award for his book, and was transformed by the experience. I can say that his internal world was re-libidinalized; he who was previously an ever-angry man was now a man with frequent smiles.

Meanwhile, Dali’s children expanded their environment by leaving the settlement, during the day, to attend college. The boys began dating local women who were also IDP’s, they fell in love, and the oldest got married. These events helped to verify their

identity and increase their self-esteem.

Even after Nodar received his award, he continued to write a poem a day. He would still ritualistically bring his poems to the breakfast table every day, but now no one but Dali would sit down and listen to him recite. Dali continued to file the new poems, which still included references to the refugees' lamentable situations, but now Nodar would give them to Dali, smile, and leave the room. Dali became the only person who functioned as the "reservoir" for Nodar's daily dose of sadness, depression, and guilt. I told her that she had become the linking object for the family, a replacement for the new Charlie. Dali understood my "interpretation."

Still another factor was intruding into Dali's inner world and contributing to her severe depression. "Our Vamık's room" was structurally complete but not yet decorated. Dali told me that as the room was approaching completion, she had to give up her illusion that I would sleep in there. She came face to face with the reality that I was not a family member and would never actually sleep in the room. Psychologically, it meant that she could not really possess me as an idealized "libidinalizing" object, perhaps as an "oedipal father." She had to give me up and mourn for this "loss," much in the same way that an oedipal girl "mourns" the loss of her oedipal father as she resolves the Oedipus complex. We discussed this too in detail. Knowing of Dali's positive transference feelings for me, I told her I could still care for her even though I would not sleep in "our Vamık's room" and that this room really belonged to her and her family. Repeating my understanding of the psychological factors that led to her severe depression, I told her that in becoming a living linking object for the family, it became her responsibility to break or maintain the family's ties to the past; this obligation was stressful for her. Her "power" to cut off this

bond, in other words to “kill” the family’s pre-refugee identity, was causing her guilt.

There was a funeral almost every time I went to Tbilisi Sea. People Dali’s age, or even younger, in Tbilisi Sea would drop dead, often for no apparent reason. I told Dali that there were others among the IDP’s who were killing themselves, and added that if Dali does not die, she could be a model for other depressed refugees as someone who can survive and adjust.

When I went back about five months later, I could not recognize Dali. She had gained weight and was smiling. There was a new dog in the apartment, a female named Linda. Dali told me that she had given up being a living linking object herself and that she was determined to avoid acquiring another “Charlie” as a living linking object. Linda was female and was not black.

During this visit Mamuka, who was dressed in his best civilian clothes, wanted Dali to set up a table for us in “our Vamik’s room,” which was now completely finished and furnished. However, Dali told me that she did not wish to break our tradition of meeting in the original room of the “apartment,” which had also been renovated. In addition, Dali told me that the new room was no longer “our Vamik’s room”—it was theirs.

They took me to see their finished new room. The soccer trophy was still on the mantle. Mamuka wanted me to hold it in order to feel how solid and heavy it was. There was a painting above the fireplace of the Hotel Gagribsh.

When Mamuka received his soccer trophy, another IDP player was given a painting of the Hotel Gagribsh. At that moment, Mamuka thought he should have such a painting himself. He found out who had painted the picture and made arrangements for

the artist to paint another Hotel Gagribsh for the Kachavara family. Mamuka and other family members were fully aware that the painting in the new room was a memorial to their pre-refugee identities. Hotel Gagribsh was the best-known location in Gagra when the Kachavara family lived there. Now it was in the former “our Vamik’s room,” like a tombstone that helps mourners complete their mourning. The painting was *not* a linking object, as they told me it symbolized there would be no return to Gagra. The family informed me that they had given up their ten-year plan to go back to Gagra. Now they had no plans to return. The painting was a “futureless memory” (Tähkä, 1993). Spurred on by my interest in the painting, Mamuka discussed his last mission to Abkhazia as a paramilitary man in 1998. The Georgians were called back only a few days after their mini-war. Mamuka was furious with President Shevardnadze, as he felt that the leader should give them permission to continue fighting. Now he explained how his own thoughts of reconquering Abkhazia had been fanciful. “To harbor such wishes and dreams was senseless,” he added. He described to me how he was much calmer now but still smoked heavily. His nightmares were gone, and he had given up his plans to return to Abkhazia. Perhaps as an expression of lingering but “silent” depression, he had some difficulty in falling asleep, though he was “normal” during the day.

My visit this time followed the marriage of the Kachavaras’ youngest son by one week. Of course, I was introduced to the new bride as I had been introduced to the first bride months earlier. There was an atmosphere of festivity in the Kachavara family’s home, but Dali wanted to speak with me alone (through the present interpreter, of course). During our long private conversation, Dali explained how happy she was with her youngest son’s marriage. However, she had an anxiety attack the day after her son

got married and wanted to understand why. The Kachavara family's "apartment," the old hotel suite, was rather small. Dali and Mamuka separated the main room into two sections with a curtain; the space behind the curtain was their "bedroom." The youngest son, before his marriage, slept on a cot in the other section, where I usually conducted my interviews with them. The son and his wife moved elsewhere after their marriage.

Dali woke up on the day after her son's marriage, and came out from her "bedroom" to find her son's cot empty. She immediately had an anxiety attack. She knew that "separation" from her son would be difficult, but she felt that her anxiety attack was connected to a sense that someone was going to die.

She recalled how her children cuddled around her in the helicopter that had flown them to safety. Her recent attack was connected to her anxiety during that helicopter flight. She now recalled this event in great detail and visualized herself crying, fearing for her children's lives. She remembered feeling that she would die if she lost one of them. She realized that seeing her son's empty cot had rekindled the old fear that had overwhelmed her on that trip. Separation and a sense of actual death were connected in her mind.

At this point Dali told me something that I had not known before. The helicopter pilot who was killed had the same name as her son. She described the physical characteristics of this pilot. He was young and handsome, like Dali's two sons at this time. Not finding her son lying in his cot symbolized her guilt over "killing" the young pilot. Dali fully recognized how guilty she felt over the pilot's death. Dali told me that when the IDPs at Tbilisi Sea got together the pilot's name would on occasion come up, since this pilot had saved some of the IDPs living at the Tbilisi Sea, but there was no

memorial or public mourning for him.

I suggested that perhaps she could attend church and perform a funeral rite for the dead pilot and that doing so could decrease her feelings of guilt and help her to separate her son(s) from the dead pilot. She readily agreed. A week later, when I had returned to the United States, Dali sent me a message through our interpreter. She wanted me to know that she had indeed gone to church, lit candles for the pilot, prayed for his soul, and that she was feeling much better.

CONCLUSION

This presentation describes a psychoanalyst's work outside of his office. Obviously, under such conditions a psychoanalyst cannot carry out psychoanalytic treatment of the individuals with whom he or she is involved. However, having training in psychoanalytic theory and clinical experience provides psychoanalysts with tools that make them helpful to refugees in unique ways. They are also able to train the local mental health professionals to notice issues that may escape routine refugee aids, such as the meaning of Dali's identity card and Charlie, the dog, which proved to be both obstacles and catalysts toward the Kachavaras' adaptation to their dislocation.

When I started working with the Kachavara family, I had no idea that this type of work could evolve into a "methodology" for helping other individuals within a refugee settlement. Since the Kachavara family members were perceived as leaders of the Tbilisi Sea Community, their improvement in adapting to dislocation provided a model for others at Tbilisi Sea. When some men from this area went off to "mini-wars," their wives

and other relatives would gather in or around the Kachavara apartment waiting for the telephone to ring. As Dali began to observe certain psychological processes in herself, she subsequently became a kind of "consultant" to other refugees. When the Kachavaras finished "our Vamik's room," others began to copy the Kachavara family and began to build expansions onto their lodgings. Most importantly, I believe that when Dali survived after her "stroke" (many at Tbilisi Sea followed the progress of her health), she became a model for "defeating" depression. It was impossible for me to obtain scientific statistical data on Tbilisi Sea, but the general consensus is that the number of people dropping dead for "no apparent reason" at this settlement has decreased considerably.

When anyone comes from another country to help refugees with the psychological effects of their trauma, it is too overwhelming to spend time, in depth, with many individuals. Thus, the "methodology" that we started at Tbilisi Sea focuses on working in depth with one (or a few) selected families and helping them to evolve into a model for others in their community.

This presentation further describes my findings regarding a condition that I call perennial mourning. After working in Cyprus, Georgia, Albania and elsewhere with dislocated persons who suffered massive trauma and violence, I came to the conclusion that the adjustment we see in refugees following such disasters points to their adjustment to life as perennial mourners with both regressive and progressive possibilities. Psychoanalysts can help the local mental health workers utilize the progressive aspects of refugees' linking objects (or phenomena) in order to help them adjust to their situations in a better way. My presentation, I hope, opens a discussion not only on the clinical condition called perennial mourning and the concept of linking objects, but also the role

of a psychoanalyst outside of his or her office.

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