

Article

Collective Trauma and Mystic Dreams in Zabuzhko's "The Museum of Abandoned Secrets"

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Abstract: The 20th century of human history was overshadowed by the horrifying events of world wars and totalitarian regimes, with their traumatic experiences becoming the very focus of today's modern globalized society. Psychoanalytic psychotherapy is one of the ways of dealing with this overwhelmingly violent phenomenon. This article will discuss an historical traumatic event through literature, using psychoanalytic theories of trauma. The problem is discussed on the level of the actual theoretical landscape including the relation between transgenerational transmitted trauma, collective trauma, and cumulative trauma inscribed in a "foundation matrix" (Foulkes). As a clinical vignette, the novel "Museum of Abandoned Secrets" by modern Ukrainian writer Oksana Zabuzhko is used. The author addresses the functions of dreams, scrutinizing the psychodynamics of the novel using concepts of projective identification, mourning, the need for repair, and epigenetic and fractal theory. It is suggested that the novel facilitates the characters' journey through trauma and its integration by the large groups (of readers).

Keywords: collective trauma; dreams; psychoanalysis; literature; Zabuzhko; transgenerationally transmitted trauma

1. Note on the Methodology

This article uses the psychoanalytic literary exegesis method and is situated in the field of hermeneutics. Psychoanalytic literary exegesis adopts psychoanalytic theories of interpretation, by stipulating that literary texts are similar to dreams constructed using the mechanisms of condensation, repression, displacement and symbolism. Early psychoanalytic reading methods were focused mainly on text itself; later theoreticians (e.g., Ogden) shifted the focus on the relationship between the reader and the text, author and the text, employing psychoanalytic concepts such as projective identification, containment etc. For a further discussion on this, please refer to my article, "Gender Aspects of the Transgenerationally Transmitted Trauma in "The Museum of Abandoned Secrets" by Oksana Zabuzhko" ([Zabuzhko \[2009\] 2012](#)), in *Dynamic Psychiatry Magazine* ([Lenherr 2018](#)).

2. Introduction

Psychoanalysis and literature have had a rather long and rich interdependent history. Freud wrote a number of important essays that interpret literary pieces, and many of his successors were passionate readers. In fact, some of the milestone theoretical concepts in psychoanalysis were borrowed from the world of literature (e.g., Oedipus complex, the notion of narcissism).

Psychoanalysis theory originated with the concept of trauma: after his mentor, Charcot, Freud hypothesized that while hysterical patients suffer from traumatic reminiscence, there were also personal traumatic experiences involved. In Freud's case, these experiences include (1) a bitter episode of humiliation faced by his father due to his Jewish origin, that Freud often ruminated on; (2) the premature death of his sibling, Julius, followed by his ostracism by the conservative Viennese Medical society, and finally; (3) the sad fate of Freud's sisters after he fled from Nazi

aggression to London. Freud's life and work is a stunning memoir of how he worked through his trauma. He can be seen as a representative for the established groups of his time (e.g., Jews, doctors, surviving siblings etc.). A discussion about one's individual identity inevitably includes groups that an individual belongs to. It is true that trauma shared by a group has an influence on every individual in the group, affecting both the individual and group identity of a person. There are various levels of trauma discussions within the modern psychoanalytic theory. In this paper, however, I will reflect on those with relevance to this clinical vignette: (1) the concept of a cumulative trauma; (2) transgenerationally transmitted trauma; and (3) collective trauma. All of these traumatic phenomena have a common denominator which can be explained by the concept known as the "foundation matrix" introduced by Foulkes in 1964. The foundation matrix is defined as "the network of all individual mental processes, the psychological medium in which they meet, communicate, and interact" (Foulkes and Anthony 1965, p. 26). The "foundation matrix" is, essentially, the conceptual metaphor for group psychoanalysis. It combines concepts such as "group" and "mother", as Foulkes postulated: often, probably, as a rule, the group represents the mother image (think of motherland, AN (author's note)), and that is why the term "matrix", derivative of *māter* (mother) is used (Foulkes 1974). The foundation matrix has an ontological quality which is an essential for all communications in a group, verbal or non-verbal (Weimer 2017, p. 1122), and is especially relevant for culture and society. Methodologically, we are situated in the tradition of the dream interpretation, in the realm of *Verdichtung*, condensation. (Freud 1900, p. 313). This concept has conclusive similarities to the Jungian idea of "collective unconscious" (Jung [1916] 1953) and the Bionian concept of "group animal" (Bion [1961] 1989). It is important to understand how different traumatic experiences affect an individual in a group and a foundation matrix of a group in order to learn more about a trauma repercussion and to diminish the risk of the repeating of the collective trauma in the future.

In 1963, Khan defined cumulative trauma as the result of breaches in a mother's role as a protective shield over the course of the child's development, from infancy to adolescence, tendering the fact that the mother is unable to provide sufficient auxiliary ego to support her child (Khan 1963, p. 290). But what if a mother herself inherited from her parents her protective shield with holes? This brings us to the realm of transgenerationally (also known as intergenerational) transmitted trauma. It should be pointed out that transgenerational transmission is a necessary condition for any individual and group development as it gives a feeling of continuity, attachment, and security, which are fundamental for healthy development. The best grandma's pie is baked when the child observes his grandmother often enough to be able to replicate her actions spontaneously. The problem with transgenerationally transmitted trauma is that traumatic experiences, emotions, and coping mechanisms associated with any traumatic event, or process, might be unconsciously repeated. Our understanding of transgenerationally transmitted trauma at a group level owes a great deal to studies about second and third generation Holocaust survivors, and others directly traumatized under the totalitarian regimes. References to many studies on this topic can be found in Kogan 1995; Kestenberg and Brenner 1996; Volkan et al. 2001, 2002; Faimberg 2005; De Mendelssohn 2008; Drexler 2017.

Our "post-traumatic" century, sadly enough, has inherited massive amounts of trauma, which is shared by large groups of people belonging to a certain culture, either nationally, or geographically. Collective trauma (or chosen trauma) constitutes an important part of the group's identity and is to be understood in this article as a traumatic effect of an event or a process shared by groups of individuals and one that can be transmitted transgenerationally and across communities. Triggers of collective traumas include war, genocide, slavery, terrorism, and natural disasters etc.

Collective trauma has a certain interdependence with transgenerationally transmitted trauma, but not every transgenerationally transmitted trauma is collective trauma, and not all collective trauma is necessarily transmitted transgenerationally. Why is it important for an analyst to differentiate between these types of trauma? An analyst who is not aware of the effects of the social and historical circumstances of the patient's inner objects risks diminishing the reflective space. In analysis, one has

to be ready to telescope through generations, as [Faimberg \(2005\)](#) aptly puts it in her book, in order to understand the echo it still has in the patient's life.

Transgenerationally transmitted trauma outside of the clinical setting is often dealt with through literature. This can be understood as an associative elaboration on collective trauma by a member of a traumatized group, namely the writer. As avid readers and writers, Freud and his disciples recognized the creative genius of literature in its ability to offer a profound understanding of human nature through the study of characters and their actions. Freud's noteworthy essays on literature and his influential papers on Shakespeare, and the works of Dostojewskij and Hoffmann also remain thought-provoking with their timeless relevance.

The most profoundly analyzed literary piece is undoubtedly "Gradiva" written by Wilhelm Jensen in 1902. In the foreword to Freud's essay "Delusion and Dream in Jensen's Gradiva", Stanley Hall (1917) acknowledges that as "an introduction to psychoanalysis, it is an extended illustration of "mysterious ways of unconsciousness". Freud's essay vividly asserts, and I firmly believe as well, that psychoanalytic theory is a powerful tool in literary criticism and culture, and one that legitimizes literary texts. Freud implies that the author Jensen, a novice in psychoanalysis, inherited "native psychotherapeutic instincts" which allowed him to describe psychic mechanisms that obviously belong to the domain of psychoanalysis, which, in turn, makes the novel both a case study and a dream book at the same time ([Freud 1907](#)). In this respect, the novel discussed in this article can be seen as a case study of a dream book.

In fact, in 1930 Freud was awarded Goethe's literary prize for his extensive literary work, and was held in high esteem among creative authors throughout his professional life:

"Storytellers are valuable allies, and their testimonies are to be rated high, for they usually know many things between heaven and earth that our academic wisdom does not even dream of, in psychic knowledge, indeed, they are far ahead of us ordinary people, because they draw from sources that which we have not yet made accessible for science." ([Freud 1907](#), p. 123)

These words, written over a hundred years ago, have granted the literary field meaning and possibility of psychological insight otherwise accessible in the analytic treatment exclusively, making literature an uncanny twin of psychoanalysis. Freud suggested that his case stories should be read like novels and in the "twin" logic, the following novel written by a modern Ukrainian writer, Oksana Zabuzhko, is read as a case study.

3. Clinical Vignette

During the 20th century, the Ukrainian people experienced major periods of violence and were massively exposed to collective trauma, i.e., deliberate human actions that directly and principally affected the whole nation as a group. I would like to draw your attention to a few historical events related to this man-made disaster ([Man-Made Disaster n.d.](#)).

1932–1933: The Holodomor, deliberately induced genocide within Stalin's policy, was responsible for up to 12 million deaths from starvation in Ukraine.

1923–1961: The Gulag, a system of forced labor camps, comprised de-facto concentration camps for everyone who could endanger Stalin's regime, i.e., every rational thinking person or intellectual elite. Russian writer and Gulag survivor, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, wrote about his Gulag experience in his Nobel winning book "The Gulag Archipelago" ([Solzhenitsyn 1973](#)).

Among others, as a response to the oppression(s) in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) was created. It existed during 1942–1956 and consisted of military, political, intelligence, and political education departments. Ideologically, the UPA was closely aligned with the underground nationalist political party (OUN). Structurally, the UPA was divided into four main units: UPA-North, UPA-West, UPA-South, and UPA-East. The events described in the novel refer mainly to the UPA-West operating in Halychyna, Bukovyna, and Zakarpattia and embrace the period of the Red Army occupation in 1942–1950. The military activity of UPA and OUN is still considered to be very controversial and

calls for further historical and political research. However, the root of problem lies in the fact that the Soviet regime eradicated the majority of its documentation and annihilated the archives. This makes any investigation exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for the later generations. The trauma of “not-knowing” one’s own origins, of being cut off from one’s own family roots is thus inscribed in the personal histories of many Ukrainian families even today. The novel, “The Museum of Abandoned Secrets”, captures this perfectly.

As previously posited, Jensen’s *Gradiva* can be seen as the introduction to psychoanalysis. In this light, it can be suggested that the novel also be regarded as a case study for transgenerationally transmitted trauma, notwithstanding. It perfectly exemplifies how individual and large group identities become inextricably intertwined in a fractal-akin way, quoting the biogenetic law that states that “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny”. Fractal is a recursive self-similarity set in mathematics, and also present in abundance in nature: sea-shells, lightning, romanescu, corn flakes etc., which to my point, illustrates well the correlation between an individual and a group identity within one person (Mandelbrot 1983).

The novel, “The Museum of Abandoned Secrets”, was published in 2009 in Ukraine and since then has been translated into many languages. It has won major domestic and international awards, e.g., The Best Ukrainian Book Award in 2010 according to the magazine *Korrespondent*, and was short-listed for the BBC book of the year (2010) and the “Angelus” Central European Literature Award in 2013. The aforementioned novel attempts to give a voice to the concept of trauma, which has been so deeply entrenched in Ukrainian history. Zabuzhko calls this type of literature one that has the courage not to please or entertain the reader, but to name things, which are excruciatingly painful. Applying this logic, the author sees her book as a cumulative experience of thinking. “It’s time in our culture”, she says, “to gather it.” (Zabuzhko 2016, p. 15).

The title of the novel alludes to some meaningful enigmas, which have been deserted for a reason. They are meaningful because if they had no sense and value to a group of people they would not appear in a museum. The novel has a certain value for a psychoanalytical researcher as well as it shows how trauma transmitted through generations is experienced and how it is placed in the unconsciousness of the person, how huge the urge to find out the truth is, how trapped in the past one can be and how existentially important it can be to work through the trauma. Furthermore, the novel illustrates the functions of dreams with respect to finding the truth. Wilfred Bion argued that dreaming is the most elaborate form of thinking and that the innate truth drive is a crucial vehicle for the curiosity (Bion [1961] 1989). Likewise in the novel, it is through the dreams that the threads of the bigger narrative are formed into a comprehensive picture that has its value and place in the psychological/psychohistorical museum of the epoche and continues to hold personal significance for the protagonists. Events in the novel convincingly maintain that it is the third generation that has to deal with a collective trauma and there is an evident historical logic to this. If somebody is a carrier of cumulative trauma, his/her ability to deal with stress that inevitably emerges when researching on family/national trauma is diminished also on a neurological genetic level.

The plot in the novel evolves as follows: in 2003, Daryna Goschinska, a television journalist, discovers a worn photograph of Olena Dovgan, a member of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), who was killed in 1947 by Stalin’s secret police. Daryna, intrigued by the photo, decides to make a documentary about Olena’s life and death. During her research, she meets the great nephew of Olena, who later becomes Daryna’s partner. They continue to investigate this case together, but the much-needed archives were destroyed at the time, making it impossible to discover the truth behind the events that took place. Although, the duo meet relatives of the people who had some relation to Olena’s story, they were also oblivious to its true facts, and it is the reader alone who has a holistic picture of the events: in 2003 they were in search of the something that no longer existed, yet, while asleep, they dreamt of the true story of the investigated object, Olena, but they were unaware of the intricate facts of the dream. Seems mystical, does it not?

There are several passages in the novel alluding to the fact that what they dealt with might extend throughout their lives. Evidently, it had a lot to do with their parents and grandparents and Ukrainian history, i.e., transgenerational transmission. For example, “that dream of mine, the one dreamt two weeks ago, on that wild night, the night that would not end, as if Aidy [Adrian, AN] and I have lived several lifetimes in that single night, on the verge between dream and wakefulness” (Zabuzhko [2009] 2012, p. 527).

Daryna reflects on the generation of her parents and the purports they left to the children, she tries to make sense of their their unconscious messages:

“[. . .] This strength of theirs [parents, AN] the one that seemed so wasted because it hadn’t been translated into anything tangible—turned out great enough to confer upon their child her own margin of safety. So that in a different era, in a different country, packed with deaths like a can with sardines this child would remain alive.” (Zabuzhko [2009] 2012, p. 279)

The question of heredity interested her the most, because Zabuzhko herself stated that the function of this novel is to restore the broken connection between time and generations:

“You loaded us with emptiness, and now we’re passing it on the next generation.” (Zabuzhko [2009] 2012, p. 278)

This emptiness desires to be understood and nevertheless to be made use of. This emptiness is similar to an “airbag”, it is necessary to hold the inherited traumatic elements apart from the psyche, so one feels, as if we do not know that it is empty, and it goes well with the need to forget, not to remember—as powerful as its antipode—the need to know the truth about one’s own past.

How does one survive such inherited trauma, how does one cope with the unspeakable and unimaginable? One does not have much choice: either to perish or to become a hero, and this is how we find it to be in the novel: “[. . .] sometimes, the thing that does kill us makes our children stronger.” (Zabuzhko [2009] 2012, p. 279).

The appalling encounter continues to echo in the lives of the generations to come:

“[. . .] Several generations’ worth of survival experience—of those packed off into camps, stripped off their property as kulaks, deportation of the heroes of Grandpa’s tales about Karlag, all their long-forgotten skills.” (Zabuzhko [2009] 2012, p. 303)

It is crucial for one’s own identity to know one’s past, to have a gravestone, where one can come to, to feel the family “grounding”; it gives a feeling of a historical right and a logic of one’s own existence in this very place and time. When the family history and mythology is not available, it sets in motion an ever-present anxiety and an almost existential curiosity, which when not satisfied turns to depression.

One has to make sense of the signs left from past, even when there are no words: “We don’t know how to hear their silence; we live as if they never existed. But they did. And their silence is the stuff of which our lives are made” (Zabuzhko [2009] 2012, p. 604). Also, the silence and the unknown has to be deciphered in order to understand who one is. And the different ways of ascribing meaning to the past are, in turn, created.

As the two young people go deeper into research, their dreams became bizarre, almost uncanny. Adrian’s dreams are especially odd to him. These dreams, though traumatic, offer a lot of material, which Daryna and Adrian are able to weave in with some scarce facts that they have about Olena. The plot lines in the novel evolve as if in parallel: one line takes place “now” in the newly independent Ukraine in Kyiv, and another one in Lwiw and its outskirts of late 1950s. These plot lines only cross in the dreams of the protagonists, mostly Adrian. The reader is in a privileged position to know and to understand what has happened in the past and what kind of influence it has on the lives of these two young people, similar to that in a psychoanalytic situation, suggesting that only from the distance or with a help of the third agency (as in a dream) can the whole picture be captured. Dreams offer a backdrop, a stage for working through the traumatic material that for whatever reasons (fear,

for example) are not accessible in the conscious state. Unlike reality, a dream has a beginning and an end.

Adrian dreamt about the life and the death of Olena and the men around her, especially one UPA soldier (also called Adrian), who loved her and died with her, as if in a documentary:

Daryna: "Do you mean to say [. . .] that you are seeing someone else's dreams?"

Adrian: "It's more precise to say that I'm dreaming someone else's consciousness. [. . .] I know it's not *my* memory." (Zabuzhko [2009] 2012, p. 117)

Dissociated memories are experienced by Adrian as intrusive, lost, disconnected, like chronicles he doesn't choose to deal with.

"Unlike regular dreams, they're utterly emotionless. No joy, no fear, no anxiety, no arousal, nothing—only stories; [. . .] If these are, in fact, memories, they must come from a disconnected brain." (Zabuzhko [2009] 2012, p. 126)

It is a remarkable fact that Olena's grandnephew ("the modern" Adrian, partner of Daryna) and the man who loved Olena, and who was loved by her sister, grandmother of Daryna's partner, (but I am not going to dwell on the sibling rivalry topic in this paper), have the same name—Adrian. The "modern" Adrian is himself a carrier of many traumatic secrets of his family, to which his name works as a signifier, the mark that indicates more secrets in this respect. Only through the dreams does he get in touch with this part of his own family narrative. Adrian in 2003 dreams about the life of the Adrian in the 1940s making this is another allusion to a relationship between dreaming, memory, and transgenerational trauma in the novel: "This is not a dream [. . .] Something tormenting this man, something too big for one person." (Zabuzhko [2009] 2012, p. 393).

After completing their research, which was rather turbulent, Daryna gets pregnant, but this baby has more of a metaphorical meaning, as if a benign resolution of the riddles of the past and a signifier of maturation and of successfully working through the transgenerational trauma.

Similarly in *Gradiva*, the author also offers a remedy for the main heroes: once they found an explanation for their mentioned silence and emptiness, one which is emotionally acceptable and plausible, they could continue on being, concentrating on their own lives and love relationships.

4. Theoretical Considerations and Reflections on the Psychodynamics of the Novel

How is something like this possible?

What importance do we deduce from psychoanalytic theory in order to understand the psychodynamics of the novel?

In which way is the dreaming phenomenon related to the collective trauma and its transgenerational transmission?

The reiteration of the name Adrian is not just a clever twist in the plot; it also has a deeper psychodynamic meaning. At this juncture, it is worth mentioning the Israeli psychotherapist, Dina Wardi, who describes in her book "Memorial Candles" (Wardi 1992) the name phenomenon, when survival's children are given the same names as their perished relatives. The idea behind it is to substitute the lost object and to avoid mourning, implying that the second and the third generations have a double identity (and often the double burden of expectation to be fulfilled not just for oneself, but also for a killed, disappeared and the dead family).

Taking a look at Adrian's dreams, which are, put simply, "emotionless", "disconnected", like "from somebody's else", they feel like "something too big for one person's life" and "emptiness". The syntax of a traumatic discourse is easily recognizable here with its typical features: overwhelming quality, dissociation, splitting, and estrangement. In the novel, it is presented in the form of a dream narration. Freud considered his work "Interpretation of Dreams" his best writing as it describes the universal mechanisms of the unconsciousness, which are also valid for creativity. In turn, the dream

utilizes “a poetic diction” of a lyrical poetry as Ella Sharpe puts it (Meltzer 2009, p. 27). In short, in the context of the novel, what we face is a traumatic experience inscribed into the dream life of a subject, reinforcing psychoanalytic theories on dreams and collective trauma.

According to Freud, the dream is made of the three main elements: day residue, wish fulfillment, and infantile experience. Freud believed we have to decipher the dream’s meaning in order to apprehend the truth. In later decades, philosophers (Wittgenstein, Langer) moved to a Neo-Platonic view, suggesting that the meaning has to be generated and deployed (Meltzer 2009, p. 26). If we consider Bion, who perceived dreaming as a most profound way of thinking, we map dreams as a room to think about the unthinkable, to convert bizarre beta elements into alpha elements, to sew the traumatized tissues together into a new coherent narrative. If we consider theories of Donald Meltzer (2009), we can see how dreams in the novel fulfill the epistemological function by creating the subjective knowledge, impossible to access otherwise.

Applying Freudian theory to the dreams in the novel, we can propose that: (1) day residue is the investigation’s project—Olena Dovgan and her heroic life; (2) the wish fulfillment is the striving of Adrian and Daryna to find the truth about Olena’s life and death; and (3) the infantile experience, the most interesting part for us, is connected to transgenerationally transmitted trauma. Here Adrian “uses” his unconscious and fragmented conscious memories of his grandmother Apolinaria and grandaunt, Olena, that are set in motion by his positive transference to Daryna and some other unconscious material transmitted by his parents and grandparents, as Gampel (1986) and Kogan (1995) suggested “through a massive process of projective identification to contain the mourning and aggression that they [older generations, AN] would otherwise have had to feed themselves and which might have made them self-destructive” (in De Mendelssohn 2008, p. 390). Volkan proposed that “the offspring of the victimized generation becomes the reservoir for unresolved mourning and “deposited representations.” The “deposited image” (Volkan 1987) becomes a psychological “gene” that, in turn, influences the child’s identity and self-representation, initiating certain tasks that the child is obliged to perform without the parent or other caregivers ever verbalizing the demand (Volkan et al. 2002, p. 36).

At this point a short detour to the field of epigenetic is needed in order to understand the correlation between biological and psychological genes, as the cortisol research on mothers diagnosed with a posttraumatic stress disorder proved that their babies also have a reduced cortisol level (Yehuda et al. 2005). Previously the group of researchers could prove that Holocaust survivors also had a reduced level of cortisol mirror (Yehuda et al. 1998, 2002). Similar conclusions have been derived by “the suicide brain research”: the anti-stress gene is “turned off” when people have been traumatized in their early childhood and for pregnant women who experience domestic violence (Meany et al. 2008; McGowan et al. 2009; Radtke et al. 2011).¹ In this respect it is worth briefly introducing the results of the Dutch Famine Birth Cohort Study, which focused on the epigenetic consequences of the hunger experience. It is a proven fact that the following generations were significantly smaller, although they were conceived in times when nutrition was in abundance. Obviously the genetic material of grandchildren contains the epigenetic level of the information about their grandparents’ life conditions (Drexler 2017, p. 26). Why is epigenetic discussion addressed in this psychoanalytic paper? Because Eric Kandel, the Nobel Prize winner, suggested that successful psychotherapy, with alterations of the genetic expressions including epigenetic changes, leads to “structural changes in the brain” (Kandel 2006). This scientific breakthrough gives us hope for a better future as a humane society without blindly acting out on collective and transgenerational traumas.

Retracting back to Adrian, it is still an open question if he fell in love with Daryna because of his feelings for her and a result of him supporting her in her research, or because he had an unconscious need to find somebody who could construct and narrate the life story of his heroic great aunt.

¹ Personal interview.

Being a psychoanalyst I am prone to yield to the second hypothesis. Why would he need to find someone to reconstruct the life story of his great aunt? There are, primarily two reasons which are truly therapeutic. Firstly, heroic epos, which would appear as a result of this research, could ground and epitomize his great-aunt's life. It could be used as an antidote to the shame, often experienced by the traumatized group and to appease the anxiety of not knowing or filling typical emptiness. Secondly, the need for reparation of the traumatized memory is used in her film, on the collective level, to rehabilitate many (Ukrainian) people—which is Daryna's deliberate aim. Similarly, Adrian is motivated, on a personal level, to restore the generational connections within his family.

It can be assumed that through the projective identification and unconscious reasons coming from the sources described above motivated Daryna and Adrian to undergo the investigation in the first place. It is the need for reparation and the urge to work through the trauma of the past that propelled the writer Oksana Zabuzhko to write this novel in this particular way. This article as well is inspired by the same source i.e., the echo of a transgenerationally transmitted trauma still operating in the unconsciousness of the author of this article.

“Museum of Abandoned Secrets” can be seen as a heroic epos. De Mendelssohn suggested that it is necessary for a traumatized group to have such epos: “In many different ethnic groups having suffered extreme persecutions, or even among individuals whose traumatic experiences have been in the public eye, the victims may feel that they are somehow forced, or must at great cost, force themselves, into becoming ‘dignified’ role models for others by always being the first to forgive their injuries and deny their insecurities, however, they can only have the courage to be what they are, whatever that may be. The ‘heroic solution’ is in adopting an ideological group identity to mask the shameful past.” (De Mendelssohn 2008, pp. 393–94). He continues to further explain this way of working through the trauma: “Once this ideological pride, is resolved, a movement toward remembering, and thus mourning can begin.” (De Mendelssohn 2008, pp. 397–98)

Mourning is a sign of a psychic maturation and a process, which accompanies an integration of trauma. As many other psychics assert, mourning should happen and indeed does happen on both levels: individual and group. I believe that there exists a special relationship between the individual and collective levels of functioning. It is best described using the theory of fractals which asserts that what looks like chaos from the individual perspective evolves into a structure with rigorous inner logic once seen from a historically wider and chronologically longer perspective. This can be compared to a visualization of a Mandelbrot set (Mandelbrot 1983), which exhibits an elaborate and infinitely complicated boundary that reveals progressively ever finer recursive detail at increasing magnifications. It seems that, in this case, literature combines mathematics and the products of the human psyche.

Ukrainian literature, in the last decade, produced a considerable number of novels which deal with the trauma experienced over a few generations or a few lifespans. Some authors worth mentioning include Jadan, Lys, and Słoniowska. Their books fulfill the same function which was aptly formulated by Zabuzhko: to bridge the historical tissues and to restore the connections between generations. It would appear that this function has a universal meaning, which reflects the *Zeitgeist*. This alludes to the fact that there is a need to narrate such stories, which are often made up of family memories built over a few generations. When reading such books, the collective mourning process can emerge, less driven by guilt than by a genuine sense of loss and an appreciation of what was damaged or destroyed in the past. When we are dealing with the more complex phenomenon of transgenerational shame, the most that we can usually do is to trace the personal histories involved, which are offered to the reader by the novels. Shared mourning strengthens the cohesiveness and the reflective capacities of the whole group, and thus historical literature facilitates a work through of some hitherto unseen aspects of what Foulkes termed the “foundation matrix” of the group (Foulkes 1978). Thus, there is an inherent need to read such stories, which make such historical novels (and “the witness literature” as Elie Wiesel put it) very much sought-after.

But it is not just a Ukrainian phenomenon; Volkan describes his work in a psychiatric hospital with African-American youngsters, who collectively wrote poems to express their inner feelings and thoughts (Volkan 1963, 1966).

In the same vein, Lily Brett (1999), in her novel "Too Many Men" presented a female protagonist who is tortured by nightmares, she is unable to comprehend. Only after her trip to Poland, accompanied her father, does she realize that her dreams mirrored her parents' experience where both survived Auschwitz (in Drexler 2017, p. 20). Similarly, Zabuzhko's novel is also based on the reminiscences and memoirs of the UPA soldiers, which she had collected before writing the book. This process of transforming the subjective oral narrative into a written literary piece that survived the horrific and verbalizing effect of what was once the unspeakable, has, in itself, a therapeutic effect on being a witness and bearing the truth. The author, in this case, serves a mediating and containing function offering a space for a reader where identification, mourning, remembering, and thus, integration is possible. The reading of this type of literature provides the opportunity for a catharsis effect on the reader through the creation of the mental space, where collective trauma has a chance to be psychically worked through.

5. Conclusive Remarks

In short, transgenerational trauma and its silent effects cannot be ignored. This phenomenon is reflected in real-life circumstances of affected societies, including continuing poverty, impingements of democratic way of life, and corruption in a political system, including international manipulation, crimes, acting out on rage and aggression, intolerant splitting of countries, and the rise of right-wing ideologies. Psychoanalysis started as a cure discipline, but is surely applicable as a cultural criticism theory to explain the political and societal challenges as well as the developmental dead-ends with a high probability of truth, which as a tradition of group analysis (which also appeared in the time of world crisis) demonstrates its relevance when trying to understand the wide range of social and cultural phenomena concerning trauma. Literature, as a realm where individual and group psychic phenomena are creatively represented, is a reflection of human history including all its collective and individual wounds. It is a highly complex way to deal with a transgenerational transmission. In its positive component, transgenerationality provides the feeling of continuity and tradition, a necessity for survival.

On the individual level, we need to be made aware of a possible transgenerationally transmitted trauma in order not to overlook the repercussions of the experience of the previous generations in the conscious and unconscious worldview of our patients.

I hope to demonstrate how a literature piece can facilitate a working-through of the trauma, as it is inherited and shared by the large groups. The rising interest in this topic indicates the need for this problem to be addressed in a modern culture. It is easy to see that if looked at more often and more openly i.e., via literature and art, the insights into the unconscious dynamics of a transgenerational trauma transmission has the potential to interrupt the repetitive cycles of violence.

The novel "The Museum of Abandoned Secrets" offers a vivid and evocative vignette on how collective trauma embedded in literature and dreams can help to uncover trapped and wounded memories. Psychoanalytically, the novel might be seen as a return of repressed memories through the dreams from the unconscious ocean of the national collective trauma. There is still much research work to be done concerning the topic as postulated by Freud: "It remains an open question, how much the individual thinker or writer owes to the stimulation of the group in which she/he lives, and whether she/he does more than perfect a mental work in which the others have had a simultaneous share" (Freud 1921, p. 83).

The union of psychoanalysis and literature has proven, time and again, to be a solid one, where the mutual enrichment of new analytical concepts and neoteric insights in the work of literary expression are born. Literature and psychoanalysis work on the same subjects, helping all of us of to digest and integrate the traumas from the past. The new challenges faced by our society provides the need

for a more relevant vision and comprehension, reinforcing the need for further work to be done in this respect.

The main outcomes of this article are:

The reflection (once again) upon the intercorrelation between the psychic mechanisms discovered in psychoanalysis and enigmas of the soul as represented in a literary world.

I hoped to show or validate the importance of literature in a process of working through collective trauma and to allude to the role of the author, reader, and group in this process.

Furthermore, it was demonstrated how dreams in a literature piece could facilitate the process of dismantling the trauma narrative as well as facilitating further integration and psychic development, not just for the main protagonists, but, possibly for the writer and readers.

It was illustrated how the scientific insights from conterminal sciences such as biology, philosophy, and fractal geometry could help to validate psychoanalytic concepts of trauma, for individuals and the group.

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