

Psychohistory News

Newsletter of the International Psychohistorical Association

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*ROOM won NAAP's 2018
Gradiva Award for New Media*

ROOM: A Sketchbook for Analytic Action

The 2016 election shook up a lot of people including, of course, psychoanalysts. The listserv at the Institute for Psychoanalytic Training and Research (IPTAR) was full of heated chatter about what had happened. In fact, there was so much on-line discussion that the president of the society called a community meeting so that analysts could share their growing concerns. The idea to create a “com-

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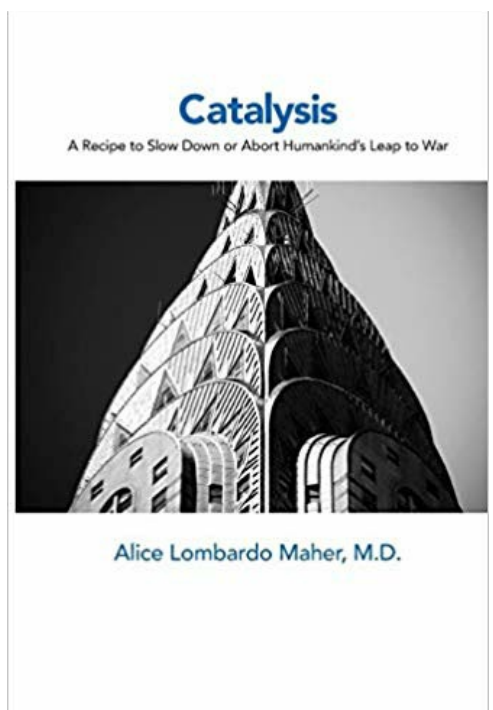
PSYCHOHISTORIAN INTERVIEW

Alice Lombardo Maher on her book *Catalysis*

Alice Lombardo Maher is a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst practicing in New York City. She has branched out from the practice of medicine and therapy and is the Founder and Director of Changing Our Consciousness, which is dedicated to creating effective dialogue across ideological lines and educating on emotional literacy. Dr. Maher

also co-created The Hot Stove Project to assist those who think outside of expected norms to achieve greater social integration. IP Books has recently published her book *Catalysis*, which promotes her vision and methods for personal and social transformation. She is interviewed here by Ken Fuchsman.

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ALICE MAHER

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KF: Your book is entitled *Catalysis: A Recipe to Slow Down or Abort Humankind's Leap to War*. What is catalysis?

ALM: In science, a catalyst is a substance that facilitates a chemical reaction. In psychoanalysis, the analyst facilitates internal conflict resolution between warring parts of the self. My goal is to enable human catalysts to emerge and facilitate conflict resolution on a larger scale. Put Democrats and Republicans, Israelis and Palestinians, religious people and atheists, in a room together with a catalyst, use my methodology, and you'll get somewhere.

KF: You write that you want to change our species' consciousness and have us consciously and deliberately take the next evolutionary leap. What do you mean by this and how do you envision this leap coming to fruition?

ALM: Vamik Volkan believes that we fight wars BECAUSE we're smart. Our brains evolved in such a way that we developed solid individual and group identities. Those can't be changed and challenge to them is experienced as threatening. As a result, we fight over abstract ideas like honor, glory, prestige, identity and core beliefs. We admonish each other to be empathic, but we're not wired to be able to wear the psychological shoes of the other except in superficial ways. If our species keeps going in this way, we risk self-destruction. I believe that we

need a new evolutionary leap in our brain wiring. That leap can be made consciously and deliberately, as a new language for communicating across human divides emerges.

What do I mean by "language"? We can bridge divides in science and technology because we've developed languages like computer science, physics, architecture and engineering. We need a similar educational curriculum to teach Human Understanding and Emotional Literacy - not as a social-emotional curriculum, but as a K-12-PhD literacy track.

KF: You have initiated a number of groups and activities, including some educational experiments. Tell us what they are and what results you have found.

ALM: All of my pilot projects have the goal of communication across massive human divides. For the past 5 years I developed an emotional literacy curriculum at Street Squash, an afterschool program in Harlem. In their senior year we partnered with students from Hunter High School and they wrote an e-book, *divides.org*, based on the work of Vamik Volkan. I'll be presenting to the parents and faculty at Hunter later this month. I hope to ally with them to develop another experimental curriculum. The young people understood what I was trying to do and made some magical things happen.

The Hot Stove Project is the mental health project that I co-created with Lois Oppenheim, PhD. Our first 20 minute docu-

mentary was called *How to Touch a Hot Stove*. We're almost done filming our second, full-length documentary funded by a grant from the NJ Arts Council, *Daniel, Debra, Leslie (and You?)*. It depicts remarkable people with severe psychiatric histories talking together about their shared experiences and different trajectories.

I've also hosted Facebook groups with friends from many different religious and political viewpoints. The original, very intense group was on my personal page. The Depth Perception Party was the second, public one. Recently I combined them in a new public page with the same title as my book.

KF: In the latter part of *Catalysis*, you discuss the roots of your ideas in your childhood experiences and a lengthy dialogue you had with a fellow psychoanalyst. Would you describe these experiences and how they led you to your innovative ideas?

ALM: That's a tough one, because it's so personal and so complicated. I had a powerful personal experience at the end of my analysis and analytic training, and I went to see Dr. X to discuss it. We developed a decade-long process that became an inside-out, creative, "catalytic" variant of analysis. We met five times per year free of charge, I wrote theoretical/philosophical love letters in between, and he sometimes responded. After a while I wanted to call what we were doing *Catalysis*, frame it as a new methodology and write about it. But he didn't see the process as

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sufficiently original or marketable. He thought he was just doing a favor for a friend. That led to a "war" - a psychologically violent battle that pulled in people from our community and had every element of armed conflict but the bloodshed. In the end, because I had developed my model and used it effectively in the final moments, it ended beautifully and we both won.

"Transformational moments" happen all the time in literature, theater, art, music and the consultation room. Using my methodology, they'll be able to happen in real life too. Heward Wilkinson, a psycho-therapist/philosopher in the UK, wrote a lovely discussion of my book referencing these moments.

KF: In the book, you describe what happened with you and Dr. X as a war, but I presume out of respect for your dialogue partner you omit details about what actually made it a war that as you say might have led to your killing each other. Would you hint at more of what made it potentially violent and thus could be a model for moving humankind away from war?

ALM: For a long time, our perspectives on what we were doing were very different. After a decade of writing and talking in secret, I wanted to emerge from hiding. But if we talked about it with others, our different spins could have ruined each others' careers - a fate much worse than death. For example, our colleagues might have assumed that he was acting out something personal (he kissed me goodbye at the end of our meetings in a friendly, parent-child kind of way), something that reflected a severe boundary violation tantamount to incest. Alternately, I could have come across a crazed patient with a psychotic transference. We came damn close to that kind of disaster, but neither of those things happened. We ended on a wonderful, movie-worthy note, and 15 years later he gave me permission to publish our story.

In the book, I use it as an example of the way that our identities and beliefs form the core of a self that will not be sacrificed. We will kill in its name. Those conflicts can't be gotten around with argument or empathy or redistribution of wealth or other political solutions. Those kinds of "wars" must be fought. In

my model, they can be fought effectively, without bloodshed, in a way that allows both sides to survive and creative solutions to emerge.

Young people who feel misunderstood, empty, hopeless and enraged will cut themselves. The physical pain relieves the more agonizing psychological state of not feeling alive and validated. I believe that the same phenomenon happens with large groups.

KF: Some may say that your ideas resemble the Christian Golden Rule in doing unto others as you would have them do to you. What do you see as the similarities and differences between your own innovations and that of the Biblical injunction.

ALM: I don't want people to do unto me what they would want done unto them, because we've very different people. If you give me a ticket to a beach and tell me to relax for a week, you'd be torturing me. If I had a "rule" it would be this: *Try to understand what others would want you to do unto them, then figure out an*

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appropriate and effective way to respond.

KF: You discuss the importance of using the educational system to promote emotional literacy and create productive dialogue across ideological boundaries. You expect then that educational experiences over time can lead to a change in humankind's consciousness. To me, your ideas resemble a good deal of what John Dewey hoped for in his educational endeavors in Chicago and in his 1916 classic *Democracy and Education*. The progressive education movement had successes and limitations. Are you familiar with Dewey's work and the history of progressive education in the U.S.? If so, what do you see as the way your proposals diverge from his? If not, you might find studying progressive education to be of value for what you hope to achieve.

ALM: I'm not familiar enough to comment on them, except to say that the idea of learning through active engagement seems a lot better than passive listening. I'm sure that's a simplistic misunderstanding, but it's a good-enough segue to my idea that emotional learning should be done using thought experiments that are experience-near but not personal enough to be boundary violating. Right now emotional education is either too intellectual (Psychology 101), too touchy-feely ("let's all be kind to each

other"), or too focused on mental health and pathology. I want to normalize human dynamics, teach students about different thinking styles and defenses and how to recognize and respond to them, present them as thought experiments and exercises in dialogue, and widen their repertoire of responses when someone triggers them with a disturbing comment. I'd love to learn more about Dewey's model and find points of intersection.

KF: In the book, you discuss the ways individual dialogues can change through seeking to understand the other's worlds and how education can lead towards the same end. How do you envision this being connected to the world of international relations and preventing war between nations? Some might claim that your proposed practices work better on the individual and educational levels and are less applicable to the complex world of jockeying between nations. How do you respond to that statement?

ALM: I don't deal with present-day issues on the world stage. My goal isn't to challenge Trump or his supporters, or people on the left who attack them in a way that can make the problem worse. If the people who are capable of seeing out of their left and right eyes at the same time can learn how to dialogue and fight elegant "wars" across ideological divides, those people will rise up as new leaders. I'm not working in the present day; I'm working for creative solutions and new leaders to emerge in the hopefully-near future.

Using my model, worthy leaders - people who can see out of their left and right "eyes" at the same time with one perspective dominant and leading - will rise up and be recognized. They will discover creative solutions to real-world problems.

KF: Are there ways your ideas could be applied to past conflicts such as preventing the American Civil War or the war against Hitler or are they applicable primarily to the next evolutionary leap and not the past?

ALM: Ha! I'd love to write a sci-fi screenplay about a group of colleagues transporting ourselves back in time with the hope of preventing the Civil War or Hitler's rise. Want to work on it with me?

KF: Since *Catalysis* has been published, what has been the response to the book so far? What have you gained and learned from these responses?

ALM: It's only been a few weeks, but I've been thrilled with the first few Amazon reviews and the ones on the back cover of the book, including one from Vamik Volkan. He tells me that he now references me in his presentations!!!

KF: Thank you, Alice.

ALM: Thank YOU, Ken. Your questions were wonderful.

Visit Alice Maher's website at <http://emotionalimprint.org/index.html>

ROOM

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munity newsletter” followed. A handful of analysts met with two graphic designers in a small office and out of this interdisciplinary matrix, *ROOM: A Sketchbook for Analytic Action*, took shape. The name itself suggests a stable place for reflection and change that is ongoing in time. *ROOM:2.17*, was issued on February 17, 2017, less than a month after President Trump’s inauguration.

ROOM is a unique publication. It not only contains articles up to 2,000 words on social and psychoanalytic concerns, but is filled with poetry, art, photography, and pictures of sculpture in alluring layouts. As psychoanalyst Hattie Myers says, *ROOM* is not a typical scholarly journal, “there are no footnotes. It has an analytic mission - to allow something in our society that may not be so conscious to become more conscious. Initially we just wanted to create a place where psychoanalysts could come together and be heard.” In less than 2 years, they have begun to do so. *ROOM* has readers in 80 countries. On November 10, 2018, the National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis bestowed its prestigious Gradiva Award for New Media on *ROOM*. It is well deserved. You can access *ROOM* free of charge by going to <http://www.analytic-room.com>.

The magazine’s website describes it as being “devoted to maintaining connections to ourselves and to our community through writing, art, music, and activism - disciplines that share with psychoanalysis a

capacity to uncover the ‘hard to reach’ corners of our humanity. We invite contributions from mental health professionals, writers, artists, photographers, and musicians working all around the world.”

The Editor in Chief of *ROOM* is the aforementioned Hattie Myers, a Training and Supervising Analyst at IPTAR with a private practice in Manhattan. Mafe Izaguirre is the Graphic Designer and Art Director. She is a visual artist from Venezuela currently residing in New York who has studied visual communication, photography, and digital media. I interviewed them about the origins, changes and purposes of their publication.

Dr. Myers has written that *ROOM* was “conceived as a way to help ourselves and our analytic community find our shaken bearings” after Trump was elected. The contributors to the first issue “expressed the kind of anger, grief, confusion and uncertainty that recalled for many of us the shock of 9/11.” After that first catharsis, the magazine evolved and continues to do so. She adds: “If the first issue of *ROOM* was a cry of anguish and a call for help, the second issue broached the possibility of entering expressively into areas which were previously un-seeable or un-sayable, and there was the #me too or the ‘Duty to Speak’ issue: How can irreconcilable differences be bridged? How is the news affecting us? How are all touched by the societal trauma of racism and sexism? The last issue, *ROOM 10.18* was super brave, authors were going out on a limb and moving into uncharted territory.” *ROOM*’s website,

launched last year contains all the issues and is a living archive of the last two years.

Mafe Izaguirre says that “in our time, something happens every day that changes the shape of history.” *ROOM* “recreates this experience in media.” It is “a space where three times a year everyone is invited to come together to experience the present moment. The images in *ROOM* resonate with the essays by getting at something that exists beyond words.” We use a visual language to create the global concept of each issue. This keeps our identity fluid and adaptable.” “*ROOM* gives voice,” Mafe says, to “what is going on in the public space, it is a powerful tool for understanding the complexity of our realities.”

As in a psychoanalytic process, *ROOM* has no external agenda or prepared themes. The editors and designer discuss the common and underlying ideas they see in each submission cycle. The poetry, art and essays are then selected and laid out to create the tone of the issue. The editorial describes for *ROOM*’s readers the global concept and introduces the essays.

In recent issues, there are such articles as Stefanie Hofer from Blacksburg, Virginia writing about Halloween in 2017 in her town where she was out with her four-year-old daughter and found a number of children were playing with toy guns and pointing them at people. Stefanie’s husband had been shot and killed at the 2007 Virginia Tech massacre. In Germany where she was born and raised, children are not exposed

to violence. It was a shock for her to see how pervasive imagery of violence is in the U.S. in doctor's waiting rooms and supermarkets. Stefanie asks "Why do so many mass shootings take place in the U.S. compared to other Western nations?" Pulitzer Prize finalist Diane Seuss's poem "Still Life With Dictator" graces the pages of *ROOM*. Economist Ann Kaplan discusses how she became an activist in the "Duty to Warn" resistance to Donald Trump. Her model for commitment was the political activism of her parents, the Freudian based psychoanalysts Louise and Donald Kaplan. There is a photo of a sculpture entitled "Sculpting Grief" by artist and clinical psychologist Natalie Korytnyk Forrester, and a painting by the Seattle psychoanalyst Joanna Goodman called "Political." Photos accompany the articles and are spread throughout the issue. This is a sample of just one typical issue.

In other issues, there have been articles on Trump's impact on the elderly, a memoir of growing up in the segregated South in the 1950s, the various effects of the media, and the changing nature of analytic practice in relation to the changing world. In the last issue an analyst from New York, Joseph Cancelmo, wrote a searing article describing the elephant in the room at the Kavanaugh hearings as the homo-erotic aspect of the men. Another piece, published around the time of the childhood separations inflicted on families by the U.S. government, described one analyst's childhood

experience living in a displaced persons camp in Germany. This was such a powerful and timely piece that a Congresswoman entered it into the Congressional Record.

Distinguished organizational psychologist Michael A. Diamond writes in *ROOM* about "Taking the U.S. Personally." He discusses both our private and public selves. Our private self requires "respite from intrusion and an opportunity to 'collect one-self.'" Space is needed for re-finding one's inner core. There is also public space where for good and ill, we express our ideas and feelings. Diamond asserts that in this time of crises, claiming the public sphere remains "vital to upholding American democracy." He sees "American citizenry reclaiming public space — physical locations such as public squares, streets, and parks and even virtual locations, such as the Internet and *ROOM*. This 'occupation' of public space is critical to the opposition and resistance."

Diamond is correct to find *ROOM* being part of the public space where deep concerns are brought into the light. Dr. Myers finds connections between the public space and psychoanalysis. She says, "the analytic process" is involved with "creating a stable, safe space in which foundational change can occur." One can build such relationships in the analytic setting. In *ROOM* we are building such relationships in the public space. Dr. Myers says, "The way *ROOM* is structured lends itself to transforming highly diverse individual expressions of meaning into ongoing community connection and

care. . . On a very personal level, my drive to understand how change happens drew me to psychoanalysis early on in life." To her, *ROOM* is "like analytic action writ large - in a new medium."

Mafe Izaguirre comes to *ROOM* from different experiences. She grew up and endured the repressive rule of Hugo Chavez. She says, "When you live in fear, you forget what freedom feels like." Living in the United States, she has again begun to experience the feeling of freedom. Now through *ROOM* and her other creative work she is finding more ways "to contribute to society, and fight for things I believe in, like freedom of speech." The dedication of Hattie, Mafe, and the editorial board which includes Gila Ashtor, Leon Anisfeld, Phyllis Beren, Elizabeth Evert, Janet Fisher, Richard Grose, Sonal Soni, and Aneta Stojnik) has resulted not only in a prestigious award but with making room in the troubled public sphere for art, commitment, and illumination.

Visit ROOM at

<http://www.analytic-room.com>. Ken Fuchsman, Ed.D. is President of the International Psychohistorical Association and a recently retired professor and administrator from University of Connecticut. He is a widely published psychohistorian and a member of the Editorial Boards of Clio's Psyche and The Journal of Psychohistory. Ken can be reached at kfuchsman@gmail.com

PSYCHOHISTORY BULLETIN BOARD

- **Howard Stein's new book of poetry, *Centre and Circumference*, looks at humanity from the perspective of Love and Life, Time and Memories, Work and Society. It is available from MindMend Publishing at Amazon and other sites.**
- **The Object Relations Institute Annual Conference will be on March 23, 2019 at Saint John's University Manhattan campus. The topic will be "The Therapeutic Action of Working with Erotic Transference." Dr. Susan Kavaler-Adler, PhD., ABPP, D.Litt., NCPsyA is the keynote speaker. The discussants are Stephanie Teitelbaum, LCSW and Dr. Margaret Yard. The moderator is Dr. Eva Papiasvilli.**
- **An updated and expanded version of Bandy Lee's best seller *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump* will be published on March 19, 2019. It contains ten essays by such luminaries**
- **as former ethics counsel to President Bush Richard Painter, Ambassador Norm Eisen, Jerrold Post, and Kevin Washington, among others.**
- **Don't miss upcoming Psychohistory Forums at Fordham Lincoln Center. On Saturday, January 26, 2019, David Lotto will present "Sex and Power in the Age of #MeToo" then at dates to be determined will be Larry Friedman and Pilar Sousa Lima Damião Medeiros presenting on "Erik Erikson on Negative Identity and Pseudo-speciation: Extended and Particularized by Ta-Nehisi Coates" and Brian D'Agostino's "Sacred Cows and Scapegoats: Displacement, Ideology, and the Future of Democracy."**
- **Simon & Schuster will be publishing a second expanded edition of Oliver Stone and Peter Kuznick's *The Untold History of the United States* at a date to be determined.**

REPORT FROM EUROPE

Psychohistory in the French Speaking Community by Marc-André Cotton

One of IPA's most important challenges is helping educate a wider audience about the childhood sources of adult psychopathology. The relevance and urgency of this agenda is underscored by the psychological state of Donald Trump and right-wing Republicans, as well as the resurgence of fascism

in Europe. Our International VP is part of this common effort, as explained in this report.

Since becoming IPA's International Vice-President four years ago, I've been educating French-speaking audiences about psycho-historical issues, especially the importance of supportive parent-

ing. This has been done mainly by means of regular publications, lectures, and interaction on the Internet and social networks. Thanks to this effort, psychohistory has gained in visibility within a still-too-small community of concerned adults and dedicated professionals.

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My regular contributions to the quarterly magazine PEPS have played a hefty part in this process. With more than three thousand subscribers, this 68-page print publication is one of the leading voices of the positive parenting movement in France and its editor Catherine Dumonteil Kremer is quite a supporter of our field (<https://pepsmagazine.com>). Psychohistory-related articles have recently covered topics such as Obama's multicultural heritage, the untold link between Brexit and British childrearing violence, the infancy of Sigmund Freud, positive parenting and guilt, use of Bowlby's attachment theory to understand the Weinstein sex scandal, and Donald Trump's European roots. "I love to read such stimulating perspectives," one of PEPS's subscribers told me at the last Lyon's annual Eco-Fair. "It widens my comprehension of current events."

These articles are available on my website *Regard conscient* (<http://www.regardconscient.net>) whose viewing audience has risen to an average of one thousand daily visits in the past year. Some of them have simultaneously been published in *Clio's Psyche*, *The Journal of Psychohistory* or *Psychohistory News* and are also accessible on my English homepage (<http://www.regard-conscient.net/edefault.htm>).

Such improved visibility owes a great deal to my regular use of Facebook for weekly updates and comments on supportive parenthood for the benefit of my 3500+ FB friends. Likewise, before the French presidential election in May 2017, the eco-parenting magazine *Grandir Autrement* ("Growing up differently") published an extensive article on psychohistory with links to resources such as deMause's *Foundations of Psychohistory* (<http://www.regardconscient.net/archi17/1709psychohistoire.html>). To this day, it has scored nearly three hundred shares on Facebook.

I have also been lecturing at an annual summer university organized by PEPS magazine. These meetings enlist about sixty adults (plus children) for a three-day residency program on positive parenting issues, emotional awareness, and personal development. This year's conference was dedicated to Trump's family heritage, but I always stress the importance of applying psychohistory in the lives of participants. Topics I addressed in past years include the intergenerational transmission of trauma and *Regard conscient's* perspective on the therapeutic process. All these sessions have been video recorded and can be viewed on my website (<http://www.regardconscient.net/videos.html>).

This spring, I began close cooperation with *La Maison de l'enfant* ("The Child's Home"), an organization dedicated to the training of

professionals to be parenting coaches. Among other things, I offer a psychohistorical perspective on Freud's own childhood traumas and their impact on psychoanalysis. In France, Freudian concepts are influential among academics and child welfare professionals, and my contribution elicits considerable interest. (For more on my treatment of this topic, see my recent *Clio's Psyche* article, "Sigmund Freud, Son of Amalia" <http://www.regardconscient.net/archives/1802sigmundandamalia.html>). I expect this partnership to progress over the following months.

In February 2018, for the fourth year now, I maintained a psychohistory booth at Lyon's annual Eco-Fair, one of France's biggest gatherings of environmental and social activists. Through this venue, the IPA is reaching a large and vibrant audience about the social impacts of punitive parenting. The relevance of psychohistory for a sustainable future is evident, for example, in the Trump Administration's denial about climate change. With your renewed confidence, I will be honored to keep up with this important endeavor. All the best from Europe!

Marc-André Cotton is a teacher, Geneva-based psychohistorian, and the IPA's International Vice-President. He can be reached at marc-andre.cotton@netcourrier.com