



**Psychic Reality in Context: Perspectives on
Psychoanalysis, Personal History, and Trauma
(The International Psychoanalytical Association
Psychoanalytic Ideas and Applications Series)**

Marion Michel Oliner

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This book skillfully combines autobiographical stories with clear psychoanalytical theories. During her childhood, the author experienced the Holocaust and was left understandably traumatised by it. It was her desire to confront this trauma that led her to psychoanalysis. For decades, the coherence of psychoanalysis seemed to be threatened by the conflicting thinking of many psychoanalytical colleagues about trauma and trauma affect, and also about the influence of external reality on the psychic reality discovered by Freud. However, Marion Oliner counters this potential conflict with her innovative theoretical integration, combined with remarkable conceptual outcomes and treatment techniques. This book spans the author's work over the last fifteen years on the impact of external reality on psychic reality. During this period many analysts, especially in the English-speaking countries and Germany, where historic events loomed large in the lives of their patients, have turned from the exclusive emphasis on psychic reality to greater attention to the traumatic impact of external reality. Considering that this has led to a body of psychoanalytic writings in which events are used to give a name to the pathology, incest survivor, Holocaust survivor, transmission of trauma, to name a few, it has implicitly created two categories of patients: patients who, because of their failed solutions for conflict, are regarded as active agents in their own suffering, and those who are victimized by events they endured passively; thus implicitly taking away from the second group the focus on conflicting motivations. This in turn has led to the adoption of some of Freud's concepts that lack a dynamic dimension. First among those is the repetition compulsion which supposedly causes events to be repeated because they happened. The concept has its place, but, if not properly understood, risks by-passing the analysis of unconscious guilt as a motivating factor in repetition. These factors have not been sufficiently explored in the analytic literature, and over the years the author has written a number of articles that try to distinguish important elements that contribute to the psychoanalytic exploration of trauma. This book is an important summation and further development of that work.

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