

Editorial

Peter O' Connell and Eve Watson

Welcome to Issue 13 of Lacunae. First, we thank our contributors for the high value of their contributions and the work invested in them.

The phrase “acting out” has pejorative connotations in the general lexicon of the helping professions. Self-harm and suicide are seen as cardinal exemplars. Hysterical paralyses were seen in a similar light by hostile contemporaries in Freud’s early years and the sufferers, mostly women, viewed as malingerers. Despite these connotations, for psychoanalysis, acting out is a phenomenon close to the symptom and is, on occasion, the symptom. The symptom is generally held to be the patient’s own attempt at a cure and we often find that work of the patient’s own has been done, and some attempt at recovery or truce essayed before s/he approaches an analyst or therapist. This recalls a recent case of a woman, now in her seventies, who had been sexually abused as a child. When she reached sixteen, she engaged in sexual activity with boys of her age, not for the pleasure involved but because she saw it as “my job.” By acting as she perceived a woman might, she was seeking to install a subjectively contingent role, acting out to assert independence of childhood sexual and emotional oppressions. In an issue dedicated to the centenary of the Easter Rising and the birth of the Irish Free State, we would be remiss not to also invite reflection on the disturbing legacy of institutional, clerical and individual sexual abuse wrought on our most vulnerable citizens since winning our hard-fought freedom.

The phrase “acting out” has real application for the women of the 1916 Rising discussed by Marlene French Mullen and for the wider project that was the Rebellion. Some see taking part in a doomed rebellion not merely as acting out, but going to the extreme of the continuum and tantamount to suicide. The slow deaths of the Republican hunger strikers in 1981 in the Maze Prison in Belfast were often described as suicides by those opposed to them. In the forms of action and the motives attending 1916 and its aftermath, there is a literal **confusion** of life and death, an unconscious welding of living and dying, defeat and victory. Moreover, because of the various confusions and countermanding orders, the Rising itself could be seen as a collective bungled action, its success in the execution and the effect on public opinion of the leaders’ deaths by firing squads. Pdraig Pearse, one of the executed rebel leaders, predicted success from the failure of the rebels’ efforts. Of course the rebellion itself is also viewed as an act of theatre, a literal and symbolic enactment of confronting the Other against all the odds, as much as a military engagement itself.

Issue 13 follows closely on the heels of Issue 12 and continues to a considerable extent with themes linked to the Rising such as revolution, passion, *jouissance*, drive, life and death, love, desire and freedom. In this issue, these are more broadly explored in relation to social justice, mourning, narcissism, capitalism, Islamofascism, contemporary violence, the drive, the phallus and Lacan’s considerations of love. The issue is thus filled with key concepts for contemporary practice and thought and as a whole suggests that perhaps the boundary between the individual and the social or collective should not be inscribed too definitively.

Our first contribution, posthumous in nature, comes in the form of extracts from the diary of the suffragette, socialist and heroine, Madeleine French Mullen, written when imprisoned by British authorities in Dublin's Kilmainham and Mountjoy jails in the aftermath of the Easter Rising. Excitingly for Lacunae's readers, the diaries are published for the first time and are a fascinating insight into the events immediately after the Rising and the mind of one its active and most deeply committed participants. Madeline's great grandniece-in-law, Marlene French Mullen, offers a companion piece to the diaries, "The Bubbling Has Not Yet Subsided" in which she speculates, in the best sense, about the propelling forces driving women such as Madeleine French Mullen and her lifelong companion, Dr. Kathleen Lynn. The conclusions are tentative, the writer preferring to tread lightly and evoke possibilities rather than resort to imaginary rationalisations about motives.

Rodolphe Adam in "What Does It Mean to Mourn?" eloquently explores the relationship between time and death and offers a repudiation of the medico-societal demand to short-circuit the time needed to mourn. The time for the work of mourning is a necessity, not a commodity. To mourn, we must give it time, which is regulated by the singularity and the temporality of the unconscious of the mourner. Drawing on his clinical experience with vignettes, he demonstrates some vicissitudes of the ego's attachment to the lost object as determined by the operation of the signifier and its implication in the process of mourning.

At an individual level in the everyday world thus, in something close to acting out, we engage in a version of the medieval reminder of mortality, the Dance of Death, literally and metaphorically. The politician does this in a metaphorical sense. The

political fray carries the possibility that s/he may suffer political death. For the sportsperson, as the racing car driver, this is sometimes more literal. In both Hilda Fernandez's "Narci-Capitalism" and Rob Weatherill's "The Right Turn. Part Two," acting out is indicated in forms that are divested of nearly all symbolic garb and questions are proffered by both about the calling power of the destructive and the near demonic insistence of the death drive in our contemporary era. Important links are made to preceding ages while specifying the crucial indices of the contemporary era; ever important is what is now designated as the "post-truth" era.¹ Hilda's work invokes the helpless cruelties in Mexico's drug wars, arguably conjuring the murderous deaths of another time, the Great War, discussed by Freud in "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" (1915). She reflects critically on the crucial role of narcissism in terms of the social and the individual, in light of the impacts of capitalism.

Rob explores the death drive and the negative social power it engenders in the "call" of religion today to address the real. He leans on Lacan's 1960 prediction of the "triumph" of religion and assesses the detonating messages of certain contemporary ideologies and religion that generate and enhance individual rage that re-emerges in the collective, fuelled and disseminated by media, especially social media. The implication is that the death drive, present even in the infant, draws on infinitely powerful wells of human rage, envy and hatred. We link here Rob's work about Isis and Hilda's about the Mexican drug cartels notionally around the exploitation of the world's most disenfranchised populations and the exploitative and nihilistic use of citizens' rage and impotency.

¹ The Oxford English Dictionary declared that its international word of the year in 2016 is "post-truth" and cites a 2,000% increase in its usage compared to 2015.

Towards a much different end and offering another solution, as suffragettes, Madeleine French Mullen and Kathleen Lynn also identified with Dublin's poorest and most disenfranchised which served for them as a metaphor for women's plight.

Dan Collins illustratively explores in "The Drive: Pathogenic and Curative" the history of the concept of the drive and recalibrates it in a distinctly human psychoanalytic context free from the lure of entrapping biological referents. Tracing the development of the drive in relation to demand, desire and fantasy via the breadth of Lacan's work, Dan importantly raises the crucial question of our existence as enjoying beings beyond the questions we are born into - "What does the Other want from me?" or "How am I going to make myself desired by the Other."

In "Bending the Phallus: Considerations of Desire in Seminar V and Beyond," Sarah Meehan O'Callaghan charts Lacan's development of the phallus as signifier in a close reading of his fifth seminar. In a thought-provoking analysis, Sarah explores the question of patrimony and normality via what she designates as Lacan's "queer" conceptualisation of desire. Finally, and in what we aim to have as a regular feature, a book review, Sheila Power takes us on an enlightening chapter-by-chapter review of Bruce Fink's, *Lacan on Love* (2016). With dexterous use of Fink's (2015) translation of the *Transference* seminar, Sheila's close reading of this companion book to the seminar indicates that it is much more than a companion book to the seminar - it also deliberates on Lacan's considerations of love throughout the course of his work.

Love and hate, desire and drive, life and death, social justice and narcissism, religion and capitalism, the earlier and later work of

Lacan - there is much to read in this issue. We wish you happy reading!