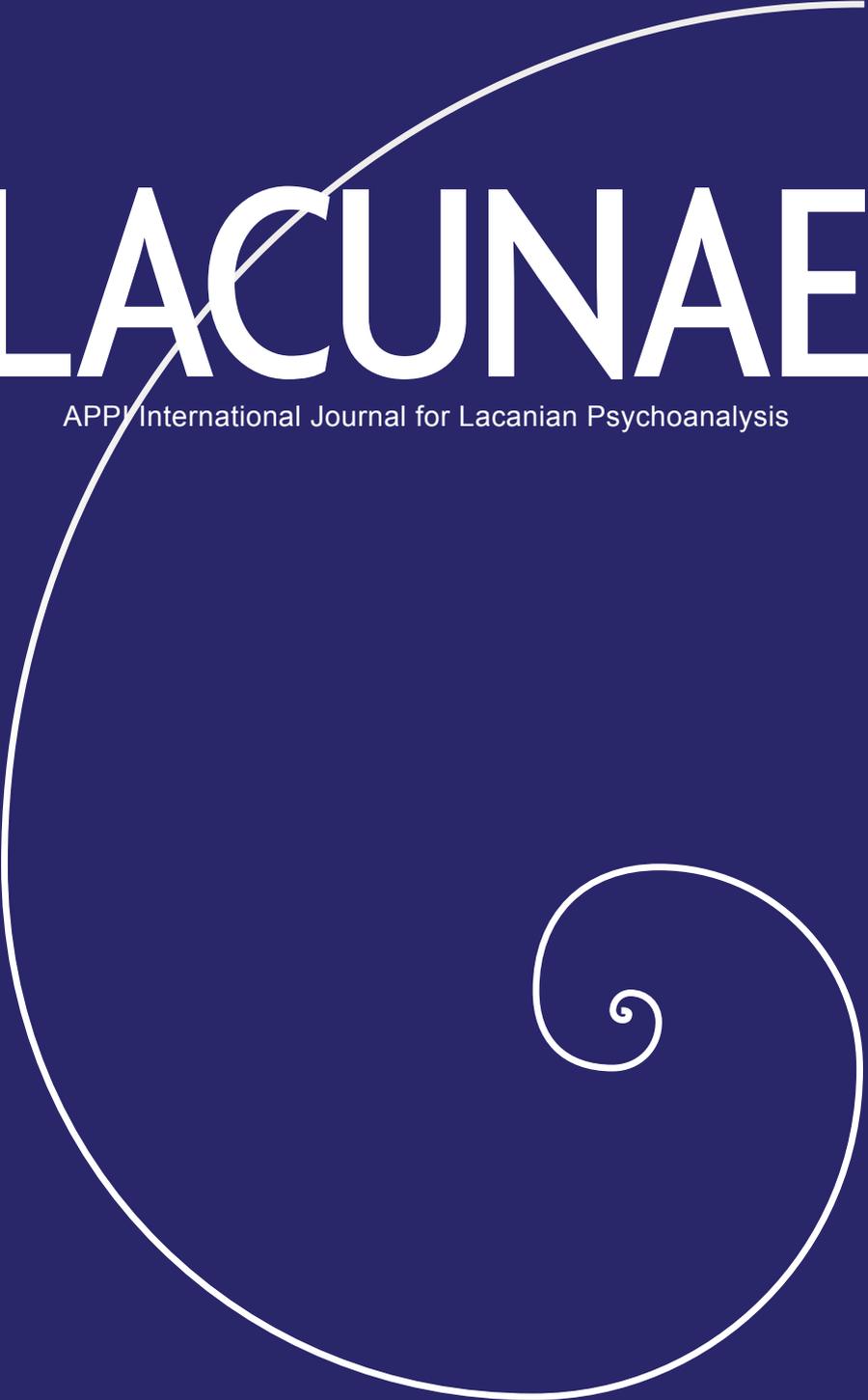


Issue 11

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EDITORIAL

MEDB RUANE

In **Brian Friel's** *Translations* (1980), an Irish-speaking woman and an English-speaking man meet in early nineteenth-century Donegal. Máire also speaks Latin but not English, Yolland, a lieutenant with the British army, only has his mother tongue. How may they communicate? He names the local places he is surveying, mispronouncing them wonderfully. Máire responds antiphonally, so that the words of their exchange become like a melody.

“*Tu es centurio in-in-in exercitu Brittanico*”, she says. “Yes-yes?” he replies, believing that she is speaking Irish. “Go on - go on - go on - say anything at all. I love the sound of your speech” (*Plays 1*, 1996, London: Faber, p. 427).

If we situated Máire and Yolland on **Lacan's** formula of sexuation, glints of their jouissances might sparkle enough for us to better specify how miscommunication is necessarily the logic of love. Assuming that he is on the masculine side and she is on the feminine side, we could say that for Yolland, it was all about the phallus and that for Máire, jouissance was about the phallus and about an elsewhere. He functions within limits, sexuating himself via fantasy and object *a*, cause of desire, according to his singular knotting of object choice and identifications. The enigma of her femininity is as Other to him as the Irish language and peoples were for British colonisers. Yolland cannot understand Máire yet he loves the look and the sound of her. It is as if her body speaks his semblants to him.

The challenge for the theme writers in Issue 11 is to offer ways of interpreting and orienting the social signifier ‘*Masculinities*’ within the terms of today’s Lacanian clinic. What might have been so in an imaginary 1820’s edge-of-empire townland, where *Translations* is set, was more problematic by 1980, when the play was premiered in Derry, because the Names of the Father were fading

away. **Ernest Jones's** biologicistic 'male and female He created them' could not be grounded clinically for speaking beings. The body was upsurging. Lacan had already elaborated his formulae of sexuation and the concept of the *sinthome*, which forefront the body and its events. By October 2015, when Brian Friel died, people in Ireland had voted for marriage equality by referendum, thus abolishing Constitutional support for the supposedly 'natural' harmony between a man and a woman (May 2015). That important recognition by the social and legal Other won't relieve subjects of having to find their own way, however. Like Daphnis and Chloe, as Lacan also said, each one must learn how to make love (1958, in *Écrits*, trans. B. Fink, p.576).

Ernesto Sinatra introduces a number of clinical observations that follow from Argentina's introduction of marriage equality in 2010. He sagely recalls the mother of a gay client who finally embraced her son's sexuality once she realised that he could now get married and make her a grandmother. Like Ireland, Argentina had been a Roman Catholic country where acknowledging rights for gay women and men threatened the Church's canon laws and, therefore, its power. The result was welcome but its effects did not make things simpler. Gender reassignment became a matter of what you chose to say on your national identity card – whether or not the saying was a genuine 'solution' to the challenges of being sexuated.

Writing from France, another former Catholic country, which introduced same-sex marriage in 2013, **Hervé Castanet** carefully distinguishes the psychoanalytic clinic from the effects of the signifier 'gender' and elaborates the singular pathways of three men in same-sex partnerships who attended his clinic throughout those transitional years. One posited celibacy as a defence against the real of the body, another had left his wife to follow his young lover, a boy in a boy band who was what he was not. A third man navigated his crisis about the cause of his father's desire, and his own desirousness, by provoking himself with various possible logical declensions of **Frege's** principle of exclusion when it came to key points of naming the father-son set.

Lacan spoke of love – *amour* – as *l'amour*, as a wall between the sexes, between

prospective partners of whatever sexuation. What, then, can the analytic experience teach us about a man or, better, about a body that sexuates itself on the masculine side? The two are not one. In our issue on *Femininities* (*Lacunae*, vol. 2:2, May 2013, ed. **J. Conway**), writers considered the ‘masculine’ in what Jones (and **Horney**, etc.) would have called a female body. Orienting ourselves to the clinic, masculinity is not something performative or pejorative, as it is for aspects of gender and queer and critical theories, and it is about a particular reply to the social Other. We might ask if the term ‘*masculinities*’ is a weasel word clinically, however useful it may be to the Master discourse. Let’s read about the case **Nestór Yellati** examines of a young child with a penis who says he is a girl – indeed, the little boy says he is a Princess. The child, a twin, had been restless since birth, unlike his brother, and his mother wanted him to be happy. He was brought from one gender reassignment clinic to another because his assertion was taken at face value, with the child meanwhile becoming increasingly symptomatic. Yet little Manuel was less than two years old when the gender drama began, not quite an *enfants* but surely still premature, in Lacan’s early sense of the term (1938). When the Other of gender emerged, Yellati points out, it was always through the Mother’s mouth.

Masculinity, then, is more a social construction effected by the signifier than a singular knotting of identifications and object choice. **Bruno de Halleux** illuminates this clinical sense of masculine and takes us through the steps he took, often with great difficulty, as he went through years of analysis while working with autistic children and living a life. Here, drawing on his Pass testimony (as an AE/Analyst of the School), de Halleux describes how he was boxed in by phallic limits, blinded by his fantasy and by repetition. He wonders what he can say as an AE about his sexuation and what the end of analysis was for him.

Gustavo Dessal asks where men are now and sounds an alert about what he calls “devirilisation” for both men and women. Are men as a species going to become extinct? Men are simultaneously censured for exercising their masculinity, while being reproached for not being man enough. **Rob Weatherill** meditates on the theme in contemporary culture, juxtaposing such devirilised men with the kinds of hyper-masculinities that rage outside the not-All, such as ISIL. The rise

in reported deaths by suicide among men especially, which he notes, is a particular feature of Ireland's post-economic boom society where a man who has nothing may come to believe he is nothing. And not only in Ireland. **Hilda Fernandez** follows Lacan's use of the classical Greek phrase *Me Phynai* (rather not to be) to specify some aspects of this 'silent epidemic'. Writing from the truth of her own clinic, she asks what is this tragic logic and why do some subjects rush towards a final nothing while others who also suffer do not. After all, Oedipus chose to live and Antigone to die.

The Oedipus Complex can be said to provoke identification on one side and object choice on the other, for each subject. Yet although the question of the limit of gender is to be found there, that does not necessarily indicate the jouissance at stake. A man may say he is a man but the mere saying reveals nothing about his mode of jouissance or how he has fetishised his fantasy. Take Schreber, for example. **Sarah Meehan O'Callaghan** finds an abyss of masculinities in his case, reading it via *Seminar III* (1955-56). And what of embodiedness, **Carol Owens** asks when she reflects on the signifier 'birds', and its variations, in her critical study of Schreber as considered by Freud and Lacan, and when examined alongside Lacan's remarks on the case of Gérard Primeau.

Something happened at the level of the real, which produced effects for Schreber. At this level, sex is not about body but about cells, about a viral algebra that can be read as xx or xy , or variations. The speaking being possesses a body which it may appropriate or colonise, to follow Friel, over time. Otherwise, the body is like a straw man, a *homme de paille*, which serves as a nameholder that may or may not be true. We can enjoy with it, possess it on an imaginary and symbolic level and experience traces left on it by the conjunction of language and the organism. Science produces a split between this level of the real and the semblance. With the clinic now oriented to the real, this real that science is increasingly mining, **Alan Rowan** interrogates the concept of 'the real unconscious' as it functions theoretically. He distinguishes it from the transference unconscious of supposed-to-knows and of signifiers and applies it to the clinic. **Adrian R. Price** extracts the algebra from Lacan's first lesson of *Encore* (1972-73) via the logic of sexualisation that Lacan wrote. It goes without saying – but must be said – that

to function in psychoanalytic research, the logic demands precise specifications. This writer rotates it via various commentaries and interpretations before and after *Encore* to better specify what real is at stake.

There are epiphanic effects on the traditional notion of subject because of the rise of the image to its zenith in phenomena such as Facebook, for **Robert Kilroy**. Meanwhile **Helena Texier** cautions would-be guide books to Lacan not to come near her door.

Let us end with a return to Brian Friel, who died on the second day of this month. His genius in *Translations* is to have the audience ‘translate’ for the characters on stage. English is spoken more or less throughout, even in the love scene, but because ‘we’ know that ‘they’ think they are speaking in Irish, we hear them differently.

Finally, Máire asks the hedge schoolmaster Hugh to teach her English. “I will provide you with the available words and the available grammar,” he says. He pauses. “But will that help you to interpret...?” (Friel, 1996, p. 446).

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