

LACUNAE

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EDITORIAL

MEDB RUANE

On the edge, at the brink
above an underworld.

My country wounded to the heart.

(Eavan Boland, 2014, 'Nationhood: Two Failed Sonnets')

For Stephen Dedalus it was a nightmare he wanted to escape, for others Irish history is a never-ending story where ethics, ideals and theatre meet sharp divisions about who tells the tale, who authors the supposed facts. It is distinctive though not uniquely distinguished from the experiences of other small countries who were colonised but its distinctions are all its own. William Trevor said that in Ireland you have to pick your tribe. For decades, the country operated a range of segregations that sought to make the other not exist – rich from poor, imperialists from colonised, males from females, English speakers from Irish speakers, Catholics from Protestants, illegitimate children from those born within a marriage, Travellers from settled, 'mad' from 'sane', asylum-seekers from citizens. Since the Belfast Agreement (1998), diversity of belief and allegiance are officially recognised on both parts of the island. One head of state, Michael D. Higgins, is elected, the other, Elizabeth II, is a hereditary monarch who is also head of the established church. Segregations continue.

How may a psychoanalytic clinic orient itself to 2016 commemorations of 1916? Why should it? Lacan said it straight: "Analysis itself is not separable from the subject's engagement in his practice. Let whoever cannot meet at its horizon the subjectivity of his time give it up then..." (2005, *Écrits*, London: Norton, 264). So, something about the real of 1916 provokes a contemporary clinic, something of 'the trauma of history' that Paula Meehan writes into nine poems from her forthcoming collection *Geomantic*, composed around working through the decade of commemorations.

In this traumatic sense, the Rising – the *jouissance* is in the word - may be thought of as a moment around which a narrative developed in order to invent a national subjective identity. And, as often with trauma, the real can be overwritten with the historical imaginary, at the expense of the symbolic. This real is impossible, unsayable by definition, yet specifying some logic may orient the compass of a practice. Lacan's comparative historical approach - on psychoanalysis and classical drama for example - lets us see the transferential unconscious as historically given because it has to do with language and is marked by history as an effect of language. History on another turn is not the same as the past.

Psychoanalysis's politics are of course a politics of the symptom which are inherent in the clinical dimension. Bassols distinguishes psychoanalysis in intension (the radically singular clinic of one by one) and psychoanalysis in extension (the social Other where aspects of the 1916 discourse and its effects may be placed) (2015, 'The Analyst and his Politics', *Psychoanalytic Notebooks* 30, 91-101). When presented topologically, he reminds us, they appear not as separate but as contiguous (Lacan, *Proposition of 9 October 1967*, trans. R. Grigg, 1995, *Analysis* 6, 1). So it is the business of psychoanalysis. Lacan went on to explore the how of it in the four discourses he developed soon after the Proposition (*Sem XVII*, 1969-70).

We may ask about transmission, which operates variously during this issue – not via Oedipal imaginaries but through subjectivities, temporalities, signifiers, through the real of it all and through a vivid writing called the Proclamation which was voiced on the first day of the Rising (and largely ignored) from the steps of General Post Office, the quilting point for this landscape. The timing spoke: it was Easter, a Christian festival, and also *Bealtaine*, a Celtic celebration poised between the spring and summer equinoxes. Lacan looked at inter- and trans-generational effects in *Family Complexes* (1938), with echoes of Freud and of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (1821). Marie-Hélène Brousse summarises briefly:

... in a family, generally at the social level what is being transmitted is name and wealth, or poverty which is the same dynamic. It just depends on your family. So, wealth and a name. That is not what is central for psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is not the mere transcription of anthropology or sociology. What is important for psychoanalysts

in transmission? I'm going to paraphrase Lacan who said that it is the transmission of a desire that is not anonymous. (2007, *Lacanian Compass* 1:11, 24/5)

'The transmission of a desire that is not anonymous'. The Proclamation seems to read in the register of extension as a nominator for an ideal republic. Influenced partly by the *American Declaration of Independence* (1776), the *French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (1789) and Irish theorists such as Wolfe Tone (1763-1798) and Edmund Burke (1729-1797), it called for a radical restructuring of political and social life and was distinguished principally by the inclusion of women as citizens and the status of children. This twentieth century shift places it within the ambit of rights-based thinking that underlies the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). In fact, the Republic was not enacted until 1949.

The event '1916' was a cut in a linear narrative that reads as a beginning and an end – an end to political stagnation and the beginning of a transformation that for good or ill in Mary E. Daly's words 'shapes the Ireland we have now'. It retroactively interpreted nineteenth century events, including the traumatic Famines and the gagging of the Irish language interpreted here by Michael Cronin, as well as being part of a wider zeitgeist internationally. Approached as a universal text, it testifies to the dominant mode of jouissance organising that particular discourse in that historical moment. Whether read now as spectacle in Guy Debord's sense, shibboleth in Roddy Doyle's, or theatre in Declan Kiberd's, that call from a proclaimed Republic set up an ideal and idealised notion. Did/does the gap between it and the everyday create desire? Idealisation also implies transforming an object into a master signifier, which in turn provokes the structural inertia of the Ego Ideal. And as such, '1916' read literally also leads into a series of ultimate death events whose mythologies veil a lethal jouissance, as variously explored by Rob Weatherill and Clifford Smyth. Bodies start becoming sacred when they decompose: the executions of sixteen of the leaders provoked stark effects.

Mentioned less often were the hundreds of children and adults hurt and killed by such jouissance. It went on. In 1937 the Free State adopted a sectarian Constitution that mirrored Roman Catholic theology, including its essentialist teaching

on women, which still stands. The Vatican had been established as a sovereign state in 1929, after an agreement with Benito Mussolini, and was opposed to any whiff of what was then called internationalism (socialism). One effect in the Irish Free State was that the Catholic hierarchy opposed civic initiatives on social services such as schools and hospitals and controlled them instead. ‘Good citizen’ became synonymous with ‘good Catholic’. The Church’s Constitutional special position was removed when the Republic joined the European Economic Community (1973).

Lia Mills works through symbolic and identificatory strands around Irelandness towards a personal history where subjectivated words from writers and writing held much more truth than Official Ireland did. Olga Cox Cameron looks at how the ‘language event’ from the early twentieth century cultural revival created ‘a terrible beauty’, in Yeats’s famous words, that turned into a counter-violence whose effects persist in her clinic. Nigel Mulligan, with Gerry Moore, develops a micro-narrative within the prism of their macro-narrative based on discourse theory as he follows his great-grandfather’s story from young rebel to ageing paraplegic who is sorely disappointed by the realities of the new State. And John O’Donoghue looks at the push to segregation and exclusion via Donald Trump’s jouissance and Lacan’s *Ethics*.

The ‘lave it so’ Joyce writes into the mouths of the washerwomen in *Finnegans Wake* becomes for Richard Kearney a call, as in *laver*, ‘to wash and heal the wounds of the past. And also as in *let be*’. Working through lost and lesser-known narratives he recovered, Kearney borrows Joyce’s words to encourage a philosophy of ‘twinsome’ minds where ‘both/and’, ‘remembering/forgetting’, replace the closed set ‘either/or’.

In Ireland 2016, many citizens have neither knowledge nor ancestral connections to 1916 Ireland. The Rising is still part of recent family mythology for many others. Working with the symptom implies a dealing with an other real that cannot be entirely defined in the historic field. As Seamus Heaney wrote (1984, *Station Island*, XII):

That subject people stuff is a cod’s game

