

Summary of Twentieth Anniversary APW Conference
June 14-16, 2019
Dublin, Ireland

On the Drive

by Judith Hamilton

Our conference was held in a hotel on a hill in the south of Dublin, in the town of Dalkey—the Fitzpatrick Castle, an eighteenth-century hotel with heavy dark wood swinging doors to the conference room where we met for three days. Our keynote speaker was Russell Grigg who presented on “The Ontology of the Drives: From Mythology to the Real,” basing it on a close reading of Lacan’s Seminar XI. He felt guided by a “French” joke: “That’s all very well in practice, but does it work in theory.” Freud says the idea of the drive is not a concept, but a convention of our theory, fundamental, obscure and indispensable. It is distinct from the instincts found in animals. Russell proposed that Lacan retains the term drive for the partial sexual drives, and that, by detaching the drive from bodily need, he no longer considers it to be on the border between the body and the mental but between the body image and the signifier. The real is implicated in the object around which the drive *fait la tour*. The source of the drive is the rim; the goal is satisfaction and the aim, if it is separable from the goal, is to circle around the object again and again in a repetition.

This keynote was accompanied by papers given by twenty-two participants, about one-third mainly theoretical, one-third clinical and one-third social, aesthetic, literary and sociological. Wanting to not leave anybody unacknowledged: the theoretical were papers by Marco Antonio Jorge (the partial drive is fundamentally the death drive, which incorporates the sexual drive, repeatedly seeks *das Ding* and has to accept mere objects), Gerry Sullivan (use of mathematical concepts to illustrate aspects of the modern psyche; drive as a construction; difference between the logic of the drive and the economy of the drive), Rolf Flor (linguistic exploration of the German word for drive, *Trieb*, and related words, including one that means “drift,” *Treiben*), Christine Gormley (Zupančič’s discussion of sex and that the ethics of the drive is the ethics of the real), Dan Collins (drive as a linguistic phenomenon, as speech, as discourse, as preventing desire), John O’Donoghue (contributions to the drive idea by Brentano, Weisman, Strachey, Picasso, Meno’s paradox, Kant and Sade), and Hilda Fernandez (the death drive as the most serious challenge in the clinic, showing up as a trouble-making agitator and as a beneficial cut).

Clinical papers were given by Marie Walshe (the “analytic act” bears on the drive in the transference; patient changes with the analyst’s spontaneous joke), Chris Vanderwees (suicidality and the death drive in a patient yet to choose between neurosis and psychosis), Kristen Hennessy (how analysis can help a child from a drive-infused environment), Judith Hamilton (raw drive appears in a regressed patient, and in the mother of an intractable patient), and Francine Danniau (analysis offers an asylum seeker the singularity of her being in the context of diminished *jouissance* of speech).

Papers addressing a broad range of topics related to the drive were given by Liz Monahan (aesthetic, sublimations of the scopophilic drive, as distinct from the “gaze,” and twentieth-century art examples), Gerry Moore (our fascination with carnage as a lure on social media), Josh Finkelstein (the drive dynamics and dangerousness of the Incel community), Marlene

French Mullen (the need for a new social bond, balancing our relations with another subject with our pursuit of jouissance), Pauline O'Callaghan (the sinthome of Joyce; the drives of Stephen and Bloom by mapping their day in Dublin), Mike Holohan (the drive of "conversion" illustrated in the autobiography of J.B. Pontalis), Carol Owens (the contemporary pursuit of and breakdowns because of liminal [transitional] experiences), Stephanie Swales (liminality as exemplified in constant self-reinvention and in the social realm of celebrity chefs), Genevieve Watters (loneliness in the mass consumption culture that appeals to drives using techniques derived from the neuroscience of motivation systems), and Eve Watson (the absence of shame in politics and culture and an appeal to take a stand).

As is evident from the topics, and the discussions they provoked, the conference was informative, stimulating, fascinating, and affirming of the work of all the participants and other attendees.