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The Irish Uprising of Easter 1916: A Psychopolitical Dialogue

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ABSTRACT *At the time of the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising in Ireland, this article offers a psychopolitical dialogue between two friends and colleagues, one Irish and one British, who share their personal, political, and psychological associations and reflections on the event. The article reflects on some of the implications of the Uprising; the nature of the Irish state, and especially the influence of the Irish Catholic Church on that state; and the role of rebel songs; the transgeneration transmission of trauma*; *as well as some of the implications of being activists and allies. The article is constructed in the form of a dialogue in which the authors interweave personal memories and associations together with theory and literature, and seek to make intellectual and relational meaning out of an event which changed and has had a lasting impact on both Irish and British political states.* Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Key words: the Easter Rising; Ireland; state and church; rebel songs; impasse theory; Easter 1916

April 2016 marked the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising in Ireland, which took place 24–29th April 1916, predominantly in Dublin. Like any political event of this nature, the Easter Uprising demands a complex political, sociological, and psychological analysis the present article offers subjective reflections on this event and its implications, and includes a number of historical and psychological references for the curious reader to deepen their understanding of this event for themselves

THE HISTORICAL

Organised by the Military Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), the Rising began on Easter Monday, 24th April 1916 and lasted for six days. The IRB was joined by members of the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Citizen Army, and Cumann na mBan (see Box 1), seized key

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Box 1. The key organisations and Irish protagonists of the Easter Rising 1916

The Key Organisations

The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) was a secret and aoth-bound organisation, established in 1858, dedicated to the establishment of an "independent democratic Ireland".

The Irish Volunteers (IV), or the Irish Volunteer Force or Irish Volunteer Army, was a military organisation established in 1913 by Irish nationalists in response to the formation of the Ulster Volunteers in 1912. Its primary aim was "to secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to the whole people of Ireland". Its leaders were Eoin MacNeill and Éamon de Valera.

The Irish Citizen Army was a small group of trained trades union volunteers from the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, founded by James Larkin, James Connolly, and Captain Jack White.

Cumann na mBan (the Irishwomen's Council) was an Irish Republican women's paramilitary organisation formed in 1914.

The Key Irish Protagonists

Thomas James "Tom" Clarke, a republican, a member of the IRB, and, arguably, the person most responsible for the Easter Rising.

Seán Mac Diarmada, a political activist and revolutionary leader, a member of many associations which promoted the Irish language, Gaelic revival, and Irish nationalism; a close colleague and friend of Tom Clarke's.

Thomas MacDonagh, a political activist, poet, playwright, educationalist, and member of the Gaelic League; founding member of and Commandant of the 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade, of the Irish Volunteers.

Patrick Pearse, a teacher, barrister, poet, nationalist, and political activist, a member of both the IRB and the IV; the main voice of the Rising and idolised by Irish nationalists, his writings and reputation have been subject to some criticism on the basis of his fanaticism and religiosity.

Éamonn Ceannt, republican, member of the Gaelic League and the IRB; Commandant of the 4th Battalion, Dublin Brigade, of the Irish Volunteers.

James Connolly, a republican, socialist, and a leading Marxist theorist of his day.

Joseph Plunkett, a nationalist poet and journalist; one of the original members of the IRB military committee and primarily responsible for planning the Rising.

locations in Dublin, and proclaimed an Irish Republic (see Figure 1). Following the suppression of the Uprising, and trial under court martial all seven signatories to the Proclamation (see Box 1) were executed by firing squad.

THE PERSONAL …

Helena: My grandmother lived in Francis Street, Dublin, in an area called "The Liberties" and I have since figured out that she must have met my grandfather when he "policed" the area, after 1916, to secure the peace. He was a handsome man, black hair, green eyes, and she was known as a beauty, auburn hair and the bluest of eyes or so the story goes. They must have fallen in love, despite being on opposite sides of the "divide". They went off to live in Bray in County Wicklow, but, subsequent to the 1916 Uprising, my grandfather, who was originally from County Leitrim, was thought of as a traitor by his compatriots. They lived next door to the barracks of the Royal

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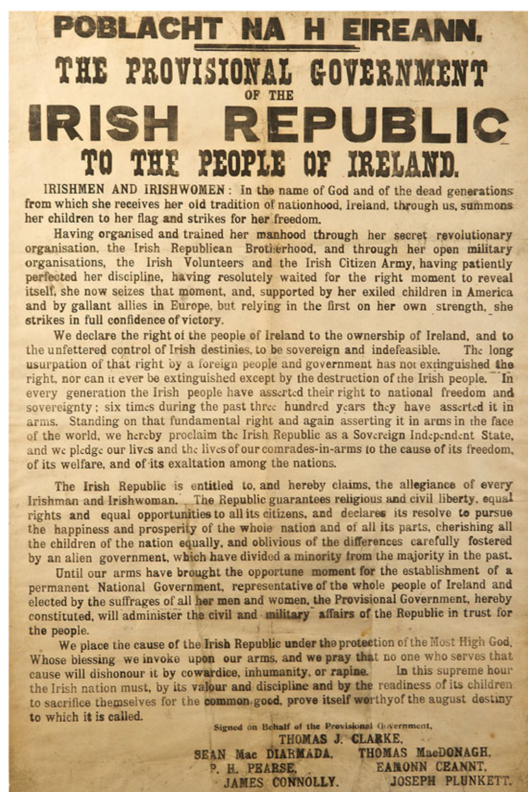

POBLACHT NA H EIREANN.

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty; six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government,

THOMAS J. CLARKE.

SEAN Mac DIARMADA. THOMAS MacDONAGH.

P. H. PEARSE. EAMONN CEANNT.

JAMES CONNOLLY. JOSEPH PLUNKETT.

Figure 1. The Irish Declaration of Independence 1916.

Irish Constabulary (RIC), with the new incumbents of Black and Tans (a force of temporary constables recruited to assist the RIC, the brainchild of Winston Churchill then British Secretary for War), who were consistently under attack by the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Bullet holes were still to be found in their house when I first went there in the 1960s. You can imagine how this caused my grandmother to go mad and my grandfather, an Irish man, born and bred in the West country, to die of pernicious anaemia at the age of 50. To me it seems as though he died of a broken heart. My father was born around 1923 into this dysfunctional, terrified, confused, split, system.

Keith: I remember my mother, who was born in Downpatrick, Northern Ireland, in October 1917, telling us of her childhood memories of a house on fire, and a lot of noise and upset. I wonder about how her father, my grandfather, a Unitarian minister and, by all accounts, a quiet and gentle man, fared in the atmosphere of religious and political sectarianism in which his peers would more than likely have included some fairly fierce Protestant ministers. As one of the peer reviewers of this article confirmed, the whole place would have been fierce as Downpatrick is a kind of border between Protestant North Down and Catholic South Down, and has two cathedrals, one Anglican, one Catholic, facing each other on adjacent hills.

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Fast forward to the early ’80s when I was a very active political activist and would often end the week in one of the Irish pubs in Hammersmith, London, usually watching an Irish band who would always end the evening playing “Amhrán na bhFiann”, the Irish national anthem. Whatever the state of the debate or however many pints of Guinness had been drunk, the whole pub would stand and sing. Depending on the news and the state of the struggle, especially with regard to the Hunger Strikes of 1980 and 1981, there would often be anger in our hearts and tears in our eyes. After all, this was only 15 years since the *Race Relations Act 1965* had made it illegal to put up notices that had been standard in the West London rented housing market: “No Blacks, no Irish, no Dogs”. Whilst the notices had disappeared, the sentiment lingered. The English version of the Irish anthem, The Soldiers’ Song, had been used as a marching song by the Irish Volunteers and by the “rebels” in the General Post Office in Dublin during the Easter Rising of 1916. At the time I was living in a collective house which included two Irish women, whose politics and experiences – including, at times and in certain situations, being fearful of speaking as their accents would reveal their nationality – very much influenced me.

Helena: Like you, I became involved in left wing politics, and joined the International Marxist Group (IMG), because, from my perception, they seemed to be the only Left wing group who understood, or were interested in “the Irish Question”, which, by the 1970s had become the dreadful Troubles. I sang rebel songs on the dock road folk clubs in Liverpool and was received enthusiastically by lovely people, who were very political, well meaning, with good intentions, but I always felt that they didn’t quite “get it”. I still am unsure of what that means, except that I was permanently in my feelings of things while they seemed very much in the intellect of things. Looking back, I think I was unconsciously carrying the weight of my father’s grief, and his own father’s grief and loss of being Irish because he had somehow, inadvertently, been on the “wrong side”. I have spent 30 years in analysis of different types mostly dealing with this turbulent legacy and transgenerational trauma: of betrayals, loss, divisions, and nationalistic fervour and its impact on my Irish family. I now can understand how I was enacting the sense of being on “the wrong side” of being the “outsider”.

Keith: I am struck by the symbolism of your grandfather policing an area called “The Liberties”, and perhaps finding some liberty and/or liberation in doing so! It seems to me that there is an important dialectic between policing and liberty. Does policing always compromise or constrain liberty, or does liberty sometimes need the protection of the police? The name “The Liberties” dates back to the 13th century when certain areas within Dublin had their own jurisdiction, a meaning that echoes and evokes the sense of autonomy and liberty.

There is also a poignant theme of division and divisiveness and, of course, this is embodied in the political division of the geographical island of Ireland. One of my favourite rebel songs is – or was – “Four Green Fields” in which a mother weeps for the loss of one of her children/fields, i.e., the province of Ulster:

> “What did I have?” said the fine old woman
> “What did I have?” this proud old woman did say.
> “I had four green fields, each one was a jewel
> But strangers came and tried to take them from me.

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I had fine strong sons, they fought to save my jewels
They fought and died, and that was my grief" said she.

"Long time ago" said the fine old woman
"Long time ago" this proud old woman did say.
"There was war and death, plundering and pillage
My children starved by mountain valley and sea.
And their wailing cries, they shook the very heavens
My four green fields ran red with their blood" said she..

"What have I now?" said the fine old woman
"What have I now?" this proud old woman did say.
"I have four green fields, one of them's in bondage
In stranger's hands, that tried to take it from me.
But my sons have sons, as brave as were their fathers
My fourth green field will bloom once again" said she. (Makem, 1967)

By the way, I don't agree about the IMG being the only group on the Left interested in the Irish Question. In the late '70s and early '80s, I was a member of Big Flame, a revolutionary socialist group (see https://bigflameuk.wordpress.com/about/) which, from its inception in 1975, expressed its unequivocal and uncritical support for Irish republican and revolutionary demands including (British) Troops Out and self-determination for the Irish people as a whole, i.e., in all 32 counties.

… AND THE POLITICAL

Helena: Yes, I do understand what you say about Big Flame. My recollection is that it was/you were also very interested in the Irish question, and, unlike some of the more dogmatic Left, more open in their thinking, but for many on the Left at that time Ireland was too close to home. They preferred struggles happening in far flung places such as those in Chile and Nicaragua about and for which they could voice their outrage and support, without drawing attention to themselves as potential allies of the IRA and thereby excite the interest of the Special Branch.

I, too, was drawn to Left wing groups in part because they embraced a type of romanticism about revolutions in general. Revolutions were considered to be a good thing. This made me feel proud about the Irish revolution. It was as if I had a revolution to boast about in my own back yard, so to speak! In those days revolution was in the air. We were young. We celebrated all and any revolution, didn't we? Perhaps revolutionary movements are essentially a young person's activity, a desire to kill the father as Freud (1913/1985) suggested, a Free Child expression of fearless energy as Berne might have said, or, an urge to transform, to make different through a type of collective projective identification which, elsewhere, I have described as "transformational transference", meaning a process of deep psychological change through which consciousness can emerge (Hargaden & Sills, 2002). However, with the benefit of hindsight – and insight – through greater knowledge and maturity, I think and feel quite differently from those days in the IMG. I can see that my "activism" was mostly a personal expression of deep discontent and unhappiness rooted in trans-generational trauma, which was linked to the Troubles but in a deeply personal and slightly dissociated way. In today's environment I would

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not refer to myself as an activist. Romanticism is easy to come by; hard facts, complexity, and paradox all generate and require a more demanding and maybe quieter view of things.

For instance, thinking about Four Green Fields, which I also used to sing, my question now is: are these lyrics too rooted in the rhetoric of Romantic nationalism, with its themes of sacrifice and heroism? Do these sons of sons have to be as "brave as were their fathers", many of whom were killed? Patrick Pearce in particular extolled a puritanical idealisation of suffering as blood sacrifice. In this sense, the song simplifies this struggle by making it into a blood sacrifice as a way to gain unity, and, thereby, avoids difficult facts about the Irish situation such as the violent civil war in 1922 in which communities turned against each other. This is how my grandfather's fate was sealed, overnight, when he became "a traitor" to the Irish cause because he worked for the then British government.

Keith: I'd like to pick up some points about rebel songs, radicalism and/or being revolutionary, and activism.

Regarding the singing of Irish rebel songs – I'll admit, also with the benefit of hindsight and insight, that, alongside my thinking (in the form of a pretty consistent political analysis), my motivation at the time included a mixture of: a sense of belonging and wanting to belong – to and in a particular group and community; an identification with and identity as being on the Left (and, therefore on the side of the Angels!) and, yes, with that, was a certain collective righteousness; a rejection of "the British" and, with that, a dis-identification with being English (which lasted until my mid-30s, when I went to live in Italy and discovered my Englishness); and a certain yearning for the kind of solidarity which I saw in Irish, republican struggles and those of other oppressed groups. It felt good to be a comrade and an ally, and, for a certain period from the late 1970s through the '80s, "the struggle" shaped a significant part of my life and activity. I'll also admit to the fact that I was – and, in many ways, still am – and idealist (and, to some extent, a Romantic). Although, since my early 20s, I have identified as a republican, there were (and still are) very few English republicans, and I suspect that this was also part of being drawn to Irish republicanism (as well as Scottish and Welsh republicanism), and, I have to say that, while I still remain seated for the British national anthem (which, of course is not about the nation but, rather, its hereditary monarch), I get hairs on the back of my neck when I hear Amhrán na bhFiann, La Marseillaise, Fratelli d'Italia, and other national anthems of Republics. So, when I sang and, from time to time, still sing republican/rebel songs, there's a lot to it – which doesn't mean to say that the singing or the song is nonetheless sincere.

Regarding "the revolution" – one of the reviewers took issue with my comment about unequivocal and uncritical support for Irish republican and revolutionary demands, questioned what that meant, and commented that "if there is no real danger, there is no real revolution". I think it's good to be clear about this. Firstly, the key word here is "demands". Big Flame did support the republican demand for a free and united Ireland and I stand by that. A critique of the history of the British conquest and partition of the island of Ireland (and many other geographical areas of the world) would support this. The means of achieving that end is another matter and not an easy one, which brings me to the second point: that of uncritical, *public* support. The point here is that any and every struggle against oppression is always criticised and undermined by the status quo, often with the full force of the state and sometimes with considerable brutality (here I'm thinking about slavery, the treatment of Suffragettes, the response

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of governments to independence movements, police reaction to demonstrators, etc.). In this context, such struggles need allies who are publically supportive; the last thing such struggles or movements need is for their allies to be equivocal and/or publicly critical. It's easy to critique liberation movements for their sexism, homophobia, etc. In its support for autonomous movements, however, Big Flame took the view that it/we would offer unconditional public support, and, through consistent and reliable solidarity work, would earn the right to have conversations in which we might raise questions of analysis, policy, strategy, and so on.

Regarding activism – whilst I think that Big Flame and other Left organisations were revolutionary in their analysis and ambition, and whilst some of us did come under the scrutiny of the British police's Special Branch, we were, arguably, in no great danger or, at least, we could choose whether to put ourselves in danger. Whether or not I was revolutionary, I was not *a* revolutionary, but I would claim to have been an activist. To me, this describes someone who is committed to a policy and/or action, usually through some form of campaigning, to bring about social/political change. I was and did, and, in some small ways, still do.

Helena: In his fascinating and knowledgeable account of the Irish Uprising R. F. Foster (2015) offers an analysis of the backgrounds and mentalities of those who ushered in the revolution. According to him it was inspired by a multiplicity of intellectual motivations, from Connolly's socialist vision, to Pearce's fanatical connection with blood sacrifice and Catholicism, to the middle class Anglo Irish descendants who were affluent and had freedoms to play, and to be artistic, mystical, rebellious, and feminist – so from poets, socialists, artists, feminists and religious believers, some of whom came from the aristocracy, sprang this Uprising which most of the ordinary people responded to with feelings such as "What are they on about?" and "For God's sake let's get on with it!" The contempt for "ordinary" people is shamefully apparent in Yeats' poem, "September 1913" in which he describes them as fumbling in "a greasy till" and adding the "halfpence to the pence" and "prayer to shivering prayer". (Yeats, 1996) Given this pre-revolutionary mix of hope and vision for diverse utopian futures, it is deeply ironic that instead, the revolution ushered in one of the most socially and politically conservative periods in Irish history. At the same time, as was pointed out by one of the reviewers, it is not so surprising, as many elements of Irish Republicanism had always been conservative, in the same way that Stalinism was conservative.

I recall my English mother, when we lived in Ireland for just four years in the 1950s, feeling deeply oppressed as a woman, mother, wife, and daughter. Her bitter memories included being told that "We don't hang the washing out on Sundays in our country" and "It's not the done thing to listen to the radio after 6.00 pm". She felt permanently chastised for behaving in "English" ways that a good Catholic Irish woman would never do, a judgement that also inferred that was "sluttish".

Another irony of the revolution was that in the pipeline had been a carefully worked out plan by people who genuinely cared for the ordinary Irish person, and about how best to proceed. This plan, the Redman Plan, would have involved the Irish nation taking complete control of their affairs, whilst still remaining under the banner of the UK, a banner which would have mitigated the influence of Catholicism, and allowed Protestant values to maintain and sustain the systems – to act as a modifying force so to speak. In the light of that I ask, what price Independence? – especially from today's perspective when we are all having to recognize, whether we like it or not, how interdependent we all are.

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In Irish history, much has been made of the negative effect of Oliver Cromwell, and the British influence, in which they did, it is true, ban the Catholic religion and the Gaelic language. However, by 1914, the British had mellowed. Curiously, one of the things I learned recently was that the British introduced universal education before they did so in England. Another thing I learned was that in the planning of the Uprising there was a big deal made of the Irish language but what they all had to come to terms with was that the English language was the one they all shared and so became the language of the revolution! In other words, pragmatism was privileged over Romanticism and sentiment, although the ideal of some Irish Garden of Eden, a return to an idyllic past, was very much part of the theme of the revolution.

The Redman Plan of course went out of the window in the wake of the Uprising because of the violent response by the British government. In executing the six leaders they immediately set the scene for a revolution, the culmination of which offered the Irish government completely, and without equivocation, into the hands of Éamon De Valera and the Catholic Church ushering in the death of any form of liberalism and has for a century, put the "ordinary" person into the clutches of people with the narrowest cultural and intellectual horizons. I recall in the 60s, my eternally creative Auntie Bridie explaining, in incomprehensible detail, why it was that she could take the contraceptive pill, not because she might wish to take control of her body, but because she had a "rare blood condition"!

Whilst acknowledging De Valera as a hero who laid the foundation for an independent Ireland, Tim Pat Coogan (2015) made quite a damning assessment of De Valera's governance of Ireland, particularly in his co creation of a political church-state monolith. Coogan's analysis resonates strongly with my recollections of my parents' experience. I recall sitting around the table at mealtimes, when we had already moved to the UK, and my parents being extremely critical of "Dev" as they referred to him, mocking his trenchant conservatism. He ruled Ireland with a fierce hand and my mother seemed to hold him personally responsible for the severe social constrains which led to her needing literally to flee the country. Under his rule, the British were the "bad object" (discussed in more depth later) to such an extent that in the Second World War he refused Churchill the use of the Irish ports in the fight against the Nazis claiming it was because the English might use it as an opportunity to get a foot back onto Irish soil. This is a very contentious point but, at the very least, it reflects the extent of the acrimonious relationship fostered by De Valera between Ireland and Britain.

… AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL

Keith: I was interested in your rediscovery of the Redmond Plan and the irony of pro-British Irish people being undermined by the reaction of the British state to the 1916 Irish Uprising which, it appears, only had the effect of radicalising ordinary Irish people into becoming even more anti British! I wonder about the implications of a state coming into being and defining itself against another which sets up an external – and I think at some level internal – opposition.

I think about this in terms of impasse theory and, specifically, the interpersonal impasse which I and Summers defined as: "the external manifestation of [an] intrapsychic impasse as split off parts of the self are projected onto the other. In this way the internal conflict gets enacted in an external relationship" (Tudor & Summers, 2014, p. 205) – in this application, between two peoples and nation states.

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I've also been wondering about the psycho-political impact of a state being born against the background of what appears to have been a glorious and possibly inevitable failure, and rebellion. Reflecting on the Easter Uprising, Tóibín (2016) commented: "the power of the rebellion came from its symbolism as much as from its strategy". Whilst I have a lot of sympathy for rebellion and rebels, there is a cost to being in opposition, especially when this is done from a perspective of having a grievance. I think this is partly maintained by the reference to and use of heroes, and, predominantly, dead ones, such as, and perhaps most notably, Che Guevara.

I was also interested in your comments about the Catholic Church. I think there's another irony here which is that a new Republic, which, in many ways, epitomises the overthrowing of the old imperial(ist) parental/Parent authority (the British Crown), then uses and colludes with an institution (the Catholic Church) which, of course, enshrines a higher parental authority (God the Father). Some would argue, as Winnicott did about the British monarchy, that such authority, in this case the Church, provides a beneficent and stable parental authority. His analysis is part of his theory of the use of an object (Winnicott, 1965/1984) and, specifically, of a transitional object, i.e., that the monarchy is a good object which, unconsciously, the people would destroy; the fact that it survives both is reassuring and useful (Winnicott, 1970/1986). Does the Irish Republican state provide a good – or good enough – object? I suspect not.

Helena: The personal is political and vice versa, so the saying going (Hanisch, 1970/2000). You highlight exactly this process when you refer to "the irony of pro-British Irish people being undermined by the reaction of the British state…" The execution of the leaders of the Uprising stimulated a nationalist fervour throughout the country in a way the rebels of the Uprising had failed to do. This could be a blueprint for how to initiate a revolution: alienate the people through a severe act of injustice!

When you wonder about "the implications of a state coming into being and defining itself against another which sets up an external… opposition", again there feels to me to be a link between the personal and the political. The feelings towards the British are so personal in the Irish psyche. When I took my son, who has a London accent, over to Ireland in the 1980s, my unpleasant uncle, who had been in the Irish army, and who was seen to be the son of a traitor (as referred to above), sat in his armchair and sneeringly referred to my small, blond haired, little boy, as a "Brit", which sounded like a swear word. When I think about this now I wonder if it was my uncle's way of trying to compensate for his lifelong experiences of feeling that he was not quite Irish enough, a strange legacy of the Uprising, with the unexpected consequences of turning Irish people, who worked legitimately for the incumbent government of the day, into "traitors". More recently, at a commemoration service in Dublin for the Uprising, it was reported that an Irish man turned around to a young woman present, who had a London accent, demanding that she account for her presence at the event. It turned out she was the great, great granddaughter of James Connolly! The roots of this bigotry can be traced back in part to some of the background of the Uprising. In Foster's (1915) book I came across a story about the Irish Republican and Cumann na mBan activist, Mabel Fitzgerald, who was originally from a Presbyterian background in Ulster, but who was married to an Irish Republican. Infused with a zealotry, as converts so often are, she wrote to George Bernard Shaw to say that she was bringing up her son to adopt a hatred of England. According to Foster Shaw replied that she was a wicked woman to fill her child's innocent soul with the burden of old hatred and rancour.

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We may think about impasses from the perspective of object relations (Fairbairn, 1940/1952), which describes the primitive psychological process of splitting in which the bad object is externalised onto something or someone, in this case the British, a process encouraged by De Valera. In my view, the object of the impasse has mistakenly been projected onto the "Brits" instead of the Catholic Church. Mind you, that could also be something to do with my projection! Although the younger generation (meaning the under 40s) are different. They are not so excised by anti-English sentiment. It seems to me that in taking back this projection they have become more resilient, stronger, more vibrant, with an increased sense of vital agency, as witnessed in May 2015 when the Irish voted by 62% or 38% in favour of gay marriage. This vote was not just about gay marriage. It was saying, we, the Irish are no longer in any shape or form to be governed or instructed by the Vatican. Goodbye! I spoke to many in Ireland during that time. The older ones were unsure, fearful, puzzled, and even ashamed. The younger ones were vibrant, clear, focused, and determined, with minds uncluttered by demonic threats of punishment for "sins" that may or may not have been committed suggesting a more mature integrated sense of self than their forefathers.

Of course neither the Uprising nor the vote for gay marriage happened in a vacuum. It would be absurd for instance to suggest that the vote for gay marriage happened because of a change in a nation's projection! In particular, of course, the exposé of the role of the Catholic Church in child sexual abuse has played a vital part in the Irish turning away from the Vatican. There is a powerful video on YouTube showing the then Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, on exactly this subject (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOQyl7ZpoH8). He almost sounds as though he is singing a rebel song: his tone so clear, his energy so vibrant, and his words so vital, as, in a direct reference to the ongoing child abuse investigations in Ireland, he warns the Vatican to stay out of Irish affairs. Of course, so many international developments influenced the gay vote, but it is beyond the scope of this rather personal set of reflections to offer an in-depth political analysis of every nuance and detail of how events have unfolded in Ireland.

This brings me onto your very interesting analysis of the role of the Catholic Church and the question of who occupies the role of the Parent ego state in our psyches. I was reassured recently by a colleague, who is an historian, explaining to me why British democracy is complex, old, and ingrained in such a way that we won't easily be destabilised. I should say that this was after the UK referendum on 23rd June, 2016, which determined that Britain should exit from the European Union which created a very divisive, and at times violent atmosphere in the country. The internalised Parent ego state is crucial, and you rightly point out Winnicott's analysis of the transitional object. Following on from this I began to think about ancient Ireland and its Celtic and pagan traditions before St Patrick made his way over to the island and appropriated the customs and rituals, ideas and beliefs to promote the Catholic way. What is Ireland's legitimate inherited Parent ego state? If no Catholic Church then what? The ancient ways linger in the psyche. In his book *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, Thomas Cahill (1995) traced the influence of the pagan and Christian scribes and how the Irish contributed to the liveliness and vitality associated with the Middle Ages. Although much criticised Cahill's book offers another story or myth about Ireland which serves to underlie the range and depth of the legacy of Irish-ness, whatever that may mean!

Keith: Yes, and of course, St Patrick got rid of all those nasty snakes: a symbolic expulsion of feminine wisdom from the land, and an assertion of patriarchal Christianity, and, I would say,

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drawing on a critical reading of the Judeo-Christian creation myth, of speaking truth to power about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Helena: I think the literary references are profoundly important too. They form an essential part of the narrative as do the rebel songs. In his poem "Easter 1916", for instance, Yeats reflects the ambivalence and puzzlement felt by many Irish people initially towards the Uprising. In the oxymoronic refrain, "A terrible beauty", Yeats captures this paradoxical experience of the Uprising. He also can't resist referring to Sean MacBride, the husband of his unrequited love, Maud Gonne, whom he couldn't stand, as a "vainglorious lout" (Yeats, 1996), yet who now has been transformed into one for whom he feels admiration – if a bit reluctantly!

I think there is much to be gained in seeing the revolution as a potent symbol as you mention in reference to Colm Tóibín. The rebel songs in particular reflect this symbolic significance, not so much of revolutionary fervour but of a passion for vitality, life, and a resistance to oppression. Rebel songs are like battle hymns, celebrating violent struggle, heroism, with the victim triumphing over their oppressor as in "The Dying Rebel": "The night was dark and the fight was over, | The moon shone down O'Connell Street". This song sets the scene and location of the Irish Uprising where the narrator meets dying men in the street: "I knew my son was too kind hearted, | I knew my son would never yield".

Tenderness and courage are linked, and later in the song, the son has gone "to heaven" as he is obviously a good Catholic! The songs refer to an historical event and create myth. The power of song has ancient roots, as Schenk (2011) put it: "Sung songs carry the paradoxical power of the Gods". (p. 233) The way the song is sung of course is part of this and matters. Whoever has heard the mellifluous voice of Luke Kelly of the Dubliners sing "The Foggy Dew" cannot remain unchanged! Only in my view of course, but try it. His extraordinary energy, clear diction, fierce tone, surely carries a message from the Gods and yet listen too closely to the words and they disappoint in part because apparently only men who fought for Ireland and buried on Irish soil can be revered. Those brave Irish men who perished in Flanders and beyond fighting for the "dastardly" British in the First World War are merely cast aside as "traitors" who, therefore, cannot be mourned because they died in a foreign land. This narrative has at last found a more complex tone. In his book *A Long Long Way*, Sebastian Barry (2005) created a character called Willie Dunne who symbolises the Irish man/men who went to fight in the First World War. It is a heartbreaking story depicting the extraordinary bravery of the "ordinary" Irishman/men who put their lives on the line for what they thought was the "right" cause, only to face the madness of the trenches, and the status of a traitor at home. The Irish war heroes have only now been honoured this year in Glasnevin cemetery in Dublin as Ireland finally comes to terms with the complexities of its Anglo/Irish interconnectedness.

The rebel songs were perhaps also popular with some left wing groups in the UK during the 1970s in part because they also spoke of socialism:

> When Larkin came to Dublin,
> says he the poor have mighty weapons,
> to fight, to bring their oppressors down. (Plunkett, 1958, cited in Nevin, 2006)

The "weapons" referred to unions, and the ability to strike, as did the wonderful paean to James Connolly (composed by an unknown author), sung with such passion, vigour and conviction by Christy Moore (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1tWwjWFmh8):

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Where oh where is our James Connolly?
Where or where is that gallant man?
He's gone to organize the union,
That working men they might yet be free.

ROMANTICISM, MODERNISM, AND POSTMODERNISM

Keith: As we've been corresponding, I've kept returning to Yeats' poem about the Easter Uprising and the fact that it represented a shift in him and his work – and perhaps the nation – from Romanticism to Modernism. As Mlinko (2016) has pointed out, Yeats' early poems feature his passion for Celtic mythology and Gaelic sagas, but in his middle age he became more attuned to the then current political reality, later (in 1922), being appointed and serving as a Senator for the Irish Free State. In 1913 he had published a poem, "September 1913", which commemorated his friend, John O'Leary, the Irish nationalist, in which Yeats had written: "Romantic Ireland's dead and gone, | It's with O'Leary in the grave". In many ways, this prefigured his innovative poem about the Uprisings: "Easter 2016" (Yeats, 1996). Mlinko (ibid) has summarised the significance of its innovation, which "rested in Yeats's ability to preserve older techniques that gave his verse its power – incantatory rhythm, rhyme, symbolism, and allegory – while engaging frankly with the interplay of personality, history, and politics of the present".

Apart from being an interesting and, I think, accurate reading of the poem "Easter 1916", I wonder if this could be taken as a reading of the Easter Rising itself. Whilst the Rising was informed by Romantics (poets, linguists, educationalists), the rebellion represented a break with Romanticism and the establishment of a movement which, within six years had led to the establishment of a modern and modernist Irish state. In this sense I agree with your critique of Four Green Fields. A couple of years ago, at a conference on Marxism, I had the good fortune to meet Eamonn McCann, the Irish journalist and political activist from Derry, Northern Ireland/the Six Counties. In the course of our conversation we talked about Irish rebel songs and he reported that, nowadays, Four Green Fields is hardly ever sung … Whilst I still think and feel that I want to honour rebels and rebellion sometimes by singing rebel songs, I agree that all have a largely symbolic function, and that it would be deeply ironic to romanticise a rebellion against Romanticism! I think Anne Enright (2016) put it well when she wrote:

> All nations have founding myths. I suppose I would prefer to have a revolution in my country's past than a monarchy. I would prefer to move on from Catholic nationalism than from fascist dictatorship. But the truth is that local history has given way, in my lifetime, to global economics, and we have no good stories for this: no parades, no revolutions. The stories we tell ourselves about the past are not about politics. I mean they are not about fairness, about who has power and where the money goes. They contain a deeper madness.

As she – and you – have argued, we need to move on from Catholic nationalism, and, I would add, any other religious nationalism.

Of course, we now live in post-modern and more complex times:

> I was seven years old for the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising, in 1966. The story had no complications. It was Ireland against England, good v bad, Irish Catholicism v paganism. And we won. We were the proof that we'd won, the boys and girls crammed into the classroom, learning the Proclamation of Independence, which

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> was drafted by the leaders of the Rising, off by heart, from a tea towel that the teacher had pinned to the top of the blackboard, roaring the words out for Ireland. We didn't understand what we were shouting: "The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities of all its citizens".
>
> Today, I love the complications. Many of the men in the GPO were actually English. I found that out only a few months ago. The children of Irish parents, they'd come over to Dublin from London, Manchester and Liverpool, to avoid conscription. The best named was Johnny "Blimey" O'Connor. (Doyle, 2016)

The vote for gay marriage marks not only a break with Rome (to coin a phrase), but also a rejection of ecclesiasticism, which, of course was a project of the Enlightenment. It thus marks another, quieter, but nonetheless glorious revolution, and a move(ment) into what we might refer to as a postmodern, post Catholic Ireland, and a much more free-thinking and empowered relationship with both Church and state. Moreover, the recent European Union (EU) referendum result in Northern Ireland (in which 56% of those who voted were in favour of remaining in the EU) raises the interesting prospect of that part of the now (dis)United Kingdom (UK) leaving the UK and joining Eire – or perhaps Scotland! Whilst this outcome may be particularly fanciful – and, no doubt, Romantic(!) – it appears as if the old order is rapidly changing in ways in which we might not have previously dreamed or imagined.

Helena: However, I have come now to consider the other side of this passion and energy. In refusing and resisting oppression, one needs to find containment and thereby avoid the histrionics and superiority of Victimhood. Much has been made of the racism towards the Irish in England, yet I was interested to read, in her book *An Irish Navvy*, MacAmhlaigh's (1964) description of how many Irish people found that containment on British soil. In Britain it became possible to earn a decent wage, raise children, have good educational opportunities and free health care. The Irish in Britain were more detached and protected from the intrusion of the patriarchal tyranny of the Catholic Church.

In the late 20th century the received wisdom was that Irish people emigrated for work; another, underlying narrative, which was not even entirely clear to themselves, is that they were also on the run from the conservatism of the Catholic Church, and, by most accounts, most found tolerance and acceptance in a Protestant Britain (MacAmhlaigh, 1964). In the 1950s, my father returned us all to Ireland, but left immediately because he said he could not find work, which was not entirely true: after four years my mother found the stifling conservatism so oppressive that she had a nervous breakdown and we returned to a more liberal Britain. One of my earliest observations about Protestants was their more casual and easy relatedness with their social and cultural environments.

And yet I still want to raise a flag for the rebel songs. I think now the feeling of them is what matters most. Their meaning now to me is to do with "home". Where is my heart? Where is my home? In his fascinating chapter on myth, Schenk (2011) describes how in Homer's *Odyssey*, "the uncertainty of home is illustrated in the role of song and storytelling", that the song "becomes a 'channel' for education, entertainment as well as a weapon of violent destruction". (p. 232) Maybe the song is a better channel for rage, for anger, for a wish to destroy. Maybe song is better than the gun – well no, not *maybe*, it *is*! Maybe the song is about a journey to find one's home in one's self. For me the rebel songs are not just about the Irish struggle, they represent a gusty, powerful eloquence: a fierce energy, a life force that all those who seek self-agency recognize. I have witnessed it many times how often English people, without any political agenda, embraced and expressed a love of the rebel songs. I came to understand then that it wasn't just political: it was personal.

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I have welcomed the opportunity to share some of my reflections on the Uprising. If there had not been an Uprising I would never have been born, since my grandmother was engaged to a man who died on the streets in 1916, and subsequently met my grandfather. As Hillman (1996) pointed out in *The Soul's Code*, all births are random and it is a mystery how any of us get here! The legacy of the Uprising for me was that I was given life, 'though, with that, I also inherited a truly turbulent, distraught, paradoxical, and painful legacy which Jung would have described as the "negre" we bring into therapy. Jung (1970/1990) used the alchemical metaphor to describe the analytic process of turning bad things into good things, the negre into "gold". Eigen (2006) describes how he works minute by minute with the psychic pain of trauma. Facing that pain has made me resilient and strong and enabled me to transform this harsh legacy into the gold dust, which means for me finding deep meaning and joy in my life and my work as a psychotherapist enabling me to reach into other peoples' hearts and minds, and to take part in their journey to find their true self, their home, their own way.

One final thought is based on another paradox described by Kiberd (1996) which is how the English and the Irish invented each other through projecting onto each other their own Shadow sides – which is good news for us all! The Irish can reclaim their potency and organizational capacities, and the English can own their lyricism and fondness for good hospitality.

Keith: Thank you, Helena. As someone who enjoys being a host, I'll settle for that, as well as the challenge of being (more) lyrical!

I have very much appreciated this dialogue. Of course, its origins go back to the late 1980s when we met as students on the transactional analysis psychotherapy training programme at Metanoia, London, UK, and has been forged by much discussion and debate – and craic – over the years since then. I am also thinking that it represents a psychotherapy *of* politics (Totton, 2000), and a more dialogic and free-flowing form of the same psychopolitics that we represented in our collaboration on psychotherapy and citizenship (Tudor & Hargaden, 2002). I look forward to further and future dialogue, and collaboration.

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