

Editorial



THE THEME OF *DANDELION* 5.1 IS 'VIOLENCE'. During times of popular discontent and international conflict, the way the meaning of violence is constructed as a cultural phenomenon becomes a pressing concern; the concept of violence continues to return as a site of struggle in contemporary discourse. With this in mind, we extended an open invitation to the academic community, calling for papers and creative submissions that would engage with questions of violence in aesthetics, in representation, in philosophy, in political struggle, in public discourse, as well as considerations of violence and trauma in wider contexts of global conflict. The response was considerable, and we are pleased to be publishing papers on a wide range of themes, from the ethics of violent testimony to the systemic violence of normative social structures.

In this issue, join us in reading Adam Brown and Deb Waterhouse-Watson on the taboo subject of violence inflicted on victims by other victims during the Holocaust. Johanna Skibsrud's essay considers Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* as a mode of thinking past human power structures through nature's enduring presence, whilst Thom May perceives 'spectral violence' in Don DeLillo's treatment of his epistemologically and psychologically fragmented characters in *Underworld*. Jeremy Kasten analyses the language of trauma in a Marguerite Duras novel, via a Lacanian conceptualisation of repression and female subjectivity. Tony Prince's study of Shakespeare's bastards invites us to consider the relationship between lineage and violence in Renaissance tragedy, and through its own heritage in medieval morality plays. Completing this edition's academic work on violence is Sarah Burdett's paper on theatre written about female soldiers during the French Revolution – and which displays surprising resonances with modern debates concerning women on the front line.

This issue's 'Short Circuits' section features two visual artists and two creative writers. Ariane Severin's series of observational photographs of torn electoral posters – in which politics, opposition and violence are visually enmeshed on the street – which were taken in Beirut, are showcased here. Our cover image, a detail from *On the Deathbed: Ostentation* by the artist Vonbrotta, forms part of our feature on Vonbrotta's chaotic oil paintings that also incorporate collage. These images present a vision where violence is intrinsic to mankind, an orgy of the catastrophic, the humorous, and the monumental. Claudia Firth's prose-poetry forms a meditation on the lived experience of different forms of violence, and questions the struggle to find meaning in the electronic witness and transmission of violent encounters. A selection of Daniel

O'Donnell-Smith's poems grapples with and thinks through ideas around the poetic subject's reaction to urban spaces and forces of mediation and fragmentation.

In our highly relevant reviews section, we have Tate Britain's poorly received exhibition *Art Under Attack: Histories of British Iconoclasm* evaluated by Paul Ingram; while Mark Callaghan reviews the wilfully nasty Chapman Brothers' near-retrospective, *Come and See*; Richard Evans critiques Steve McQueen's award-winning film, *12 Years A Slave*; and Claudia Firth appraises Howard Caygill's new book *On Resistance: a Philosophy of Defiance*, which thinks through connections between violence and political struggle. This issue's breadth of approaches to its theme affirms the complexity and challenge of assimilating this explosive and difficult topic to arts and humanities research, and more broadly to lived experience itself.

Enormous thanks must go to our contributors and to all those involved in producing this issue of *Dandelion* – particularly our editorial and typesetting teams.

Mark Callaghan and Vicky Sparrow, *Dandelion* General Editors

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Cover Image

Vonbrotta, *On the Deathbed: Ostentation* (detail) 2010

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