

## Editorial

### Crisis: Predicament and Potential

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We could not, in the relative innocence of April, 2019, have predicted exactly how oracular it would be to theme issue 8 of *Aigne* “Crisis: Predicament and Potential”. Nor could we, or our contributors, have predicted how the writing and assembling of this journal would be affected. I will, therefore, open *Aigne*’s eighth issue with a thanks to our editors, contributors, peer-reviewers and advisors, who, in the midst of a global pandemic, gave startling energy and time to bring this journal to fruition.

The crises responded to in this journal existed before the viral spillover of Sars-Cov-2. While the crisis into which this journal is being released postdates the crises it covers, the pandemic certainly inflected the last few months of *Aigne*’s assembly, and will no doubt be visible to readers through the language which crept in through the edits, tweaks and changes added during that time.

A particular feature of the current pandemic is that it has, in its urgency, the power to obscure pre-existing crises, but also the potential to expose them. In the early days of the Covid-19 crisis, it appeared that the first of these options would be more widespread. There was a sense that environmental, cultural and political concerns needed, for a time, to be put on hold: the virus itself, said the platitudes, did not discriminate, so this must be a time of unity.

Of course, the virus does discriminate, and the loci of its discrimination are situated at the nodes of pre-existing crises, many of which are incisively analysed by our contributors. Racial, political and economic injustices have been exacerbated by a virus whose strain on attention and resources has been significant, and has, therefore, taken the most from communities that have the least.

The crisis of underfunded or exclusivised healthcare services has, in particular, multiplied the consequences felt by various communities around the globe. From indigenous communities, which may exist further from centralized medical systems, to the medical communities, working

at these systems' very core, the resources required to mitigate the virus's impact have not been evenly distributed. The global #BLACKLIVESMATTER movement has elevated the voices of oppressed peoples, who have testified to both the uniqueness of their oppression and the shared structures that allow it to take place. In Ireland, as we isolated in our homes, the plight of those denied a home has become even more urgent. In particular, the scandal of Direct Provision's continued existence has taken a shameful centre stage.

What this crisis has therefore highlighted is the interconnectedness of crises, a reality which this journal has also attempted to illuminate. The crisis of a moment may be singular: an oncoming train or a cut brake-line. Crises which occur on community, national or even global levels tend to be multiple, and rooted in previously unsolved or unfronted crises. These connections bring us to our first article, by Colum Finnegan, who opens *Aigne's* eighth issue with an analysis of crisis rhetoric itself.

Finnegan's article, titled "Reframing Our World: Examining the Crisis of Crises", gives nuance to the wider journal through its deconstruction of crisis rhetoric, and the effects of its constancy on our ability to rationally understand and respond to crisis. Finnegan opens with an examination of the 'fight or flight' response, which serves as the foundation for his argument that contemporary news media 'hijacks' our cognitive crisis response mechanisms, which results in a lessening of our ability to rationally solve 'slow' crises such as climate change.

Corinne Mitsuye Sugino, in our second article, likewise queries the idea of an age of crisis, positing that the neoliberal market sells both crisis and its cure through its appropriation of Eastern meditation practices. Her article, "Palliative Buddhism: Corporate Exoticization and Appropriation of Mindfulness Under Neoliberal Crisis", uses three cases studies—the interruption of the 2014 *Wisdom 2.0* conference by protesters, and the meditation apps *Buddhify* and *Headspace*—to argue that some Westernised approaches to meditation are orientated toward allowing the individual to bear the stress of life under neoliberalism, but in a manner that distracts from the actual causes of these stresses.

We shift, then, to explorations of crisis through literature and literary lives. Whereas Finnegan and Sugino illustrate the potential of crisis to prolong itself into mundanity, Elysia Balavage, in our third article, focuses on the apocalyptic, yet generative, side of crisis. In "'Surely Some Revelation is at Hand': Yeats, Disaster, and the Generative Void", Balavage connects William

Butler Yeats's treatment of crisis and catastrophe to the generative nihilism espoused by philosophers such as Spinoza, Kant and Hegel. Balavage argues that Yeats's treatment of apocalypse must be understood in relation to this ideological context. Her juxtaposition of this context, along with Yeats's comments on the same, to poems from *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*, *The Tower*, and *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* proves, itself, to be generative, expanding our potential perspectives on the Irish poet.

The apocalypse, and its generative potential, is likewise illuminated by Stefan Veleski in "Crisis and Transformation: The Aftermath of First Contact in Three Mid-20th Century Science Fiction Novels". Veleski nuances a traditional close reading through digital methods. His use of a novel 'sentiment analysis', enabled by Matthew Jocker's 'syuzhet' package, allows Veleski to plot the emotional valence of Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End*, Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* and Isaac Asimov's *The Gods Themselves*. So armed, Veleski endows his close reading of the novels with a new understanding of both the affective potential of their imagined apocalypses, and their authors' views of the same.

In "Writing *Saudade*: Navigating Home, Homeland, and Sexuality in the Work of Gabriela Mistral and Elizabeth Bishop", Corey Clawson centers crises both personal and societal around the Portuguese word *saudade*, a concept whose difficulty of translation helped render it a poetic centerpiece in the works of both Bishop and Mistral. Clawson renders the word as a combination of solitude, nostalgia and yearning, the mercuriality of which is explored, though not always through the word itself, by Bishop, writing in English, and Mistral, writing in Spanish. Clawson connects *saudade*, foreign to both writers, to their position as 'sexiles', individuals in some form of exile due to their sexuality. Through this link, Clawson illustrates the evolution of *saudade*, and how it is possible to feel *saudade* for a life denied not only by spatial and temporal distance, but by the social distance engendered by queerness.

Rounding out issue 8's articles is Kevin J. Greene's "Moonlight in Miami: The Split Sociopolitical Reality of South Florida As Told By Barry Jenkins". Greene similarly explores both the predicament and potential offered by a crisis through his exploration of Barry Jenkins's 2016 film *Moonlight*, focusing on the intersection of blackness and queerness against the particular cultural and geographical backdrop of Miami. Utilizing sociological studies of Miami, as well as popular depictions of the city, Greene argues that Miami, as a city of contraries based on both

wealth and race, forms a crucial cultural context for understanding *Moonlight*. In particular, Greene shows how the macrocosm of the city and the microcosm of the film both reflect on and encompass each other, most visibly in Chiron's navigation of blackness, queerness and masculinity.

Each of the articles engages with crisis in both its localized form through that article's subject matter and its global form through its connection to a delineated theme. We hope that both the insight and incisiveness of each article is multiplied by its connections with the others, and that the interested reader will gain much in their understanding of crisis: both its particularity and its interconnectedness.

### **Book Reviews**

In approaching the theme of crisis, *Aigne's* book review editors, Juan Carlos Ladines Azalia and Carolyn Howle Outlaw, sought out recently published work which dealt with some aspect of crisis. Our thanks to the publishers for providing the reviewed works.

- Sarah McCreedy of University College Cork reviews *Cormac McCarthy's Violent Destinies: The Poetics of Determinism and Fatalism* (2017), a collection edited by Brad Bannon and John Vanderheide and published by the University of Tennessee Press.
- Punyashree Panda of the Indian Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswar, reviews *The Discourse of Environmental Collapse: Imagining The End* (2020), a collection edited by Alison E. Vogellar, Brack W. Hale and Alexandra Peat and published by Routledge.
- Chandni Girija of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, reviews Simon Chauchard's *Why Representation Matters: The Meaning of Ethnic Quotas in Rural India* (2017), published by Cambridge University Press.
- Brian de Ruiter, of Brock University, St. Catherines, reviews Erika Guttmann-Bond's *How Archaeology Can Save the Planet* (2018), published by Oxbow Books.

### **Event Reports**

For the event reports section, editors Sarah McCreedy and Conor Cashman sought out scholars

who had attended conferences which reflected, in some manner, on the theme of crisis.

Éadaoin Reagan, of University College Cork, reflects upon the 2019 meeting of the *Women and the Family in Ireland, 1550-1950* symposium, held in the University of Hertfordshire. Reagan notes that crisis, if defined as a time of intense difficulty or danger, could rightly be applied to the experience of women in Ireland, a position reinforced in the report by Reagan's accounts of her and her fellows' research findings.

Carolyn Howle Outlaw, also of University College Cork, reports on the 40<sup>th</sup> *Association for Environmental Archaeology* conference, held in the University of Sheffield. The theme of the 2019 conference, "Living through change: the archaeology of human-environment interactions", was particularly pertinent to this issue's present theme. Howle Outlaw, underscoring the environmental archaeologist's view of the climate crisis, reiterates a theme that reoccurs consistently within this issue: that crisis is permanent state of being for humanity, and that we can stand to learn from the means by which our ancestors dealt with the same.

## **Creative**

In a tradition started in our previous issue, *Aigne* sought creative submissions oriented around the journal's theme, with a particular interest in authors whose creative work intersects with or complements their academic work. Creative editors Robert Feeney and Matty Adams carefully considered the many submissions received by *Aigne*, judging them on both literary merit and their ability to further illustrate the theme of crisis. Their final choices for inclusion, Gráinne O'Hare's short story "Same Time Next Tuesday" and Michael Kurian's poem "Into the Kalari", are ably introduced by them in their creative editorial (p. 124).