

Editorial

Liminality: Transitions and Marginalities

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When we drafted our call for papers for this issue in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, we had just published *Aigne*'s eighth issue on the topic of "Crisis: Predicament and Potential". Where could we go from here? The idea that the virus might be with us for some time created uncertainty everywhere around us. But isn't this something every generation goes through? While we may feel we live in unprecedented times of change and precarity, those before us faced similar fears in various guises. The war in Ukraine and the energy crisis have taken over the news from Covid-19, and people are concerned about the future anew. Every crisis brings change and may shape societies, cultures and attitudes in different ways and for years to come. Crisis is therefore followed by a transition between the before and the after, between old and new ways of doing something. It offers a chance for true change but comes at the cost of huge uncertainty in the interim. This is where the term 'liminality' came to describe our thinking. It encapsulates a state of transition wherein new ideas, identities or solidarities can come into being. As a concept it thus offers a crucial prism through which any in-between phase for a person, group, or even for a whole society can be better understood.

In the current day and age, liminal spaces permeate the essence of uncertainties and marginalities. While marginalities are often related unwholesome conditions, liminal spaces are not favoured for their lack of permanence. This space can be occupied by those in stasis, which represents detachment and departure from expectations borne of stability towards the marginal spaces of uncertainty, fluidity, and the suspended potentiality of the unknown. Although departures and transitions can lead to liminal spaces and marginal conditions, one hopes to never return to these spaces. Unlike the stigma attached to such spaces and conditions, there are various examples that suggest the positive outcome of one trudging on the path of liminality, either to remain on the precipice of the almost 'return' or to inspire a never-reached 'future'. Never forget the purgatory traversed by Dante, which not only reveals the idea of permanence, but also showcases the positivity of such uncertain spaces. However, the concept of displacement, without the knowledge of the source or the destination might be unnerving,

could be one filled with explorations. The comfort of permanence versus the excitement of transitions can be conjectured.

The kinds of liminality responded to in this journal are varied. They take our readers from an engagement with death, grief and memory, to liminal spaces that are occupied only temporarily, all the way to analyses of female agents in or of transitions.

The first article by Margaret Bonass Madden analyses grief as a liminal space at the example of Anne Enright's novel *The Gathering*. She demonstrates how the protagonist moves between different modes of grief, exemplifying Kübler-Ross's theory of The Five Stages of Grief. For the main character and her family in *The Gathering*, the suicide of a brother and the subsequent funeral arrangements represent a definite cut in time where emotions run high, priorities are re-assessed and the past can be processed. The immediate grief is a painful transitional period.

Rachel Andrews explores the burial site at Carr's Hill, County Cork, where initially victims of famine and later Cork's poor and unclaimed dead were buried. The site also seems to have been used to bury children whose mothers were in the Bessborough Mother and Baby Home in Cork, according to a 2019 report commissioned by the Irish Government. Equipped with this knowledge, Andrews visited the burial site, documented its appearance on the day with pictures and recorded her observations, feelings and thoughts in the form of field notes. Her account shared in this article should be read as a work-in-progress which will form the basis of her creative non-fiction writing. Andrews' engagement with this site beyond an understanding of its history or geography is an exercise of deep mapping. By reflecting on her own encounter with the burial site, Andrews adds more layers to the more known, tangible conception of the space. Her account of her experience shows how spectral traces of the past resonate from the landscape and how cultural memory and meaning are interwoven with a sense of place.

The third and fourth articles continue on the theme of liminal places and spaces. First, Kübra Vural Özbey considers the forest in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* as a liminal space. Its location is unclear, its characteristics are ambiguous and its meaning depends on each character's experience of it. Its inhabitants are all outsiders of different backgrounds, and they form new bonds in the forest setting. The forest is a place of transformation as the characters exiled from the court establish new identities here, before restoring their positions at the court in the end. It is also a place of resistance and of political critique of the court, corruption, exile and colonialism. Therefore, Vural Özbey argues, Shakespeare uses the forest as a liminal site

which veils his critical remarks on the late Elizabethan court, questioning the practice of banishment and commenting on political, social and cultural issues of the time.

Hanna Huber examines to which extent the Festival OFF d'Avignon in France unites carnivalesque exuberance with its status as a performing arts market. On the one hand, the fringe festival constitutes a marketplace for the purchase and sale of theatre productions, mirroring neoliberal structures of modern-day society and representing an initiation rite for artists and their creations. On the other hand, the festival's revolutionary story of origin still resonates when the provincial town is transformed into an in-between space every summer, a counter-reality to question hegemonic discourse and to redefine social identities.

The fifth and sixth articles engage with two novels by Stephen King. Hollie C. McDonnell examines how the characters Paul Sheldon and Annie Wilkes in Stephen King's *Misery* move fluidly between their gendered roles as well as their roles of power. The reclusive Annie rescues the author Paul and cares for him while he is injured. He is therefore cast as the physically weaker element in their power binary. Annie continuously transitions between an admirer of his creative talent and a sadistic tormentor. She becomes his captor and controls his medication and survival as well as his writing when she demands for him to bring *Misery* back to life. This in turn gives him power over her because he controls the fictional world she loves. McDonnell argues that the uncertainty of power and position promote the sense of horror in King's novel.

Laura Mulcahy analyses the female transition of menarche in Stephen King's *Carrie*. The novel presents menarche as a traumatic event due to societal discomfort with the abject female body. Carrie's body as a feature of the monstrous feminine is heightened by her supernatural abilities which awaken around the same time. She is marginalised as she fails to fit in with peers.

The final article by Ronan Keohane focusses on a selection of music videos by pop-star Aleyna Tilki. She is caught within a political and cultural rift in Turkey, being pulled between tradition and modernity, between religious values and Westernisation. The article provides an overview of the different ways Turkish people circumvent censorship, particularly through the use of online platforms. Keohane offers an interpretation of Tilki's music videos in terms of symbolism. He argues that, through her use of symbolic imagery, Tilki draws attention to current issues, such as misogyny and femicide.

Each of the articles engages with liminality in its many different forms and applications. They show characters in transition, others on the margins, places and spaces occupied for a fleeting time – all entering and some departing territories of uncharted ground.

Before moving onto the book reviews, event reports and creative pieces that will round this issue off, I'd like to extend a huge thank you to our editors, contributors and peer-reviewers who have dedicated their time and expertise to *Aigne*. It's been a tremendous pleasure working with you all!

Book Reviews

This section offers a selection of reviews on recent academic publications, some of which connect to our thematic issue:

- Nevin Gürbüz-Blaich, of Heidelberg University, reviews Becky Taylor's *Refugees in Twentieth-Century Britain: A History* (2021), published by Cambridge University Press.
- Shu Wan, of the University of Buffalo, reviews Brett Krutzsch's *Dying to Be Normal: Gay Martyrs and the Transformation of American Sexual Politics* (2019), published by Oxford University Press.
- Punyashree Panda, of the Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar, reviews *Flann O'Brien: Gallows Humour* (2020), a collection edited by Ruben Borg and Paul Fagan and published by Cork University Press.
- Brian de Ruiter, of Brock University, reviews *Routledge International Handbook of Irish Studies* (2021), a collection edited by Renée Fox, Mike Cronin and Brian Ó Conchubhair and published by Routledge.
- Subir Rana, an independent scholar, reviews Catherine Keller's *Political Theology of the Earth: Our Planetary Emergency and the Struggle for a New Public* (2018), published by Columbia University Press.

Event Reports

Doris Murphy, of University College Cork, reports on the *Boundaries, Borders, and Care: Feminist Ethics in Practice* postgraduate conference, held in 2018. The three-day conference focussed on challenges in feminist and gender-focused research and the relationship between scholarship, policy, art, activism and lived experiences.

Creative Pieces

This section provides space for creative submissions which respond to the theme of 'Liminality' in different ways and through different genres:

- Poetry: *Ghost* by Edel Hanley
- Flash fiction: *The Suit* by Mark Kelleher
- Short story: *Auschwitz Days* by Mathew Raisun

Last but not least, the image selected for *Aigne's* volume 9 cover page was a commissioned response to the theme 'Liminality' by Grace Claro.