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### Epilogue

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## Epilogue: The Ends of Crisis

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and Natashe Lemos Dekker*

**Abstract** Crisis has no end. Or at least, it might seem like it, with the term ‘crisis’ qualifying all spheres of life: from climate, politics, and health to economy and education. It might be tempting to declare that ‘all is in crisis.’ While capturing the sense of urgency and the necessity of attending to the overlapping crises, the very notion of crisis can also foreclose critical analysis and action.

This book’s unique contribution to understanding how ‘crisis’ operates as “a blind spot for the production of knowledge” (Roitman 2014, 14) is in outlining some concrete chronotopes of contemporary crises and

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reflecting on the logic of their production. We approach these chronotopes as grammars, genres, modes of experience, and forms of critique, and inquire into the possibilities they create or close off.

If crisis today often works to minimize choices and dissent and narrow the space of the future, producing a present without alternatives, this book traces crisis in time-space configurations that, to speak with Hamlet, are “out of joint” with the present: in this porous out-of-jointness, that is, the untimeliness of crisis, alternative chronotopes, present, past, and future, become manifest.

**Keywords** Crisis • Chronotope • Knowledge • Critique • World-making

The crisis has no end. Or at least, at times, it might seem like it, with the term ‘crisis’ qualifying all spheres of life: from climate, politics, and health to economy and education. It might be tempting to declare that ‘all is in crisis.’ While capturing the sense of urgency and the necessity of attending to the overlapping crises, the very notion of crisis can also, somewhat paradoxically, foreclose critical analysis and action. Crisis, as Eliah Bures reminds us, is an interpretation, not a fact. Invoking crisis, “a favourite tactic of the dictators,” allows to put to the side political pluralism and, as we would add, epistemic pluralism that would challenge zero-sum (‘with us’ or ‘against us’) framings (Bures 2020, n.pag.).

The term’s potential function today as foreclosure of plurality and dissent is clear. Against this backdrop, it becomes all the more important to recall the intimate connection of crisis with critique. As Balibar, following Koselleck, states, “[t]he crisis renders the contradictions visible, and in so doing brings to the fore the internal structure of the world (particularly the political world, the social world) that is to be the object of the critique.

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Or, inversely: “crisis *summons critique* to produce the instruments, the elements of intelligibility, which would allow for an analysis and resolution” (Balibar 2016, 11). The lens of the chronotope, as we hope this book has shown, enables us to rekindle—when possible—this critical potential in crisis and trace how crises may “shed light on those evidences that we take for granted” and expose the logic of dominant systems—just as the global financial crisis of 2008, for example, “made the logic of the financial system visible” (Antentas 2020, 316).

Attending, therefore, to the chronotopes of crisis—the specific spatio-temporal genealogies and manifestations of crisis as at once a localized event and part of global processes—is an all the more urgent and necessary task. Thinking with chronotopes of crisis places emphasis on overlapping factors, structural processes, and multiplicity. Drawing on Bakhtin’s understanding of the chronotope as “a definite and absolutely concrete locality” that “serves as the starting point for the creative imagination” (1988, 49), our use of a chronotopical optic helps precisely in mapping and scrutinizing the tangles of crises. It resists giving into what Eva Haifa Giraud describes as “[i]rreducible complexity” which “can prove paralyzing and disperse responsibilities in ways that undermine scope for political action”; in response, her aim is to “to explore the possibilities for action amid and despite this complexity” (2019, 2).

This collaborative essay has attempted to contribute to and embody, on the one hand, an acknowledgment of such complexity and, on the other, to put forward clear proposals on how to think in and with crisis, *otherwise*: from brief studies of particular cases of crisis situations, reflections on the grammars of crisis and their discontents or hidden potentialities, manifestations of alternative grammars (such as the ‘middle voice’), the reshaping of infrastructures of thinking and being in crisis, including loopholes and sideway alleys, through acts of memory, to the materiality and chronicity of crisis and critique of ‘crisis’ as foreclosure. While each section engages with particular disciplinary and contextual formulations of crisis, together they seek to position crisis as a “knot” (Luckhurst 2008, 15), an assembly of ideas and practices tied together within one term. While addressing this tangled nature and the inherent ambiguity of ‘crisis’ (a turning point and a chronic state, a signaling of a norm and a potential opening with unpredictable outcome), we also tried to disentangle the relations of power in the acts of adopting and contesting crisis narratives, focusing on in whose name, how, and to what end, one speaks of crisis, and how these utterances invoke or downplay pathos. Furthermore, the

“knot” we scrutinized, to extend Luckhurst’s use, is not just a theoretical assemblage. Rather, crisis ties together individual and collective experiences, histories, violence, and suffering as well as hopes for, and dreams of, a life otherwise. In this context, this long essay aimed to speak *to* and *from* life.

Complementing this focus on experience, the creative and theoretical character of the book equally hopes to invite and inspire a work of imagination. Imagination which, in Anthony Bogues’ formulation, can operate as “critical thought,” aiming to imagine and break “the boundaries/horizons of the status quo of the everyday” (Bogues 2012, 45) as crisis. This imagination as critical thought is, precisely, anchored in a radical awareness of the differentiated, unequal and, only at times shared, experiences of crisis. In her meditation on time and “our time,” Lisa Baraitser proposes that “‘we,’ as a heterogeneous community of those ‘who have nothing in common,’ to borrow Alphonso Lingis’ phrase (1994), or as ‘communities of the unlike’ to borrow Yasmin Gunaratnam’s (2013), nevertheless at times, share time” (2017, 11). Even if dominant framings suggest a unitary and united time and space of crisis, an experience of crisis is only shared “at times.” This book’s ambitious scope, the interrogation of crisis as a concept, framework, speech act, and experience as made manifest across contexts, allows to clearly see such an “unlike” experience of a crisis and its “unequal distribution of vulnerability” (Butler 2020, 71) as well as trace how crises traverse each other yet remain differentiated, not necessarily comparable. Thinking through this “unalikeness” at the same time allowed us to draw connections between ways of experiencing, comprehending, and framing crises across different contexts and scales, and to contemplate—and experiment with—several conceptual figures and modes of critique.

As a whole, this book’s unique contribution to understanding how ‘crisis’ operates as “a blind spot for the production of knowledge” (Roitman 2014, 14) is in outlining some concrete chronotopes of contemporary crises and reflecting on the logic of their production. We approach these chronotopes as grammars, genres, modes of experience, and forms of critique, and inquire into the possibilities they create or close off. Beyond indicating the dead ends of crisis-rhetoric and narratives, this multi-faceted approach helped us to lay out some *alternative* ways of voicing, gazing at, and navigating crises. While taking the current chronicity of crises as a starting point, these practices, discussed together, may contribute to emerging modes of imagining, acting, and critique in/of crises.

Significantly, the optic of the chronotope invites us to acknowledge the presence of alternative time-space configurations in the here and now: chronotopes that are already here but brushed aside as ‘noise’ because they are not intelligible within the chronotopic structures of neoliberal governmentality. Such chronotopes that enact social life otherwise may be traced, for example, in what Moten and Harney, drawing from black radical thought, have termed the “undercommons” (2013). In his introduction to Harney and Moten’s *Undercommons*, Jack Halberstam refers to the undercommons not as a place of heroic rebellion “where we ‘take arms against a sea of troubles/and by opposing end them,’” but as “a space and time which is always here.” “Our goal,” he adds, “... is not to end the troubles but to end the world that created those particular troubles as the ones that must be opposed” (Halberstam 2013, 9). Halberstam describes the undercommons in chronotopic terms: as a “space and time which is always here” (9), a “zone” that “exists in the present” or “a wild place that continuously produces its own unregulated wildness” and thus alerts us to the existence of “a wild beyond to the structures we inhabit and that inhabit us” (7). If the “troubles” he refers to are another name for the crises that are endemic to neoliberal capitalism, these crises should be treated as symptoms of the world that created them. One should strive, then, toward changing this world and its structures—the *disease* rather than its symptoms, to echo the medical meaning of crisis. This endeavor needs to involve counterpublics (Felski 1989; Fraser 1990; Warner 2002)<sup>1</sup>—forged by marginalized groups, those that often face the most intense consequences of crises—that could craft world-making practices through and away from present chronotopes of precarity and crisis: time-space zones that are unruly, wild, uncanny, utopian ghostly, queer, untimely, enmeshed with counter-memories and alternative futures—and hopefully, more inclusive and more breathable.

If crisis today often works to foreclose choices and dissent, and narrow the space of the future, producing a present without alternatives, this book traces crisis in time-space configurations that, to speak with Hamlet, are “out of joint” with the present: in this porous out-of-jointness, that is, the *untimeliness* of crisis, alternative chronotopes, present, past, and future, become manifest.

## NOTE

1. Nancy Fraser coined the term “subaltern counterpublics” (1990, 67), drawing from Felski’s notion of “counterpublics.”

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