

*Where the Wave Broke by Danae Economou*

*Danae Economou's photobook explores Dublin and Athens and finds common ground in the contrasting experience of crisis.*

In *Where the Wave Broke* by Danae Economou, a billboard advertising an Irish daily newspaper displays a diptych of riots on the streets of Athens contrasted with calm on Dublin's deserted streets. How is this to be interpreted? Greek violence as opposed to Irish peace? Greek revolt versus Irish acquiescence? Passion contrasted with apathy? Whatever the interpretation, the intention to contrast the two countries is obvious. The problem is contrast can be superficial and can overlook the underlying similarities.

*Where the Wave Broke* sets out to examine those similarities behind the apparent contrast, to explore the effects of the same economic crisis on two countries that on the surface appear so different. The established narrative of the crisis is that these days Ireland is Europe's poster child for the supposed success of the austerity approach, whereas Greece is portrayed as the naughty child: disobedient and disruptive, difficult to control and prone to violence. This is how it is often presented by the media and the political establishment. But it is not the whole truth, not the reality of the crisis as it is lived.

Danae Economou's book dives beneath these formulaic billboard generalisations to find crisis reflected not just in the places depicted, but in the faces that live there. Amidst scenes of Athens and Dublin, both chaotic and quiet, are images of the ordinary young people of those cities, people who have no alternative but to live through their shared crisis. Many seem solitary, even lonely; pensive, even frustrated; isolated, even within a crowd. But here and there, Economou captures a simple gesture of friendship or even love, solidarity or even just empathy – a touch, a hug, a kiss, a burden shared. These gestures are evidence of interdependence, mutual understanding and compassion. Though their lives and cultures and even their reactions to crisis may be different, the affinity between the people of those places emerge in faces that display shared emotions – fear, love, anger, joy. Crisis is something that is felt, and it is people who feel it and the anxiety that attends it. That is the common humanity that underlies the differing circumstances.



From Greece to Ireland, the wave breaks over everyone, the crisis reaches all the coasts of Europe. It may pull some down, it may carry some away, it may leave others stranded. Some may sink, some may float, some may drown. But what is shared by all is the instinct to swim, to fight in their own way to keep their heads above the wave. In the end, says Economou, whether people engage in a huge communal revolt against austerity or stay enclosed in their own personal struggles to get by, the feelings of the people are the same.