



TRANSITIONS SEMINAR NEWSLETTER 1

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The *Transitions Seminar* is a permanent initiative set up in 2019 by the LIMEN Research Group. It convenes approximately on a monthly basis. It provides a forum for research and debate into liminality and related issues, and functions as a venue for the current *Transitions Project*. It is linked to The Gateway Press and the websites *LIMEN & TEXT* (<http://www.limenandtext.com/index.html>) and *The Northanger Library* (<https://northangerlibrary.com/>), which offer several venues for the dissemination of our research. The seminar is also expected to pave the ground for two larger events: the *International Seminar on Liminality and Text* (ISLT), irregularly held every few years since 1999, and programmed for 2025, and the *Postgraduate Seminar in Liminality Studies* (PS[L]S), yearly organised by MA and PhD students since 2019.

Between January 13th and 14th 2022, a mixed online/onsite conference titled *(De-) Writing the Borderland: Human and Non-Human Liminal Identities* was sponsored jointly by the universities of Vigo and Santiago. Seven members of the LIMEN Research Group submitted talks at this conference, of which six were eventually delivered. Although the conference held undeniable interest, the large number of participants made for a very tight schedule that did not allow much time for debate; additionally, in the case of onsite talks, the unavoidable use of masks complicated reception for some of us. Then again, the conference made no provision for publication, and the talks were devised as materials for the *Transitions Project* and require much feedback, so we felt that the *Transitions Seminar* would be an excellent venue for a repeat of those talks under more relaxed conditions. The papers offered in our first two sessions were accordingly revised results of that event. The aim is to tighten up the talks towards the formulation of a coherent theory of liminality in text studies. We hope the results can be eventually published in *The TRELLIS Papers*, but other plans are being considered for expanded versions of them.

The first session (February 18th) held two talks: Manuel's "Reading Liminality", and Belén's "Embodiment through Site-specific Digital Narratives: A Liminal Experience". For the second session (March 18th), Andrés gave a talk on "Liminality and Transition in the Development of African American Heroic Lore". We thank those of you who attended these. We are preparing the appropriate certificates of attendance and will be sending them to you shortly.



OUR NEXT SESSION

Session 3 in our Transitions Seminar series will take place online via Zoom on

April 8th, at 10.30:

Beatriz Sánchez Santos

**“In search of the post-liminal stage in
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah*”**

Adichie’s novel presents to us a series of border crossings with observable outcomes: emigration, becoming a legal immigrant, the return to the country of origin as a woman who has lived in the US, an “Americanah”. All these represent a change in an individual’s status, while inevitably altering their sense of identity—cultural, national, racial, or other. The title itself is a promise of a post-liminal stage upon the protagonist’s return to Nigeria, with a label to pin down her new identity: Americanah.

I will argue that migration results for Ifemelu in a permanently hybrid identity that reveals an asymmetry in the liminal passage: seen as a person who “is”, but feeling eternally “becoming”, she finds herself in a protracted liminal experience, in search of an identity that she can finally feel as authentic, a definitive (and elusive) iteration of herself. I will explore how migration is depicted in this narrative as a quintessential threshold experience. Full of promise and danger, it fragments and destabilizes the characters’ identities, forcing negotiations and dialogues between identities perceived and assumed and the symbols that accompany them, and probing the boundaries of national, ethnic, and social distinctions: Nigerian, Igbo, black, African-American, American-African, Americanah. With this analysis, I intend to show how the identity conflicts and fluctuations that spring from migration may serve to define liminality as an experiential and relational construct, its function and effects dependent on experiencers and observers of liminal transformations.

Everyone will receive the Zoom link a couple of days before.

COMING EVENTS

The fourth *Postgraduate Seminar in Liminality Studies*, organised by Andrés, Jennifer and Trevor, is scheduled for

April 28th-29th:

PS[L]S 4: The Limen in Upheaval

with contributions by ten postgraduate students from various Spanish and European universities, and the participation of Jochen Achilles (Würzburg) and Sandor Klapcsik (Liberec) as keynote speakers. As usual, a Zoom link will be forwarded to you all a couple of days before the event.



PUBLICATIONS OF THE LIMEN RESEARCH GROUP since 2017

The following information has reached the Newsletter's editor. Please send us any additions or modifications; we need this for the next project application.

Aguirre, 2017. "Thick Description and the Poetics of the Liminal in Gothic Tales", in *Orbis Litterarum Universarum* 72:4, pp. 294–317.

Pritchard 2018. "Practical Jokes: Don DeLillo's *Ratner's Star* and Literary Games", in *Revista de Estudios Ingleses Odisea* 19 (2018),
<http://ojs.ual.es/ojs/index.php/ODISEA/article/view/2119>

Aguirre, 2018. "Liminality", in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Literary and Cultural Theory*, ed. Jeffrey R. di Leo (London: Bloomsbury Publishing), pp. 553-54.

Aguirre, 2019. "A Gothic-Folktale Interface", in *Gothic Studies* 21:2, pp. 159-175.

Aguirre, 2019. "An Outline of Propp's Model for the Study of Wondertales", in *The Bloomsbury Reader in the Study of Myth*, eds. Jonathan Miles-Watson and Vivian M. Asimos (London: Bloomsbury Academic Publishing), pp. 163-74.

Aguirre, 2020. "'Dreary Abodes': Gothic Formulaic Discourse as a Technique of the Surface", in *Neophilologus* 104:1. pp. 1-18.

Sánchez (ed.) 2020. *At the Interface* (Madrid: The Gateway Press, Studies in Liminality and Literature 9). Includes:

- Sánchez, "Interdisciplinary Exploration for Liminality and as Liminality", pp. 1-19.
- Aguirre, "Gothic Castles and the Rhetoric of Binaries: The Case of Ann Radcliffe's *The Castles of Athlin and Dubayne*", pp. 41-64.
- Guilló, "The Ghost Tale: Legendary Fact or Fictional Literature? An Epistolary Ghost Tale as a Possible Example of an Interface Genre", pp. 65-75.
- Bredendick, "Writing from the Interface: Hemingway's Insider Perspective on the Bullfight in *Death in the Afternoon*", pp. 76-96.
- María Álvarez, Elena Bermejo & Melisa Teves. "From Natural to Cultural, from Outsider to Insider: A Study of Liminality in the Figure of the Witch", pp. 97-118.
- Soto, "a black modifier against the white body": Protocols of the Limen in Natasha Trethewey's *Thrall*", pp. 119-130.
- Westmoreland, "The Shifting Interface: Technology and the Transcendent in Richard Powers and Don DeLillo", pp. 151-69.

García de Polavieja, 2020. "The Power of the Beat: US Hip Hop through Wallerstein and Bourdieu". *Hidden Cities: Understanding Urban Popcultures*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9781848881037_008 Web.



- Aguirre, 2021. "Formulaic Language", in *The Palgrave Handbook on Gothic Origins*, ed. Clive Bloom (London: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 95-118.
- Sánchez and Aguirre, 2021. "The Grammar of a Genre", in *The Palgrave Handbook on Gothic Origins*, ed. Clive Bloom (London: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 73-94.
- Bermejo, 2021. "The Song Remains": Necessity of Fiction in Terry Pratchett's The Last Hero, in *The TRELIS Papers* 8, 41 pp.
<http://www.limenandtext.com/pdf/Trellis%208.pdf> Web.
- Aguirre, 2021. "'A Dismal Howling': Formulaic Density and the Gothic Tableau", in *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 56, pp. 181-207.
- Guilló, ed., *Inhabiting the Threshold: Proceedings of the Third PS[L]S* (Madrid: The Gateway Press, to appear in 2022) (contents to be provided).
- Guilló. *Safeguarding West-African Communal Identities: The Gradual Unveiling of Countercultural Stances within African American Musical Discourse* (TFM accepted for publication by UAM Ediciones).
- Harding. *Here There Be Monsters: Mapping the Hero's Journey of Beowulf and its Implications on Understanding the Thresholds and Narrative Cycles of the Epic* (TFM accepted for publication by UAM Ediciones).
- Harding and Guilló, "A Living Bibliography of Liminality in the Literary Field" (accepted for publication in *The TRELIS Papers*).
- Sánchez. "The Mathematics Inhabiting the Limen" (accepted for publication in *The TRELIS Papers*).

RECENT CONFERENCE TALKS BY MEMBERS OF THE LIMEN RESEARCH GROUP since 2017

- Guilló. "Trapped in Heterotopia: The Ghetto and the Prison in African-American Musical discourse" (*The Politics of Space and the Humanities*. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, December 15-17, 2017) (International conference)
- Guilló. "The Ghost Tale: Legendary Fact or Fictional Literature? An Epistolary Ghost Tale as a Possible Example of an Interface Genre" (*The Eighth International Seminar on Liminality and Text (ISLT8): At the Interface* (UAM), April 26-28, 2017) (International conference).
- Guilló. "The African-American Interface: Analysing Rap as a form of Liminal Poetics" (*First Postgraduate Seminar in Liminal Studies (PS[L]S)* (UAM): April 23-24, 2018).
- Guilló. "Representations of Scientific Development in Utopian and Dystopian Universes: Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*" (*Utopia, Dystopia and Climate Change*. Monash University, July 1-5 2019, Prato).
- Guilló. "Analyzing Rap as Liminal Performance" (*Performativity in Contemporary Culture Conference*. Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, May 24-25, 2019).



Guilló. "‘I am’ and ‘I are’: The fluctuating nature of first-person personal pronouns in Rap lyricism" (*Second Postgraduate Seminar in Liminal Studies 2 (PS[L]S 2)* (UAM). May 9-10, 2019).

Pritchard. 'Practical Jokes: Don DeLillo's Ratner's Star and Literary Games', read at *Literary Games - Reading, Editing and Translating Experimental Narrative*, UAM (11/04/18).

Pritchard. 'Flights of Fantasy - Liminal Journey's in Don DeLillo's *Valparaiso*', read at *Expanding the Threshold - The First Postgraduate Seminar in Liminality Studies*, UAM (25/04/18).

Pritchard. "'The Effect of Echoes" - Don DeLillo's *Americana* and the films of Jean-Luc Godard', read at the 42nd AEDEAN Conference, University of Córdoba (07/11/18)

Pritchard. 'Counternarratives as Counter-attack - Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* and Non-violent Resistance to Fundamentalist Ideologies', read at *SAAS Conference* at the University of Salamanca (11/04/19)

Pritchard. 'The "Long Journey Across Gray Space" - The Merging of Private and Public Space in Don DeLillo's *Great Jones Street*', read at *Inhabiting the Threshold - The Second Postgraduate Seminar in Liminality Studies*, UAM (10/05/19)

Pritchard. 'Transitions in Abeyance - Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and the Mid-life Crisis Novel', read at *The Limen: (In)stability and Process - Third Postgraduate Seminar in Liminality Studies* at the UAM (29/10/20).

TO-DO THINGS

The seminar has 'gone public' as the saying goes, and now enjoys an international audience. Future speakers are requested to pass their title and abstract to the Newsletter's editor with sufficient anticipation; the info will be relayed to the coordinator of the Faculty PhD literature programme so she can upload it onto the Faculty bulletins.

Further talks are forthcoming by Trevor, Elena and Isabel. A special session on labyrinths is in the works.