



TRANSITIONS SEMINAR NEWSLETTER 27

Bimonthly, edited by M. Aguirre,
manuel.n.aguirre@gmail.com

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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 bi-monthly basis, online since 2020. It provides a forum for debate on liminality and related issues, and a research-training ground for PhD candidates, as well as functioning as a venue for the current project *Forms of the Threshold Chronotope*. It is linked to The Gateway Press and the websites *LIMEN & TEXT*, *The Northanger Library*, and *The Janus Gate Project*.

<http://www.limenandtext.com/rst.html>
<http://www.limenandtext.com/index.html>
<https://northangerlibrary.com/>
<http://janusgate literature.com/>

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1. THE TRANSITIONS SEMINAR, fifth series (2025-26)

Due in part to preparations for the November ISLT9 encounter (see the *TS Newsletter* #23) and the ensuing administrative wrangles, little work was devoted to the Transitions Seminar; only one talk was delivered this academic year:

TS1. 20 February 2026. Manuel Aguirre, 'Liminal Paradise: Wholeness, Edges, and Margins in Medieval Depictions of Eden.'

As always, scholars interested in liminality studies are invited to participate either via contributions to the *TS Newsletter* or through proposals for talks for next academic year 2026-27. Please send suggestions to the editor at m.aguirre@uam.es.

2. THE VICTORIAN HAUNTED HOUSE SHORT STORY SEMINAR (HHSS)

As part of the new research project *Forms of the Threshold Chronotope: Liminality and the Study of Speculative Fiction* (see *The TRELIS Papers* #20), the HHSS was designed to explore liminalities and threshold chronotopes in Victorian haunted house short stories and to develop a model for the study of this specific historical genre. The HHSS took off in December, and has convened four times so far:

12 Dec. 2025	Intro
29 Jan. 2026	Algernon Blackwood's 'A Case of Eavesdropping' (Aguirre)
26 Mar. 2026	Edward Bulwer-Lytton's 'The Haunted and the Haunters' (Aguirre)
12 June 2026	Sheridan Le Fanu's 'An Authentic Narrative of a Haunted House' (Guilló)

Further contributions have been proposed by Ricki O'Rawe and Elena Bermejo for the Autumn. Some results of this new project have begun to appear in *The TRELIS Papers*:

- Manuel Aguirre & The LIMEN Group. 'Forms of the Threshold Chronotope: A Liminalist Study of Speculative Fiction,' *The TRELIS Papers* nº 20 (2026), <https://limenandtext.com/pdf/TRELIS%2020-%20FORMS%20OF%20THE%20THRESHOLD%20CHRONOTOPE.pdf>
- Manuel Aguirre. "It Seemed a Very Quiet House": Chronotopic Analysis of Algernon Blackwood's "A Case of Eavesdropping",' in *The TRELIS Papers* nº 21 (2026), <https://www.limenandtext.com/pdf/TRELIS%2021%20-%20AGUIRRE%20-%20IT%20SEEMED%20A%20VERY%20QUIET%20HOUSE.pdf>

3. THE LIMEN LAB

The original title of this section, 'Notes, Queries, Responses,' was provisional. Begun in January 2024, it aimed at gathering reflections on threshold issues. The new title, equally provisional, is intended as a call for data and experiment, pieces that pose a problem, whether or not accompanied by a solution: e.g., a contradiction or inconsistency in the model, a possible way of handling a given concept, a tentative new approach to some issue, and so forth. It would involve some focus on methodology, and could very well offer something already done, thought of, published, or developed in ongoing research. The main goal is to provide food for thought and propose tasks that can be eventually tackled by the author of the piece or by others. Length is no issue at this point. I begin by example.

The threshold and the chronotope of the threshold.

Bakhtin's concept of a *chronotope of the threshold* is a useful instrument to solve one of the most fundamental problems in liminality studies, that of the spatiality and temporality of an object—the *threshold*—that, by definition, is supposed to lack extension and duration. I have dealt with this concept in various issues of the *TS Newsletter*. In *TSN* #13 I tried to reconcile the two concepts; in *TSN* #16, I discussed the confrontation and eventual merger of two chronotopes in a U. K. Le Guin novel; in *TSN* #17, I queried telic assumptions regarding the limen, and used Donne's 'The Good Morrow' as an instance where, from the vantage point of the threshold chronotope, points of both departure and arrival are reassessed; in *TSN* #19, I sought to lay out different manifestations of the limen chronotope as 1) a relational site, one in which time and space contract or expand; 2) a spatiotemporal loop; 3) a site of deprivation and/or plenitude; more generally, the chronotope of the threshold is a domain of experience varying in width and duration. It is this last notion I wish to enquire into here.

My problem is, then, how the two concepts, *threshold* and *chronotope of the threshold*, can be reconciled and integrated into a useful framework for analysis. My example is E. R. Burroughs' fictions about Pellucidar, a realm 'at the earth's core.' My choice of texts reflects my persuasion that, when analysis bears on identifying formal strategies, the popular literatures seem to offer a particularly promising field of research, as they display their formal wares rather more candidly than canonized ones. The sophistication of Joyce, Faulkner or Borges's writing will tend to cloak their basic warp under a dazzling woof.

Pellucidar is a vast continent complete with islands and oceans on the underside of the Earth's crust, five hundred miles below the surface of the planet; it is lit by a miniature sun that 'hangs perpetually at zenith' (*Tanar of Pellucidar*, 180). Boring through the crust with a mammoth drill engine, David Innes reached the savage land of Pellucidar. One can easily describe it as an in-between space, neither of earth nor out of it; by our conventional estimations it is, as Turner puts it, 'a place that is not a place,' an interface domain. Like the US Frontier, it is threshold territory and offers the kind of promise and danger—wild nature, primitive human tribes, prehistoric beasts—which civilised society is supposed to be no longer able to afford: a negation of twentieth-century order (much as we find in other book series by Burroughs: Tarzan's Africa, John Carter's Mars, Carson's Venus), ripe for exploration and conquest, but also fraught with destructive forces. It displays characteristic traits: the un-structural or, better, the 'anti-structural' (Turner

again), manifested in an absence of expected order. I think it is fair to conclude that Pellucidar is liminal territory.

On the other hand, part of its essential deprivation consists in an absence of spatial and temporal markers which ensures visitors from the upper crust will get lost:

But where there was no east, no west, no north, no south, no stars, no moon, and only a stationary midday sun, how was I to find my way back to this spot should ever I get out of sight of it? (*Pellucidar*, 7).

Watch and compass do not work in such an environment; in fact, '[t]ime is not even a word to the people of Pellucidar' (*Tanar*, 175); 'the sun does not set and there is no night, and time is immeasurable and unmeasured' (ib., 215). These two points, the absence of time as we measure it on earth, and the labyrinthine nature of space, clearly suggest that Pellucidar is embedded in a chronotope of the threshold that indeed conditions plots, action, and other aspects of the books.

The problem lies in how best to formulate the relationship between the two notions: we have a liminal place that 'contains' (or is contained by?) a chronotope of the threshold, and this raises several questions. Are the two terms synonymous, or perhaps equivalent? Must we then expect to find threshold chronotopes in every limen? Is the difference one that will or will not surface depending on the optics we bring to bear upon the site? It would be interesting to produce an experimental, perhaps collaborative paper on this issue, possibly using the corpus of Burroughs' seven Pellucidar volumes (*At the Earth's Core* (1914), *Pellucidar* (1915), *Tanar of Pellucidar* (1929), *Tarzan at the Earth's Core* (1930), *Back to the Stone Age* (1937), *Land of Terror* (1944), and *Savage Pellucidar* (1963)).

4. PUBLICATIONS RELEVANT TO LIMINALITY STUDIES

- **Damien Chaney & Christina Goulding.** 'Exploring Nuances of Liminality: Unbridled, Oriented, and Restrained Liminality in Cultural Rituals,' in *Marketing Theory* 25:3 (2024) (online first)
<https://doi.org/10.1177/14705931241275528>
- **Melissa M. Damico.** *Finding Liminality in Literature: The Decentered Voice and Its Power to Rewrite Cultural Narratives* (Grand Valley State University, 2024), Masters theses 1120. <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/theses/1120>.
- **Susanne W. Gibbons, Alyson Ross, Margaret Bevens.** 'Liminality as a Conceptual Frame for Understanding the Family Caregiving Rite of Passage: An Integrative Review,' in *Research in Nursing & Health* 37:5 (2014), 423-36.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.21622>
- **Lisi Gordon & Joanne Kerins.** 'Experiencing Liminality as an Inevitable Aspect of Multiple and Multi-Dimensional Transitions,' in Divya Jindal-Snape (ed.) *The*

Palgrave International Handbook of Multiple and Multi-Dimensional Educational and Life Transitions (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2026) (no pages given)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-11145-6_3

- **Clemens Ruthner.** *Die Kultur und ihre Ungeheuer: Fantastik, Liminalität und Kulturökonomie* (Vienna: Turia & Kant, 2024).
- **Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen & Joshua Edelman.** 'Liminality,' in *Ecumenica* 7:1-2 (2014). Available at <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:771489/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- **Elizabeth Taylor.** 'Navigating Transitions: Liminality, Ethnography and Stroke Rehabilitation,' in *Rehabilitation in Practice*, eds. Christopher M. Hayre, Dave J. Muller & Paul M. W. Hackett (Singapore: Springer, 2022) (no pages given)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-8317-6_11

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