TRANSITIONS SEMINAR NEWSLETTER 18

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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 *Transitions Project*. 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://janusgateliterature.com/

1. Forthcoming events.
2. News.
3. Notes, Queries, Responses.
4. Publications relevant to Liminality Studies.

1. TWO FORTHCOMING EVENTS

I.

Parisa Delshad Rezaee

(University of Burgos)

will speak on

'Captured *en Passant*: Realism and the Limits of Representation in Mediations of Europe's Southernmost Borders.'

on FRI, January 24th
at 10.30 a.m. (CET), via Teams

This paper pursues a two-fold aim. On the one hand, it examines how European media represent the borders of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, alongside their portrayal of migrants arriving at these two European land borders with Africa. On the other hand, it problematizes the issue of representation by focusing on the author's forthcoming documentary film about these borders.

The first part of the paper centers on stories about stunted passage to form a literary-analytical framework. Focusing on the arbitrariness of the border, it takes as its point of departure the nineteenth-century German novella *Michael Kohlhaas* (1810). The story is based on the chronicles of a sixteenth-century horse dealer and is catalyzed by his stumbling upon a hitherto-nonexistent border on his usual way to an animal fair to sell his horses. Similar to other works by Heinrich von Kleist, such as *The Marquise of O* (1808), literary representation and the limits of realism are essential to this canonical story's position on the border between history and literature. Precipitating the events that bring about Kohlhaas's downfall, the border is also central to J. M. Coetzee's "interpretive translation" of Kleist's story in his *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983). Here, too, the border that marginalizes and invisibilizes is resisted in the protagonist's inexhaustible movement in spite of the barriers along his long walk to return to his mother's home in Cape Town in the middle of a civil war. Both stories serve as allegories for the complexities of human response to systems of control, epitomised in the border. Coetzee's story is not only similar to Kleist's as he makes his Michael trespass empty houses, duck through the fences, and entertain the impossible idea of "spending a life driving stakes into the ground" (Coetzee, 1983: 97), but it shares Kleist's concern with representation. His protagonist worries about the gap that remains "when he tried to explain himself to himself"; "a hole, a darkness before which his understanding baulked, into which it was useless to pour words" (Coetzee, 1983: 110).

The question of representation will be followed in an exploration of the contemporary issue of borders in the cities of Melilla and Ceuta. Often described as the "gateways" to Europe, these cities

are also spaces where migrants both face violent and inhumane treatment from border security forces, and also exercise resilience. The second part of the paper will thus explore how these two cities embody borderland liminality, illustrating borders not merely as geographical markers but as forces integral to the identities and fates of those who cross them. More importantly, the lens of migration, border politics, and the human condition will be applied to these spaces that host migrants *en passant* to underline the limits of representation and the challenges of capturing immigrants on film. The preliminary conclusions of the paper suggest that passage itself becomes a reflection of the border's role in shaping human lives. This underscores how the representation of migration must confront not only spatial divisions but also the deeper representational challenges articulated in literature, where borders similarly test the limits of mimesis and narrative control. Ultimately, borders emerge as sites that echo the literary tension Kleist and Coetzee explore between reality and the elusive capture of its meaning.

Keywords: Border; Ceuta and Melilla; Representation; Kleist; Coetzee.

Here is the link:

https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19*3ameeting_ZDNiNTNiYzktZDVkNC00MjcxLThlZjYtMmRjNzYwYzA0ZTIw*40thread.v2/0?context=*7b*22Tid*22*3a*22fc6602ef-8e88-4f1d-a206-e14a3bc19af2*22*2c*22Oid*22*3a*222618df3b-c74a-4e43-9f80-18f47d76e245*22*7d__;JSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUl!!D9dNQwwGXtA!T7VVsS1X-3LsFtVvRT4S757UCwgbRqL-3TuV4wizO1ddbVO5Q-ta470XS6TMT9bpNto0Qf_yZVNUyQ$

II.

Lourdes Salgado Viñal

will speak on

Liminality and Heterotopia in G. W. M. Reynolds's Servant Novels

on TUE, February 18th at 11.00 a.m. (CET), via Teams

(the talk will last about 30 minutes.
A link will be provided a few days before the seminar)

ABSTRACT

A passionate, revolutionary writer ahead of his time and one of the few who devoted himself to his readership in heart and mind by allowing them to behold, understand and embrace his moral beliefs, his prejudices, his commitments… that would be Reynolds. His publications became best sellers at the time on five distinctive tiers: novels, journals, short stories, translations and other miscellaneous pieces of writing which very quickly outsold Dickens's and positioned both writers in a long-life literary and somewhat personal rivalry. Two of Reynolds's novels, *Mary Price; or, the Memoirs of a Servant-Maid* (1851-1852) and *Joseph Wilmot; or, the Memoirs of a Man-Servant* (1853-1855), certainly share several narratorial and content features which distinguish them from the rest of his novels. Based on the core principle of power relations as seen through the lens of law and morality which Reynolds externalised by means of servant versus master/mistress duality in order to present before the middle-class readership a representative example of the hardships in life realities endured and/or experienced at each level in the chain of command wrapped, as it could not be otherwise, in the veil of melodramatic sensationalism, one of their prevalent features in their multiple or hybrid constructions is that of a gendered and heterotopian spatial framework. Everywhere in the plots of these two novels the reader finds themself in liminal places which evoke and iterate the ultimate moral lesson to be reaped. Yet what is exactly a heterotopian space and why did Reynolds used them in his plots? This paper attempts to facilitate an answer by exploring Soja's concept of "thirding-as-Othering", Lefebvre's spatial dialectics and Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia by juxtaposing its medical definition with the philosophical notion of utopia in relation to the liminality of time and space in these two Reynoldian novels.

KEYWORDS**:** geocriticism, heterochrony, heterotopia, liminality, rhizome, spatial dialectics, thirding-as-Othering.

2. NEWS

The video recordings of the following two sessions are now available on our website under http://www.limenandtext.com/rst_online%20videos.html);

- Bea Sánchez's 'The Mathematics Inhabiting the Limen'

- Fran Fuentes' 'The Re-Imagined Identity of Diasporic Writers'

So are Newsletters 16 and 17, at
http://www.limenandtext.com/1%20transition%20project%20ts%20newsletter.html

3. NOTES, QUERIES, RESPONSES

This section is open to notes from readers, and contributions are welcome. Notes should not exceed the 1000-word limit by much.

4. PUBLICATIONS RELEVANT TO LIMINALITY STUDIES

- The World Futures Study Federation (INDEPENDENT GLOBAL PEAK BODY FOR FUTURES STUDIES 1 SCHOLARSHIP A UNESCO PARTNER – FOUNDED PARIS 1973) is a global think tank that held a series of seminars in 2023 on liminality and social transition including topics of: governance, technology, humanity in transition etc. https://wfsf2023paris.org/program/

- Fabienne Goux-Baudiment. 'Liminality from a World to Another,' WFSF (World Futures Studies Federation), 25th World Conference, *Exploring Liminalities: Creating Spaces for Unlimited Futures*, Paris, 2023, Liminality from a world to another by Fabienne Goux-Baudiment (youtube.com).

- Halleh Ghorashi, Marije de Boer, & Floor ten Holder. 'Unexpected Agency on the Threshold: Asylum Seekers Narrating from an Asylum Seeker Centre.' *Current Sociology / La Sociologie contemporaine* 66:3 (2018): 373-391. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5909881/#bibr30-0011392117703766

- Rima Sadek. 'Liminality, Madness, and Narration in Hassan Blasim's "The Nightmares of Carlos Fuentes" and "Why Don't You Write a Novel Instead of Talking about All These Characters?",' *Humanities* 2023, 12:3, 50 (2023), 1-11, https://doi.org/10.3390/h12030050

- Laura Lojo-Rodríguez & Noemí Pereira-Ares. 2024. 'Introduction: Border Politics and Refugee Narratives in Contemporary Literature.' *Humanities* 13: 74 (2024), https://doi.org/10.3390/h13030074

- Ville R. Hartonen, Pertti Väisänen, Liisa Karlsson, & Sinikka Pöllänen. 'A Stage of Limbo: A Meta-synthesis of Refugees' Liminality,' *Applied Psychology*, 3 (2021), 1132-11, https://iaap-journals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/apps.12349.

- Radhika Mathrani Chakraborty. 'Indeterminate Liminality and the Refugee Journey: Partition and Hindu Sindhi Women's Life Narratives,' *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 35: 3 (2022), 1204–1220, https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feac018.

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