

[L] POSTGRADUATE SEMINAR
IN LIMINALITY STUDIES



PS[L]S 2

Inhabiting the Threshold

Conference Programme

**THE SECOND POSTGRADUATE
SEMINAR IN LIMINALITY STUDIES**

THIRD CIRCULAR

**UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE MADRID,
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES,
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES**

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The Postgraduate Seminar in Liminality Studies

The Postgraduate Seminar in Liminality Studies is born in light of the UAM's foundational role in the study of liminality and text. By this point in 2018, several decades of work have gone into the project of redefining what was once referred to as 'marginal' or 'marginalized,' stressing instead the idea that such texts reside rather in the in-between, in the limen. In this vein, the concept of 'liminality' was adapted from the anthropological writings of Van Gennep and later Turner to discuss the domain of literature. The discussion has evolved over time to focus on liminality in text at a variety of interdisciplinary levels: at the level of genre, semiotics, linguistics, spatiality, subjectivities, art form, technology, and so on. This project is born with the object of potentially filling the intergenerational gap that exists between established academic research groups on liminality and text such as the Limen Group and the ISLT, and younger generations of potential scholars who seek to take their initial steps into this specific academic research field. Therefore, we present this second edition with the intention of cultivating the seed planted last year in terms of the development of an enduring research seminar, in which students from different academic levels - ranging from final undergraduate years to postgraduate and doctoral level - are welcome to participate.

The 2019 Seminar: Inhabiting the Threshold

The threshold is inherently transitional in nature, from its basic physical definition as the “point of entry or beginning” (Oxford Dictionary) to its anthropological development by Van Gennep and Turner regarding rites of passage. However, in the wake of last year’s expansion of the threshold, it is becoming increasingly clear that this liminal space is one which often opens up much wider than previously acknowledged, perhaps even providing the potential for extended inhabitation or dwelling therein. It is thus that when considered in this light such basic definitions of the threshold as the above are most obviously insufficient, in that they are unable to cover the concept’s enormous potential when applied in the context of the extensive diversity of research fields through which it may indeed function as a spinal cord of sorts. It is for this reason that the first edition of the Seminar in 2018 had a general focus on “Expanding the Threshold,” in order to suggest the seemingly endless range of possibilities which the study of the threshold has to offer. The results were accordingly heterogeneous and interdisciplinary in nature, and included the study of the threshold with relation to such concepts as subjectivity (in both narrative and poetry), genre (between image and text, folklore and literature or biographical and fictional writing), and even regarding the roles of author and editor.

It is thus that, in a push for continuity and to build upon last year’s conclusions, we have settled upon the title “Inhabiting the Threshold” for the 2019 seminar as a natural successor to the previous edition. The slight shift in focus is therefore centered around the idea of “inhabiting,” which is especially interesting beyond its basic definition as “living in a place” (Cambridge Dictionary) in the more specific sense of “being present in or occupying in any manner or form” (Merriam Webster). Rather than emphasizing (an impossible) fixity (one thinks of Heidegger’s similar focus in his otherwise key essay “Building Dwelling Thinking”)¹ this second definition opens onto a range of possibilities centered around mere *presence*; if to “inhabit” means “to be present therein,” how does this metaphor extrapolate to studies of the threshold? For example, it has been suggested that the limen or threshold does not merely represent a transitional space from one established concept to another, but rather offers the possibility for this in-between state to exist in its own right. In other words, as suggested above, we wish to focus on the threshold as a space that opens up to the possibility of inhabitation, rather than merely representing a stopping point between this and that. Some

¹ Heidegger, Martin. “Building Dwelling Thinking.” *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*. Harper and Row, 1977.

relevant and varying examples would be the important interdictions of Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*² or Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*³ in terms of recognizing liminal subjectivities, John Miles Folley's concept of the "oral-derived,"⁴ – which he uses to designate texts that share elements with both the oral and the written – as well as the exploration of liminal genres which live in this threshold, such as the graphic novel (located between image and text) or the Gothic (as originally emerging between the realms of folklore and the medieval romance).

With this focus in mind, while explorations of the threshold in any capacity are always welcome, we encourage participants to consider the threshold specifically with regards to this idea of inhabiting. Continuing the interdisciplinary spirit which was fostered in last year's inaugural edition, in which the broad focus is of course on *text*, we wish to generally explore such questions as: Just how far can the threshold be expanded? Can it indeed be inhabited? If so, what are the specific characteristics of this inhabitable threshold? What are the possible implications for the more established adjacent spaces surrounding this threshold? At what point does the liminal lose its status as such when the in-between state becomes "permanent"?

Invited participants at the postgraduate level are welcome to give a talk of up to twenty minutes on any of the ample variety of topics in which the concept of the threshold may thus be engaged. The seminar already looks forward to keynote addresses from five established experts in the field of liminality studies, some of which are coming in from abroad. At least ten minutes will be scheduled for debate after each twenty-minute talk, and thirty minutes will be allotted after each keynote address. Like last year, this seminar is indeed designed to promote discussion amongst all participants in response to each contribution - it is conceived of with the literal and figurative use of a round table in mind. As the overall aim of the seminar is to establish the presence of emerging scholars in the field of liminality, providing a groundwork from which to continue the development of the field here at the UAM, the focus is to create an atmosphere of cooperative scholarship out of which the liminal project (in an individual and collective sense) can continue to expand.

² Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 2004

³ Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute, 1987.

⁴ <http://www.pathwaysproject.org/>

PS[L]S 2 Seminar Schedule

Keynote talks are scheduled for 45 minutes with 30 minutes for discussion, while postgraduate talks will each last 20 minutes, with 10 minutes for discussion.

Thursday, May 9th

9:30 – 9:45 - Seminar opening

9:45 – 11:15 - Group 1: Brazilian & Poetic Limens

Valeria Iglesias

Thresholds and Limens of the Mind: Clarice Lispector's *Near to the Wild Heart* as a Portrait of Trauma and Dissociation

Henrique Alves de Souza

Looking Through the Window – Liminality and Fracture in Elizabeth Bishop's "The Burglar of Babylon"

Helena Sánchez Gayoso

Laura Riding's Metaphysical Quest: Between Physical Perception and Emotional Creation

Coffee: 11:15 - 11:30

11:30 – 12:45 – First Keynote Address

Ricki O'Rawe (Queen's University Belfast)

The Political Potency of the Fantastic

Lunch: 13:00 - 14:30

14:30 – 15:45 – Second Keynote Address

Clemens Ruthner (Trinity College Dublin)

The Fantastic/Gothic in Literature and/as Liminality: a Theory Sketch

15:45 - 17:15 – Group 2: Thresholds Between Subjects and Communities

Andrés Guilló

"I am" and "I are": The Fluctuating Nature of First-person Personal Pronouns in Rap Lyricism

Marta Vega

Fanfiction Writers: The Merging of Author and Reader

17:15 – 18:30 – Third Keynote Address

Beatriz Sánchez Santos (Independent Scholar)

The Mathematics Inhabiting The Limen

Friday, May 10th

9:45 - 10:45 – Group 3: Liminal Fantasy

Melisa Teves

Sabrina, a 21st Century Witch: Liminal Features in Contemporary Witches

Elena Bermejo

Opposites Attract: A Preliminary Study of Grimdark and Hopepunk

Coffee: 10:45 - 11:00

11:00 - 12:15 – Third Keynote Address

Ineke Jolink-Bockting (Institut Catholique de Paris)

Life in the Interspace of Jazz and the Blues: Liminality in Esi Edugyan's Novel *Half-Blood Blues*

12:15 - 13:15 – Group 4: Liminal Representations in Don DeLillo's Fiction

Trevor Westmoreland

From Life to Death (and Back Again?): Liminal Passageways in Don DeLillo's *Zero K*

Simon Pritchard

The "Long Journey Across Gray Space" - The Merging of Private and Public Space in Don DeLillo's *Great Jones Street*

Lunch: 13:30 – 15:00

15:00 - 16:15 – Fourth Keynote Address

Isabel Soto (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia)

"To trace out a story": Between the Said and the Unsaid in Teju Cole's Fiction

16:15 - 17:15 – Group 5: Inhabiting the Gutter – Liminality in Graphic Novels

Alba Beltrán Flaño

The "New Flesh" in Contemporary Comics Storytelling: Liminal Genres, Monstrous Bodies and Twisted Minds in Shintaro Kago's *Reproducción por mitosis* (2012) and M. A. Martín's *Rubber Flesh* (2018)

Quetzalina Lavallo Salvatori

***The Wrenchies* and the Use of Metafiction in Sequential Art**

17:15 - 18:00: Round Table

18.00: Seminar Closure, to be followed by a 'tapas' evening in downtown Madrid.

ABSTRACTS

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

INEKE JOLINK-BOCKTING

Institut Catholique de Paris

Life in the Interspace of Jazz and the Blues: Liminality in Esi Edugyan's Novel *Half-Blood Blues*

Seldom have I read such poetic words of praise as there are on the introductory pages of the novel *Half-Blood Blues* by the Ghanaian-born Canadian writer Esi Edugyan. As *The Seattle Times* puts it:

The story hurls us from Baltimore, to Berlin, to Paris, to an obscure Polish town—as breathlessly as that trumpet player finishing a long heartfelt riff. From bleak, violent cityscapes, it shifts to the troubled souls of the musicians as they tend the pure flame of art and the impure fire of jealousy.

The book, which won many prizes in Canada as well as in America and Europe, basically tells the story of a group of Jazz musicians at the time of the Second World War in Berlin and Paris, presenting, to quote *Newsday*, “a bold imagining of a hitherto little-regarded corner of the black Diaspora.” I will show how this imagining of the black Diaspora the musicians live in is a palimpsest of liminalities: temporal, spatial, racial and purely linguistic, as well as, most gloriously, musical. Indeed, while the Blues, as a musical genre, represents an endeavor to overcome—or at least live with—racial injustice and grief, Jazz, in its own way, is an overcoming of the Blues. The symbolics of this transformation is important and can be seen, for instance, in Toni Morrison's well-known novel *Jazz*. But in the context of a war-ridden Europe, the celebration that Jazz represents is returned towards the suffering of the Blues, the plot of the novel centering itself around the record that the musicians try to produce in Paris, in the in-between of the two musical styles, its title also the title of the novel: *Half-Blood Blues*.

RICKI O'RAWE

Queen's University Belfast

The Political Potency of the Fantastic

Responding to the provocation in the first circular, this paper will assume that a text is a threshold that the reader inhabits for the duration of a reading in order to explore what this could mean for the political potency of fantastic literature. To do this, I will draw on the implied liminality in Jacques Rancière's reconceptualisation of modernist aesthetics. For Rancière, the aesthetics of the 19th and 20th centuries are notable for their shift towards the primacy of experience in art, which collapsed the strict delineation between life and art that had been maintained by previous regimes of aesthetics. This blurring of boundaries foregrounds the liminality central to the sensory experience human beings rely on to make

sense of both art and the world. Rancière argues that this shift into ‘the aesthetic regime of art’ emphasises the aesthetic nature of politics, which – like art - is always presenting a particular alignment between things as they appear to the senses and things as they are in the world (a specific ‘distribution of the sensible’). In this paper, I will explore how the concept of liminality might help us to understand Rancière’s argument for the inherent politics of aesthetics/aesthetics of politics, as part of a strategy for asserting the political potential of literature. To illustrate my argument, I will discuss the political valence of the Fantastic, a mode – I posit – which effectively draws the reader into the liminal threshold of the text, using the limen’s propensity for fluidity and flux both to draw attention to and subvert the distribution of the sensible assumed by the reader in their extratextual existence. Ultimately, using Rancière’s work as a theoretical lens, this paper will demonstrate that it is the liminality on a fantastic text, which always exists between two antinimous modes of being, that grants the mode its subversive power.

CLEMENS RUTHNER

Trinity College Dublin

The Fantastic/Gothic in Literature and/as Liminality: a Theory Sketch

Around the millennium, research into the Fantastic slowly made its way out of its Academic limbo in the German-speaking world and grew into an area which is more or less taken seriously nowadays. The endeavours of various scholars have contributed to conceiving the occult irritation by the Fantastic as a productive challenge for literary and cultural theory.

From my vantage point as observer and fellow traveller of these theoretical discussions over the last two decades, there are currently at least two prolific – and potentially complementary – ways of conceptualizing the Fantastic beyond Cvetan Todorov’s seminal work from 1970:

1. as a visualisation or literalisation of *rhetoric*;
2. as a staging of *liminality* or as the liminality of representation.

With regard to the second point, and in connection with my book *Am Rande* (2004) and an article from 2010, I would now like to present, specify and further develop the hypotheses introduced in those studies regarding the “marginality” the Fantastic, including further research literature. In this enterprise I will attempt a compromise – albeit not unproblematic, though in my opinion, necessary – between the positions of (Literary) Anthropology, Constructivism and Post/Structuralism for a conceptualisation of the Fantastic, which is much indebted to the works of Jacques Derrida, Victor Turner, and Hans Richard Brittnacher. Naturally this is to be understood as a (patch)work in progress, which must excuse the sketchy nature of the hypotheses at the centre of which lies an broadened concept of *liminality* revised by cultural studies: an endeavour that awaits further elaboration.

BEATRIZ SÁNCHEZ SANTOS

Independent Scholar

The Mathematics Inhabiting the Limen

Throughout the years, our conceptualizations and descriptions of the limen have made use of countless analogies that derive from mathematical concepts: from Manuel Aguirre's anisotropic spaces in Gothic Fiction and the surficial in Fantasy literature to Robert Samuels's music as narrative limit, or my own definition of characterization in Gothic fiction as a strange attractor in a non-linear dynamic system.

Despite the many difficulties that arise from an interdisciplinary approach to literary analysis, I cannot but fully endorse Katherine Hayles's view that "One way to understand the connection between literature and science is to see science as a repository of tropes that can be used to illuminate literary texts."⁵ In this talk, I will present some ways in which mathematical models can help us "illuminate" the limen in literature. First, by providing a wide-ranging overview of some branches of Mathematics that have been used or could be used to describe different liminal phenomena in literature: Logic, Geometry, Topology, and chaos theory. I will then offer an analysis of the embedded narrative in Ursula K. Le Guin's story "Semley's Necklace," in which I argue that the different ontological and discursive planes in the two narratives give rise to a problematic case of metalepsis. It is my intention to provide a topological model that accounts for, and allows us to visualize, this phenomenon: the Klein surface.

From this overview, several questions will arise, the most important being: what could be the advantages of using mathematical modelling versus a simple visual metaphor? Is it possible to go beyond mere analogy, even? How can we grapple with the complexity of the relation between science and literature at a point where science can/does inform literary production itself? I hope that either during the talk or during its discussion we will reach a deeper understanding of these questions.

ISABEL SOTO

Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia

"To trace out a story": Between the Said and the Unsaid in Teju Cole's Fiction

My reading of Teju Cole's *Every Day is for the Thief* and *Open City* focuses on the novels' strategies of reticence or suppression. Cole's aesthetic practice is one of elision, omission, and revelation through indirection, his vocabulary weaving back and forth between terms of forgetting and recovery. One might call this a poetics of reticence—what Julius, the narrator of *Open City*, refers to as "the ability to trace out a story from what [is] omitted" (9), suggesting a readerly tool to unearth memory and, ultimately, make sense of the novels. If the liminal is generated by, and resides in, a space between two or more systems then that is where readers must locate their reading and seek meaning. In Cole's fiction, that space lies between the said and the unsaid.

⁵ Hayles, Katherine (1991) *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, p.20.

POSTGRADUATE SPEAKERS

Henrique Alves de Souza:

Looking Through the Window – Liminality and Fracture in Elizabeth Bishop's "The Burglar of Babylon"

"The Burglar of Babylon" is one of the most representative poems written by Elizabeth Bishop in and about Brazil and, unlike many of her other Brazilian poems that use nature to reflect about the country's present and past, it exposes the fractures and borders that characterize social and racial relations. It is unique in the way Bishop combines her ability to behold and describe the reality of the city she was living (Rio de Janeiro) and her capacity to establish a dialogue with the local history and literary tradition.

The poem tries to explain how the contrasts between the poorer north and richer south of Brazil force people to migrate and how this system validates the social schism that result in more poverty and violence. The almost invisible limen that separates these two worlds is never seen but its presence is palpable in the lines of the poem. This fracture is hinted in the geography of the city where the poor people live in the different favelas whereas those who are rich watch the action "through binoculars". The action in question is the death of the criminal Mucuçu by the hands of the police.

By means of a format that mixes language simplicity with the popular "ballads" typical of North-eastern Brazil ("cordel"), Bishop exposes the implication of other social actors (the political and religious authorities, the media, the army or the police) in the perpetuation of this fracture, as well as reproduces concerns that called the attention of local writers like Joao Cabral de Melo Neto and Clarice Lispector.

Alba Beltrán Flaño:

The "New Flesh"⁶ in Contemporary Comics Storytelling: Liminal Genres, Monstrous Bodies and Twisted Minds in Shintaro Kago's *Reproducción por mitosis* (2012) and M. A. Martín's *Rubber Flesh* (2018)

Some contemporary artists have found in the comics narrative, a hybrid genre between text and image, the ideal means to explore corporality as an inhabitable threshold; that is, as a liminal territory in constant change where the inhabitant subject's inner tensions and conflicts converge and are projected. This is the case of *mangaka* Shintaro Kago, whose works are framed into the *ero guro* (a specific Japanese genre that means "erotic grotesque"), and Spanish cyberpunk strip cartoonist Miguel Ángel Martín. Beyond considering the body as a trace that points out the transition between categories such as young and old or alive and dead, these authors are interested in scrutinizing the body/identity correlation when their transformation leads the subjects to go deep into this in-between-and-beyond space occupied by the perverse and the monstrous. Both the body as a "symptom", which reveals the self's angst through mutations and deformities, and the body as "instrument", used by the subjects to model who they are far away from socially-accepted canons, are present in Kago and M.

⁶ Gérard Imbert, "La nueva carne: el cuerpo entre la carencia y el exceso en el cine actual" in *Opción*, vol. 30, num. 74, May-August, p. 60-73, Universidad del Zulia, Maracaibo, 2014.

A. Martín's formally-transgressive works. This study analyzes how the representation of this “New Flesh” echoes the experimentation on the comic genre in Kago's *Reproducción por mitosis* (2012) and M. A. Martín's *Rubber Flesh* (2018) as a way to question the limits of tradition and expand the possibilities of human condition from a double perspective.

Elena Bermejo:

Opposites Attract: A Preliminary Study of Grimdark and Hopepunk

Despite its increasing prominence in today's popular culture, the boundaries and defining traits of the fantasy genre remain a matter of dispute. A cluster of distinct definitions —such as the ones provided by Tzvetan Todorov, Rosemary Jackson, Kathryn Hume or Brian Attebery, among others— are regarded as equally relevant for the demarcation of the genre, while an agreement on what exactly constitutes fantasy has yet to exist. It is in this context of exploration of an expanding and shifting genre where analyzing the latest currents becomes of the utmost importance for the definition of the canon. In this paper, I intend to study two modern fantasy subgenres, born in the last decade and colloquially named by popular culture: Grimdark and Hopepunk. Generally understood as one being the opposite of the other, Grimdark works are characterized by a nihilistic or amoral tone and a rejection from the deterministic “happy ending” of traditional fairy tales; while Hopepunk emphasizes optimism and the resolution of conflicts through political action. Of course, these general traits could hardly be described as precise definitions —a fact that denounces the necessity to study these subgenres in a critical context. My paper will endeavor to analyze the liminality that Grimdark and Hopepunk embody, as they inhabit the shifting margin where new movements appear in reaction to the canon and even to each other. Thus, the recognition and examination of Grimdark and Hopepunk may help us to understand not only the nature of these contemporary subgenres, but also to identify the limits of the canon they attempt to amend.

Andres Guilló:

“I am” and “I are”: The Fluctuating Nature of First-person Personal Pronouns in Rap Lyricism

Rap is one of the latest musical variants to have sprung from the larger and encompassing genre of African-American music. Like its musical forefathers, the nature of rap is profoundly liminal for several reasons; for one, it merges traits from both African and European musical traditions, a common feature to all African-American musical variants. Rap further displays its liminal status in the complex formal aspects of its poetics, which share traits from both oral and written poetry and therefore prevent scholars from applying strict categoric distinctions when it comes to locating it in the realms of either folklore or literature. In some forms of rap lyricism, certain linguistic elements stand out whenever one attempts to approach the texts with a literary or folkloric frame of reference. The distinctive use of first-person personal pronouns by some rap artists is certainly one such element. The object of the present paper is to apply a close examination of the use of the “I” within the lyrics of two song-texts written and recorded by distinguished rap artist Tupac Shakur. Through this analysis I intend to expose the fluctuating nature of the “I”, by demonstrating that it works as an element that may refer to a single speaker — which is to be identified with the author figure —, while simultaneously functioning as a metonymic element used to

express the collective perspective of Shakur's African-American community through an individual speaker. Hence, this examination will present the "I" as a liminal linguistic mediator between the individual identity of the artist, and the collective identity of the community to which he belongs. We will be able to distinguish between a literary and a folkloric use of the "I", since the metonymic use mentioned above may very well remind us of the anonymous status of the composer of the folksong, the lyric "I" of which refers, more often than not, to no one person in particular, but to a universal experience which s/he may have shared.

Valeria Iglesias:

Thresholds and Limens of the Mind: Clarice Lispector's *Near to the Wild Heart* as a Portrait of Trauma and Dissociation

Joana, an eccentric character marked by trauma, is the protagonist of Clarice Lispector's *Near to the Wild Heart* (1943). As readers, we are invited to peek into her mind through the free indirect style narration, combined with the use of techniques such as interior monologue and stream of consciousness. Joana references and echoes the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza, focusing around the idea of good, evil and freedom, touching on morality by juxtaposing the ideas of immorality and amorality. Joana was orphaned at a young age and sent away by her aunt, who was meant to be her legal guardian when her father passed. She, therefore, experiences abandonment and childhood trauma, causing her to become dissociated from her own reality. This, together with her lack of morals and her understanding of the notions of good and evil, results in her inhabiting a sort of grey area that will be described here as a liminal space or threshold. For that matter, the purpose of this paper will be to explore how Joana's dissociation from reality translates in the creation of a mental space that can be equivalent to a liminal space, concluding in her inhabiting a threshold: *the mind has corridors surpassing material place*.

Quetzalina Lavalle Salvatori:

***The Wrenchies* and the Use of Metafiction in Sequential Art**

The Wrenchies is a graphic novel published in 2014. *The Wrenchies* is a comic book inside the graphic novel. *The Wrenchies* is also the name a group of children in the story choose for their gang as a tribute to the #1 they find in their world. Comic books and graphic novels have a long tradition of resorting to metafiction to create stories, great titles and historic numbers have based their success on it. Sequential art, apparently, seems keener on playing with it than other medium. Farel Dalrymple's work is a complicated and elusive story involving a postapocalyptic world, magic and five different dimensions and timelines crashing, dealing at the same time with the uncertainties of growing up, the perils of an artist and the power of comic books. Through the exploration of this particular universe, my aim is to elucidate the role of the metafiction in sequential art and establish a connection between it, the liminal nature of the medium and the particular way in which artists become so. Through the story of Sherwood Breadcoat and Hollis, who represent artist and reader respectively, we learn the importance of comic books in puberty and how both experiences (reading and creating) end up being similar. Furthermore, Dalrymple's graphic novel dedicates much efforts to depict the anxieties and fears of adolescence: Sherwood's adventure in the cave and

the opening of the sinister door represents his journey towards maturity and his envisioning of adult life, whereas his creation of a terrible alternate future —and of his comic— mirrors his fright to grow up. This leads me to believe that there is a certain tradition of artists linking the beginning of their careers not only to the moment they started drawing, but when they became avid readers too, which transform the way they understand creation. Finally, *The Wrenchies* also accentuates to what extent comics are based on the artist's life and experiences when not only the references can be written, but also visual —without forgetting the shared experience necessary for the gutter to work. Therefore, the use of metafiction in sequential art can be linked to its liminal nature, first, because it entails a high involvement of the artist with his creation and secondly, because the medium entails a certain cultural approach that affects the process of becoming an artist.

Simon Pritchard:

The "Long Journey Across Gray Space" - The Merging of Private and Public Space in Don DeLillo's *Great Jones Street*

Bucky Wunderlick, the protagonist of Don DeLillo's 1973 novel *Great Jones Street*, is a "hero of rock 'n' roll". In an attempt to escape the fate of self-destruction that this position seems to foist upon him, Bucky retreats, from the "devouring neon" of his fame, to a run-down tenement in lower Manhattan. Although he attempts to withdraw, from the very public (and central) realm of his position as a famous rockstar to the private (and marginal) space of an apartment, Bucky instead falls into a threshold between the private and public spheres. Various figures from his public life (manager, assistant, bandmate) infiltrate their way, along with the wind and ice of a New York winter, into his "small, crooked room". Likewise, his private thoughts are eventually consumed by the public that await him, their anticipation of his next move whetted by his apparent disappearance.

This paper will explore how Bucky's failure to occupy a purely private space, away from the public space of stardom, is shown by DeLillo to be symptomatic of the fact that we are never able to simply occupy one space or the other. The terms "private" and "public" can be used to describe two facets of being: we are all *both* private individuals *and* public figures. We are always both of those things, regardless of the space we physically inhabit, and however much we might wish to retreat from, ignore, or annihilate one of those facets. That is because, to be a social being is to inhabit a threshold between the private and public spheres, where one sphere always, however marginally, overlaps the other. For those social beings who, like Bucky Wunderlick, live an exaggerated public life, where the public facet of their existence is warped by extreme fame, the result is often madness or death. *Great Jones Street* is a novel about learning to inhabit this threshold; it is a novel about gaining the balance and poise required to live both privately and publicly and not, like Bucky Wunderlick, tumbling out into the surrounding abyss.

Helena Sánchez:

Laura Riding's Metaphysical Quest: Between Physical Perception and Emotional Creation

In the New York Review of Books, Paul Auster stated in reference to the poet Laura Riding that "at an age when most poets are just beginning to come into their own, [...] she had already reached maturity". The dissenting and powerful voice of this American avant-garde

Modernist poet penetrated the literary scenario of the 1920s and 1930s, reaching its culmination when she became an official member of the Fugitives, a group of American Southern writers whose discussions on poetry and philosophy were grounded on finding new criteria to apply to poetry. Their conclusions were to become the seed of New Criticism. Several years later, Laura's obsession with the pursuit of the "style of truth" led her to make the drastic decision of renouncing poetry during a period of time in order to write a dictionary on the inner workings of meaning and language, guided by the wrong assumption — as she later recognized — that poetry could never be or become the language of truth. Although her poetry has been compared to that of T. S. Eliot and Emily Dickinson, Riding's romantic entanglement with Robert Graves -in a Sylvia Plath style- has overshadowed her literary production. Together with Graves, with whom she cofounded the Seizin Press, Laura stayed in Majorca until the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, in the small town of Deià in Ca n'Alluny. This paper aims at analyzing some of the poems that she wrote during her time in Majorca — surprisingly, the least-known of her entire production — in which Riding's metaphysical quest in between the physical perception of the world around her and her emotional and mental recreation of reality (truth) mirror a liminal space that problematised the process of finding truth, unity and perfection through poetry.

Melisa Teves:

Sabrina, a 21st Century Witch: Liminal Features in Contemporary Witches

Over the centuries, the figure of the witch has entertained and captured audiences of all ages. From its traditional depiction found in the fairy tales published since the 17th century, to the White Witch of Narnia (1950) and Hermione Granger in the Harry Potter series (1997 - 2007), fictional witches have always been present in Western literature and cinematic productions. Their image, however, has changed throughout the years, producing contemporary depictions of witches that are unrecognizable when compared to their predecessors. The aim of this talk is to explore the ways in which those modern witches managed to gain a new voice and a space close to the centre of the cultural system while retaining important aspects of their liminal nature.

The starting point of this paper will be the analysis of the changes that the figure of the witch have experienced throughout the time; a progression traced and studied on the essay "From Natural to Cultural, from Outsider to Insider: A Study of Liminality in the Figure of the Witch" presented in the ISLT8 in 2017. Following that research line, a comparison of two comic books series published by Archie Comics; Sabrina the Teenage Witch (1971) and Chilling Adventures of Sabrina (2014) — and their respective television adaptations — will be presented to illustrate in detail the evolution of the modern witch in terms of characterization, role and position within society. The paper will end with a reflection on the precise liminal status of the contemporary witch, and a reflection on the socio-cultural changes that seem to have triggered that transformation.

Marta Vega:

Fanfiction Writers: The Merging of Author and Reader

Ever since the creation of the online website FanFiction.net in 1998, fanfiction has proliferated and expanded. Fanfiction is essentially a work of fiction published on the Internet that is created by fans. The stories are usually based on a "canonical" work; in other words,

fanfiction writers may use characters, settings or any other element from an original piece of fiction to create a story of their own. For this reason, controversy has arisen regarding fanfiction and its creator's authorship. In this essay, I will focus on fanfiction and its authorship, exploring its liminal status. I will explore how these writers merge the role of author and reader, as they were firstly readers and, based on their reading, they became writers. Moreover, we also have to take into account that in fanfiction there is a distinctive collective authorship, for writers communicate with their readers as they write along, taking into consideration their comments or suggestions. Thus, it seems that more than a crossing between the readership and the authorship realm, there is a permanent 'in-between' state where fanfiction creators stand. I will use liminality and Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault's essays on the figure of the author as a theoretical framework to prove that fanfiction creators are inhabiting the threshold that exists between being an "established" author and being a reader.

Trevor Westmoreland:

From Life to Death (and Back Again?): Liminal Passageways in Don DeLillo's *Zero K*

Don DeLillo's latest novel *Zero K* (2016) revolves around the potential technology has, in the face of ever escalating problems of war, famine, and environmental catastrophe in a future just-around-the-corner, to bypass or transcend the limitations of the human. This potential is sought in the novel by a group calling themselves the Convergence, who have built a large subterranean complex in the middle of the Kazakh desert dedicated to the preservation (mostly of the super wealthy) through cryogenic freezing. This process is bolstered by both the words of its advocates and by the spatial structure of the complex itself, which all work to portray an ideology of individualized transcendence; this ideology itself centers around the overtly liminal transition that those who decide to have themselves preserved (for awakening at a later date) undergo.

In this paper I will therefore discuss the way that DeLillo's narrative undermines the Convergence's goals, often in a structural way. Of key significance is the way the novel is broken into two distinct sections, which are broken up by a brief but crucial interlude. I argue that the two main sections represent a fundamentally different value when it comes to chronotope or worldview, and that it is the interlude which acts as the formal, textual passageway from one to the other. More specifically, the interlude portrays the wandering thoughts of the character Artis, who has been artificially preserved and floats in a body pod. In this short section her ontological state is decidedly liminal, stuck between (embodied, implaced, communal) life and the non-existence of the death that the Convergence is trying so hard to transcend. The paper will thus explore the implications of this overall shift in meaning from one section to the other by an analytical gaze which revolves outwards from this doubly liminal interlude section.