

**BEYOND BOUNDARIES:
EXPLORING THE CONCEPTS OF LIMINALITY AND ALTERITY
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM AND PHD COURSE
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NOTEPAD

with abstracts in chronological order and space for notes

PARTICIPANT LIST

with affiliations and e-mail addresses



Organisers

- Border Poetics/Border Culture Research Group, Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education, University of Tromsø (<http://uit.no/borderpoetics>)
- Comparative Indigeneity (KURF) research group, Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education, University of Tromsø

Beyond Boundaries: Exploring the Concepts of Liminality and Alterity

This symposium sets out to explore two contested concepts - alterity and liminality. It will do so from the perspective of the social sciences and the humanities. Keynote speakers are well-known international researchers, whose approaches have set the standard for innovative work in both fields. They will present a broad overview of the two concepts in their own work, and within the disciplines with which they are associated.

The symposium will examine the concepts of alterity (otherness) and liminality (being on the threshold) from a humanities' and social sciences' perspective. Concepts of liminality and alterity have developed differently in different disciplinary traditions, and our present understanding of borders, identity and space in a world of global postcolonial differences and religious, cultural, ethnic or other divisions will be enhanced through the bringing together of these different conceptualizations in critical dialogue. Just as liminal settings bring together disparate aspects and entities, we are soliciting submissions that use material, artistic, historical, literary, and ethnographic types of evidence to address situations exhibiting ambiguity, transcendence, and transgression. Moreover, interventions may discuss forms of liminality/alterity arising in both abstract and concrete spheres. To the former end, participants are encouraged to reflect upon subjects that appear to blur or erode traditional conceptual demarcations and theoretical distinctions. Participants are encouraged to reflect from the concrete life histories or life experience of people 'living on the boundaries' but all papers do not have to be exclusively focused in this way.

Such issues may evoke conditions in which normally accepted intellectual categories or social conventions begin to dissolve, or circumstances in which people straddle lines (real or figurative) between existential or experiential states (e.g. along lines of gender, sexuality, pure or mixed indigenous status, nationality, race, ethnicity, social status, religion, culture, or class). Papers may consider figurative boundaries such as those associated with rites of passage, the dynamic interactions between author (or performer) and audience, presentations of conflict between local, indigenous, national, or international communities or groups, or figures (literary or historical) who function as intermediaries. One may also choose to investigate more tangible expressions of liminality and alterity by exploring the actual borders, crossroads, and geo-political frontiers in which these two concepts manifest themselves, including margins or limits within states, cities, the home, and other spheres. Whether looking at future possibilities or current definitions, both literal and figurative approaches to the topic will encompass themes dealing with boundaries, limitations, transitions, fluidity, change, dichotomy, indeterminacy, and syncretism.

The interdisciplinary symposium addresses researchers and scholars working within a variety of fields connected to borders, frontiers, liminal spaces and places, as well as to their effect on individual and group identities. The outcomes of the symposium will give a limited number of researchers two significant opportunities, firstly, to have their research commented upon by international scholars in the field within a trans-disciplinary dialogue, and secondly, to discuss with other scholars the various ways their methods, disciplinary focus, and theoretical assumptions might be sharpened or reconsidered within the intersection of alterity and liminality studies.

Heterogeneity and Boundaries in Finnmark, Northern Norway

In spite of the heterogeneity and the long enduring historical close contact between different ethnic groups in the Northern Scandinavia, much scholarly work has paid attention to boundary making processes. This might be said to be the case for the national borders, boundaries between ethnic groups as well as inside the frames of ethnic groups, as well as in the field of religion. In this short talk I address this occupation with boundaries in research in the Norwegian part of this region in general and Finnmark in particular, and emphasise that the scholarly view often is matched by some discourses in everyday life. In particular this latter is peculiar as long as one in the quotidian can observe that such boundaries on other occasions seem to not matter at all. What is suggested is that some of the explanation for this obsession with boundaries might be understood as a result of macro processes where the nation state has played an important role.

Kjell Olsen is associate professor in travel and media studies at the University College in Finnmark. His original fieldwork is in the ethnically mixed communities of Finnmark and Northern Norway. He has published extensively on indigeneity and identity politics in Northern Norway and is the author of the volume *Identities and Ethnicities in a Border Zone*.

Heterogeneity and Boundaries

Introductions by Professors Kjell Olsen, Anne Britt Flemmen and Sidsel Saugestad.

Relocating the Identities of the Dead and Other Missing Bodies

The lecture opens with a discussion of Damian Hirst's 1991 'dead shark' artwork, actually entitled 'The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living' in order to consider the radical alterity the dead offer to the living. The paper then goes on to consider the ways in which the living serve to (re)assign identity to the dead in forensic contexts and the conflation between individual and corporate identities (such as ethnicity) that characterizes some forensic science practice.

Marcus Banks is professor and the Director of the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Oxford. His original fieldwork was with Jains in India and their diaspora population in England. He is a specialist on visual methods in anthropology, author of the acclaimed volumes *Organizing Jainism in India and England*, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions*, and *Visual Methods in Social Research*. He has been active in recent debates and resistance to neo-nationalism in Europe.

If Everyone is Ethnic, Who is the Other? A Critical Inquiry into the Ethnicization of Indigenous Groups, Migrants and Nations

Some anthropologists have used ethnicity to refer to indigenous groups like the Sami and the Mayan people of Mexico and Central America; to the core of the nation as ethnic; and to migrants coming to America and Western Europe. Others have argued that if ethnicity is to have analytical currency, we have to limit the use of ethnicity to certain features such as ethnic groups being minorities and seeing ethnicity as arising within unequal relations of power. I will argue that ethnicity as well as discourses on ethnicity are best approached through social practice theory that highlights the lived, the practical and the reflexive aspects and its larger constraints that may lie well beyond the actual practice. To substantiate this argument I will draw from studies of the Yucatec Mayans in Mexico and on popular and academic approaches to migrants coming into Scandinavia.

Peter Hervik is associate professor of migration at Aalborg University. His original fieldwork was on the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico. He is a specialist on the construction of identity and author of *Mayan People Within and Beyond Boundaries* and the recent best-seller *The Annoying Difference: The Emergence of Danish Neonationalism, Neoracism, and Populism*.

Towards a Poetics of the Liminal in Gothic Tales

The talk argues that the Gothic genre enjoyed a liminal status in between folklore and literature, and employed formal strategies analogous to the 'anti-structure' devices Victor Turner detected in the liminal stage of rites of passage. These strategies can be ultimately tracked down to a set of 'rules' shaping and governing the genre. The talk outlines and illustrates five such rules and argues that they shape a *liminal* poetics.

Manuel Aguirre is Senior Lecturer in English Literature, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. He is head of LIMEN Group for the investigation of liminality and literature and The Northanger Library Project (<http://www.northangerlibrary.com>). His books include *The Thresholds of the Tale: Liminality and the Structure of Fairytales*; with Roberta Quance & Philip Sutton *Margins and Thresholds: An Enquiry into the Concept of Liminality in Text Studies*; and *The Closed Space: Horror Literature and Western Symbolism*. He is also author of numerous articles in *Gothic Studies*, *Review of English Studies*, *Modern Language Review*, and *Mnemosyne*.

Astri Dankertsen, University of Nordland

Identity negotiations and ethnic fragmentation in a Sami context

Konstantin Zaikov

The Role of Norwegian and Russian maps of the 18th century in constructing the political boundaries. The case of the “common districts” Tromsø University

Neither here nor there: Liminality in Contemporary French fiction and Autofiction

This paper offers a selective overview of contemporary French fiction and autofiction and tracks the recurrence of the motif of liminality across a corpus of novels and *révits* written by a number of authors who, in many respects, can be regarded as the literary descendants of the *nouveau roman*. In the work produced over the last three decades by, amongst others, Pierre Bergounioux, François Bon, Marie Darrieussecq, Héléne Lenoir, Laurent Mauvignier, Marie Ndiaye, and Jean Rouaud the processes of ritual and passage serve as the thematic and structural linchpins of narratives, the protagonists of which strive and, more often, struggle or fail to accommodate life transitions and the role-changes that they bring. The fictions and autofictions discussed are all narratives of situation in which characters, families and sometimes broader social groups are caught in the process of passage from one state, status or role to another; these are narratives in which plot is either a matter of readerly reconstruction or is consigned to second-degree, embedded stories recounted at liminal moments, and in which consequences of events and processes of change figure more prominently than the events themselves. Striking by its recurrence across the corpus is the preoccupation with issues relating to selfhood, with obstacles encountered in the acquisition of a sense of self and the threats that constantly jeopardise it. Thus, the texts analysed yield a wealth of examples of difficult or impeded maturation, identities that have been defined largely by loss or compromise, individuals whose potential has been curbed by family obligation, social class, genetic heritage, physical incapacitation or self-abuse, and psychological trauma or abnormality. The first part of the paper will examine an indicative selection of these liminal fictional scenarios and explore briefly some of the themes that are developed through them, while the second part of the paper will focus upon the formal and structural strategies deployed to evoke the experience of being 'betwixt and between'.

Jean Duffy is Professor of French at the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests lie principally in twentieth and twenty-first-century French fiction and in word and image studies. She has published widely on the *nouveau roman*, on the relationship between literature and the visual arts and on the role of ritual in modern French narrative. Her books include *Reading Between the Lines: Claude Simon and the Visual Arts* (Liverpool University Press, 1998), *Signs and Designs: Art and Architecture in the Work of Michel Butor* (Liverpool University Press, 2003) and *Thresholds of Meaning: Passage, Ritual and Liminality in Contemporary French Narrative* (Liverpool University Press, 2011). She has also contributed scholarly editions of *La Bataille de Pharsale* and *Le Jardin des Plantes* to the Pléiade volume devoted to Claude Simon (Gallimard, 2006).

The Pressure of Experience Forces Language Into Poetry: On Herta Müllers's poetics of border crossings and transitions between and within liminal spaces

In my paper the point of departure will be the interconnection between historic experience and aesthetic production, which often can be seen in literature written during or in the wake and remembrance of extreme circumstances such as war, deportation and persecution by or in totalitarian regimes. All of which is part of Herta Müller's personal life experience and is reflected not only in her choice of themes and motifs but even more so in her choice of a poetological strategy constantly and deliberately moving beyond the semantic and logical boundaries of language.

Sissel Lægroid is a professor of German Literature at the University of Bergen, where she is currently a co-leader of the interdisciplinary research group "The Borders of Europe". Her recent publications and research projects are the aesthetics of exile, German-Jewish exile literature, Rumanian-German literature, cultural border meetings/hermeneutics and cultural dialogism, literature and psychoanalysis, and modernism/postmodernism.

Exploring Liminalities and Alterity in literary and other medial representations

Johan Schimanski

"Victor Turner and the Border Fantastic"

David Anderson

"Ancestors and Alterity: Kinship in First Nations
Indigenous Discourse"

Holger Pötzsch

"Marginal or Liminal? The Norwegian County of
Finnmark in Knut Erik Jensen's Stella Polaris and
Burnt by Frost"

Espen Dahl

"The holy and the liminality of the ordinary"

Stephen Wolfe

"Atlantic Ancestors 'drowned at sea':
Awakening the Dead"

Continuation of above session with a focus on
Research Applications and Publication

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IKL = Department of Culture and Literature

ILP = Department of Education

ISS = Department of Sociology, Political Science and Community Planning