INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON LIMINALITY AND TEXT 7: GENRES, MEDIA AND THE LIMINAL
UIT THE ARCTIC UNIVERSITY OF NORWAY, 12-14 MAY 2014

Manuel Aguirre------------------------4
Heilna du Plooy-----------------------5
Ana María Manzanas-------------------6
Peter Messent------------------------7
Gerd Bjørhovde------------------------8
Miriam B. Mandel---------------------9
Roberta Quance-----------------------10
Johan Schimanski----------------------11
David Murray-------------------------12
Beatriz Sánchez Santos---------------13
Yael Levin--------------------------14
Ineke Bockting-----------------------15
Ricki O’Rawe------------------------16
R. J. (Dick) Ellis---------------------17
Isabel Soto--------------------------18
Belén Piqueras-----------------------19
Stephen Wolfe------------------------20

PROGRAMME
and practical details

NOTEPAD
with abstracts in alphabetical order and space for notes

PARTICIPANT LIST
with affiliations and e-mail addresses
International Seminar on Liminality and Text 7: Genres, Media and the Liminal

How are liminal spaces and subjects presented within different genres and media? Can genres and media themselves function as liminal spaces? We will be discussing a variety of genres and media, both traditional and new, “pure” and mixed, extensive and marginal, high and low, or combinations of these. We interpret “Liminal” as referring to any kind of threshold forms and experiences, be they transitory, transformative, sublime, integrative, transgressive, hybrid etc. The focus on liminality within genre and media and on the function of literary texts, cinema, artwork, performance as liminal spaces in themselves bring with it the opportunity for a timely discussion on the performativity of the arts and their potential for innovation and critique.

For previous ISLTs, see http://www.limenandtext.com/islt_theislt.html.

Programme

Sunday 11 May
2000 Meet in hotel lobby for walk to Skarven for a drink

Monday 12 May
0830 Meet outside hotel for maxi taxi to University
0900 Registration
0915 Welcome by HSL faculty
0930 Manuel Aguirre & Heilna du Plooy (discussion chair: Stephen Wolfe)
1100-1115 Coffee
1115-1245 Ana María Manzanas & Peter Messent (discussion chair: David Murray)
1300 Lunch
1400-1530 Gerd Bjørhovde & Miriam Mandel (discussion chair: Yael Levin)
1530-1545 Coffee
1545-1715 Roberta Quance & Johan Schimanski (discussion chair: Manuel Aguirre)

1730 Reception on inside balcony of HSL faculty

Tuesday 13 May
0845 Meet outside hotel for maxi taxi to University
0915-1045 David Murray & Beatriz Sánchez Santos (discussion chair: Gerd Bjørhovde)
1045-1100 Coffee
1100-1230 Yael Levin & Ineke Bockting (discussion chair: Heilna du Plooy)
1245-1345 Lunch
1400-1530 Ricki O’Rawe & R. J. (Dick) Ellis (discussion chair: Johan Schimanski)
1530-1545 Coffee
1545-1630 Isabel Soto (discussion chair: Ana María Manzanas)

(Free for each delegate to find their own dinner in Tromsø, meet at 1930 in hotel reception.)

Wednesday 14 May
0845 Meet outside hotel for maxi taxi to University
0915-1045 Belén Piqueras & Stephen Wolfe (discussion chair: Holger Pötzsch)
1045-1130 Discussion of publication of papers and future plans
1145-1245 Lunch
Departure (busses or taxis from University to Airport)

Practical details
The symposium will be in room E0103 in the Humanities/Social Sciences building at the university.

The 20 and 21 busses take you straight from the university to town. Remember to keep tickets for your travel form.

For travelling, you will need to be at the airport about an hour before your flight.

We have set aside 30 minutes for each paper, with 15 minutes discussion time in addition.
Territorial borders have received renewed academic attention in this age of transnational mobility, though often in a fragmentary and isolated fashion in the humanities. As an ever present, if not always simply definable element in human life, they are commonly represented in narrative and symbolic forms. The Border Culture/Border Poetics Research Group sets out to develop theoretical and practical strategies (a “border poetics”) for examining the function of these forms of representation in the intersection between territorial borders and aesthetic works.

The group has been responsible for the Border Aesthetics project (2010-2013), which investigated how changing perceptions of borders relate to shifting practices of aesthetic evaluation. It drew upon two guiding observations that must inform any notion of a border aesthetics, these being a) that aesthetic theories and practices regularly invoke and engage with notions of the border; and b) that borders are in turn capable of producing aesthetic effects and can themselves be conceived of as aesthetic objects. For more details on publications and activities, see http://uit.no/hsl/borderaesthetics.

At present the group is a partner within the EU 7th frame programme research project EUBORDERSCAPES (2012-2016), where it coordinates work package 10 in the project, which relates “cultural production” and artistic endeavour to the social construction of borders. This work package explores different examples of how culturally produced representations have contributed to socio-political interpretations of state borders as well as challenged official meanings, symbolisms and functions attached to state borders. It opens a humanities perspective that is not merely additional to social science approaches and promotes a more comprehensive understanding of the role of cultural production as a bordering practise.

The research group has worked extensively with public outreach, research bibliographies, seminars, workshops, conferences, a key terms database, web lectures, university courses, cooperation with artists, and special issues of academic journals. See http://uit.no/borderpoetics for details, and also the “Border Aesthetics” facebook group and the @bordaesth twitter account.
Demarcating the Gothic Genre: ‘Horror’, the Limen, and the Sublime

Formulaic discourse in Gothic fiction has received scant critical attention, yet it seems to provide valuable keys to an understanding of the genre. In attempting to construct a sort of ‘algorithm’ for the formulaic use of the word ‘horror’ in a Gothic novel, the talk will argue that formulaic language has thematic implications. After distilling the system of connotations exhibited by the word in our chosen text, the talk will lean on Edmund Burke and Ann Radcliffe’s reflections on the nature of the Sublime in order to explore the possibility that the liminal rather than the sublime is implicated in the semantics of the word ‘horror’.
“I am she!”—Layered Liminality and Narrativity in Poems about Identity

This paper will address issues concerning liminality in poetry and poetry as a liminal activity. Is poetry a better or more likely genre or medium for the representation of liminal themes than other genres such as narrative? Are writing poetry and reading poetry as such liminal activities? Analyses of selected poems of Mary Elizabeth Coleridge and Antjie Krog will be used to carry forward the argument. To delimit the field the choice of poems will be restricted to poems in which a revelatory insight into the self is represented. The issue of genre distinctions will be addressed by indicating that lyric poems can more often than not also be read as a specific form of narrative, thereby illustrating the fluidity and relativity of the generic distinctions. In the analyses of the poems the focus will be directed at the complexity of interactive narrative and liminal layers in the exploration and poetic representation of crossing physical, emotional and metaphoric thresholds, borders and boundaries in the search for selfknowledge.
Hospitality and liminality in Junot Díaz’s *This is How You Lose Her*

This paper looks at liminality from the perspective of hospitality and the guest-host dynamics. When a guest enters a household there is some hesitation at the threshold. Cautious about his or her right of entrance, the guest seems to pause, as if aware of the affirmation of mastery that governs his or her going in. This lingering at the limen is revealing in that it points at the workings of hospitality. Hospitality “governs the threshold—and hence it forbids in some way even what it seems to allow to cross the threshold” (Derrida “Hospitality” 14). Hospitality, Derrida argues, “becomes the threshold” and “remains forever on the threshold of itself” (“Hospitality” 14), at the crux of a bifurcation, a double postulation or contradictory movement between opening and closing, between mastery/ipseity and the other/guest, between hospitality and hostility. The paper illustrates these processes in Junot Díaz’s *This is How You Lose Her* to claim that the migrant as guest is contained within the national body as “its interiorized outside” (Butler 16), always at the threshold, always in a liminal position. Guests may be welcome and granted a right of asylum by being authorized to cross a threshold or line that will accompany the migrant everywhere.
Mark Twain, White Elephants and Siamese Twins: Humour and Liminality

Twain’s humour often works to dislocating effect – stops us dead in our tracks as we take in, and then laugh at, its absurdities. In this paper, I look to explore something of the liminal effect that occurs as a normative desire for rationality bumps up against jarring illogic; as Twain’s jokes (to follow Freud) work like dreams to condense meaning, turn around the customary logic of the world, act to ridicule and disrupt the social order and routines we normally look to for our stability and protection. Twain’s humour, then, tends to take his reader into a world of fluid malleability – somewhere between unconscious and conscious meaning, between innocent fun and purposive meaning. Such liminal effect is reinforced by the way he juxtaposes the everyday with the exceptional, the outrageous or monstrous, again creating an in-between space where interpretive activity is focused. In this paper, I look briefly at a number of Twain’s short sketches, ‘Map of Paris,’ ‘Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins,’ and ‘The Stolen White Elephant.’ In ‘Map of Paris’ I am particularly interested in the gap between Twain’s nonsense humour and the tragic domestic circumstance of the time of writing. In the ‘Siamese Twins’ sketch and ‘Stolen White Elephant,’ I focus on generic borders between the commonplace and the freakishly disruptive. I conclude by suggesting that we may see the last-named apparently puzzling story as crucial to an understanding of Twain’s comic art and its liminal urge.
Border-Crossing Fiction: The Liminal Aesthetics of Stevie Smith’s Over the Frontier

Stevie Smith’s 1938 novel Over the Frontier is a border-crossing text in a number of ways, most obviously as the story of a journey from England to Germany in the mid-1930s. In some ways it is an amusing and entertaining read, with Pompey Casmilus’s highly idiosyncratic (semi-autobiographical) voice talking/taking the reader through her everyday concerns. On a personal level it is a story of love gone wrong, of depression and near breakdown followed by doctor’s orders for a complete change of environment as the way to be healed.

However, Over the Frontier is also a deeply/deadly serious text, focusing on the cultural, political and even military situation in Europe in the mid-1930s. Set in a Europe heading for another world war, it also ventures into discussions of pressing global issues such as imperialism, capitalism, racism and national chauvinism.

But when the text makes its sudden leap, “over the frontier” as it were from the (fairly) realistic story into a different, a fantastic world, the term border-crossing becomes inadequate. In an uncanny landscape bordered by northern seas on one side, fog and marshes on the other, Pompey finds her own person undergoing dramatic change, too, suddenly becoming an active agent of unstable gender in a world of uniforms and military action.

This paper will attempt to show how a reading of Over the Frontier based on liminal aesthetics may explain some of the “strangeness” of Stevie Smith’s writing.
Conversations with A Moveable Feast: Derived Texts Create Liminal Spaces

It is not unusual for one book to enter into conversation with another. This uninvited, deliberate, and usually announced visitation is conscious on the part of the visitor or invader who crosses textual boundaries to exalt, dethrone, rewrite, refine, redefine or otherwise exploit the prior work. The host text is, of course, unaware that it is invaded, though it may have, via its openness and liminality, invited the invader. This process, this transgression or conversation, creates a space between the two texts from within which the reader, Janus-like, must cope with shifting, parallel and retrospective readings and re-readings.

My discussion of this liminal space will begin with Gerard Genette’s concept of transtextuality, focusing on his term hypertext, for which I propose an alternative vocabulary. The nuts and bolts of the paper will be a discussion of Ernest Hemingway’s A Moveable Feast (1964)—in itself an unstable, liminal production—which has spawned a goodly number of (mostly) book-length derivatives in the half century since its publication. These come in a variety of genres: biographies of his wives, travel books detailing what has come to be seen as his Paris, scholarly books focusing on manuscripts and annotations, a recent work of similarly slippery nonfiction, and even a new, expanded version of itself. I will focus on two items, themselves difficult to define but perhaps falling under the rubric autofiction: a poem by Jaime Gil de Biedma, called “París, postal del cielo,” and a prose narrative by Enrique Vila-Matas, París no se acaba nunca (2003). But I would suggest that all derived texts, whatever their genres, jolt the base text out of its position and onto a continuum, onto a liminal space where gaps are widened and explored, contradictions are revealed, and the host text is challenged and redefined.
Projections on the ‘Wall of the Future’: A Liminal World in Federico García Lorca

The argument has been made that in *Así que pasen cinco años* (When Five Years Have Passed), written in 1931, Lorca conceived of theatre as offering a liminal space, where time was above, in-between, or beyond real time (Wright 2000). In the course of her perceptive analysis of the hero’s crisis of masculinity, Wright did not consider, however, that the predicament had first appeared in Lorca’s early poetry (André Belamich 1983) and prefigured the play. Indeed Belamich was convinced that the hero’s psychic conflicts had already been explored in the *suite* ‘In the Garden of the Grapefruits of the Moon’ (1923) whose poetics have also—following an independent path—been termed liminal, insofar as they point to a failed rite of initiation (Quance 2008). This paper, therefore, seeks to bring the two works together and to ask whether there is a way of theorizing liminality that can help us to understand the way the earlier poetic work is reformulated in the drama, taking into account the different senses in which we can say a poem is performed and a work of drama is performed. Lorca’s dilemma of the broken engagement – ‘remembered forward’ (Smith 1998) – is reminiscent of the Kierkegaardian paradox of repetition. The impossibility of either accomplishing the repetition as such—or giving up on it for good—suggests that Lorca’s poetic hero can only be saved if he sticks to poetry as a way to represent liminality.
Liminal spaces of migration and writing: Sara Azmeh Rasmussen’s *Skyggeferden* and Marie Amelie’s *Ulovlig norsk*

This paper is based on research on border concepts in migrant literature within a work package on “Border Crossing and Cultural Production” in the research project EUBORDERSCAPES. The paper explores the possibility of using different concepts of liminality to identify operative border concepts in two migrant narratives published in Norwegian, both on the plane of the territorial border crossings described in these narratives, and on the border-crossings from private to public, from experience to literature, constituted by these two publications.

Immigrant TLGB activist and social commentator Sara Azmeh Rasmussen’s debut novel *Skyggeferden* (“The Shadow Journey”, 2013) is an autobiographical fiction about a young woman growing up in Syria, harbouring literary ambitions, undergoing a process of liberation, emigrating to Norway, and becoming integrated into Norwegian society. Maria Amelie’s *Ulovlig norsk* (“Illegally Norwegian”, 2010) tells the temporally clearly delimited story of the pseudonymous Russian (North-Ossetian) author while living without papers in Norway, from 2003 to the publication of the book. On publication, the author became a cause célèbre: She was arrested outside a public speaking engagement, underwent trials, became the focus of controversy and public demonstrations, was deported and then readmitted to Norway after a change of rules known as “Lex Amelie”. A comparative reading of border figures in the two books, one ostensibly a novel and the other a testimonial, raises questions on the function of liminal and liminoid spaces, individual and societal transitions, and published literature as a liminal or liminoid space.
Giving and Exchanging Across Cultures: Liminal Representations in Accounts of Early Travel Encounters

This paper will examine a number of early travel narratives which describe first encounters between European travellers, colonists and missionaries and Native Americans, and it will explore the characteristic tropes and ideological assumptions in this genre. It will focus on the many forms of exchange involved in such encounters (languages, commodities, bodies, diseases, beliefs) and the conflicting understandings of these exchanges as trade and gift. Mauss’s seminal work on the gift has been extensively revisited, notably, recently, by Derrida, and I will be using this work to explore the gift’s liminality. By closely examining some early accounts from the 16th and 17th century and showing the exchanges taking place across all sorts of thresholds I hope to show how truly liminal these encounters were, and how this liminality was represented.
An Analogy between Gothic Fiction and Classic Music: Rhetoric and Iteration

The 18th century saw a rise in popularity and in mass production and performance of literary and musical works. Forms were imitated, duplicated, structured according to patterns that are, even to this day, recognizable. A clear set of principles of composition is the departure point for this analogy between music and literature at the mid-to-late 18th century, a time at which both musicians and writers saw demands of prolific production: they tested the boundaries of composition in a period that also witnessed growing professionalization and appreciation of quality over quantity.

The search for variety within unity is a common artistic aim for music, but in the quest for this balance, different compositional principles competed, evolved, and were explored during the 18th century, most notably an exploration of enormous expressive possibilities arising from binary forms, which culminated in the sonata form. This form has been described as “more a procedure or a set of principles for organizing and developing musical ideas than a rigid form.”1 We attempt to explore where analogies with music analysis could be useful as a study of those modes of expression in Gothic fiction that exploit binary relationships, and whether we might consider the formulaic pattern and the pervasiveness of symmetry and disturbances of symmetry in Gothic fiction as representations of a shift in artistic rhetoric during the 18th century.

Even though the limitations of analogies between music and literature must be taken into consideration, we would like to envision them as artistic representations of contemporary concerns: a search for balance and its disturbance, an exploration of tension and dynamics, and most importantly, the possibilities of complex variation and repetition of different structural units: phrases, motifs, themes.

Bordering the Subject: Joseph Conrad´s Diegetic Insistence

Conrad´s works repeatedly testify to the traditional separation of language and action, a division that is often fashioned through the pitting together of two central characters: the man of action and the man of words. The hero is he who relinquishes language or finds expression impossible; the writer-speaker-narrator is a spinner of yarns, a witness, subjective prism or storyteller who expounds to an audience the lessons of another man´s experiences. The first is a symbol of action, the second of language and passivity. Hamlet´s various procrastinations in Shakespeare´s play repeatedly demonstrate such opposition. In *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* the character of Tuco offers a rather more succinct summary of the self-same literary topos in his comment: "When you have to shoot, shoot, don´t talk." This paper will explore the setting up of these binaries in a number of texts from *Lord Jim* to *Suspense* and trace the subtle variations and deviations from the scheme. It will suggest that the thematic and stylistic explorations of language as passivity are key to determining Conrad´s explorations of a subjectivity in crisis.
Into the Interspace of Linguistics and Literature: Liminality and the Depiction of Spiritual Exaltation in Literature

In this paper I want to enter the interspace of linguistics and literature by focussing on different forms of attributive discourse, especially the so-called small-clause. In contrast to other types of complements of mental activity verbs that a narrator may use to attribute mental activity to a subject—such as the that-clause, the how-clause and the to-infinitive clause—this linguistic form is non-epistemic in that it makes no reference to a truth judgment by either the narrator or the experiencer. In other words, it allows for the expression of experience without any intellectual mediation, "raw" as it were.

The small-clause, therefore, is a gold-mine for the depiction of the various forms of threshold experience associated with limited, disturbed or altered consciousness—when intellectual mediation is underdeveloped, degenerated or temporarily dysfunctional—such as those connected with mental retardation, mental illness, epilepsy, situations of extreme mental stress and dreamlike, hypnotic, hallucinatory and exaltated states.

My contribution will start with discussion of the different linguistic and cognitive aspects of the small clause and their literary possibilities. I will then focus on a number of passages in fiction, so as to show the different ways in which the small-clause is used to depict a character in the throws of a spiritual experience.
Borges, Liminality, Poetry

In the first poem of Jorge Luis Borges’s first collection, 'The Streets' (1923), his poetic persona establishes the streets of Buenos Aires as both the mundane location of his flânerie and the metaphysical landscape of his confessional reflections. As he draws his native city into his consciousness, he stamps it with markers of his own subjectivity which he hopes can then be returned to the world in poetic form, hung out like the flags of a sovereign nation. In subsequent poems and collections, the reader follows his progress as the lyrical subject paces the streets of the suburbs at dusk or dawn, rests in patios and public squares, and takes stock at the turning of the year. Although his invocations of these liminal spaces and moments are occasionally marked by a feeling of communitas—whereby the lyrical subject feels released from the mundane structures of society and on the cusp of discovering a profound truth about the universe—he is also beset by a recurring disappointment as he ‘returns’ unsure of the stability of the realm experienced and frustrated that he is unable to communicate it is his poem.

In this paper I will show how the concept of liminality might allow us to better understand both the liminoid pilgrimage that Borges has his poetic persona make through the city and his frustration at not being able to capture his experience in a poem. I will contend that, for Borges, both the liminal spaces in the poem and the liminal space of the poem offer a chance to achieve communitas that will, however fleetingly, allow the ‘emergence of the integral person from multiple personae’ (Turner & Turner 1978). Although beset by failure, Borges returns time and again to the poem hoping that he can craft a poem that will somehow justify him, engaging the reader and connecting him to something beyond himself.
'...if these things do not occur in their proper time ... the world in which we live does not exist': Walker’s Appeal and the rise of racism

David Walker’s *Walker’s Appeal*, which went through three editions during the period 1929 to 1830, constitutes a key intellectual intervention into global considerations of race and how these are being especially shaped by events in America, as the ‘world’s first democracy’ refused to progress the abolition of slavery. This determination meant that African Americans inevitably occupied a liminal position in American society, either as slaves, denied recognition as full human beings, or as free blacks, all too often regarded as a threat to the American republic, and therefore best encouraged to participate in various African colonization programmes. This sharply reminds us that a liminal location is far from always a desirable one, and *Walker’s Appeal* confronts this by demanding that the situation be addressed and rectified. This demand is advanced militantly, and establishes how on theological, natural and enlightenment grounds, African Americans must be fully integrated into American society, lest devastating consequences follow their enforced liminalization. Walker makes the point that this is not just an internal American issue, but one with consequences for the whole world, in that the risk is that if nothing is done, the lines of racism will ineradicably harden and enduring racial conflict will be the consequence. As such this ground-breaking Black intellectual’s message is one offering a sharp reminder how liminality can function as a dangerous process of marginalization with deleterious ramifications in terms of social cohesion.
Wails, moans, and bullets: Genre and the Lexicon of War in Langston Hughes

In an essay from 1941, Langston Hughes wrote, "I like to travel. Just travel". Indeed, he spent much of his life travelling across oceans, continents and hemispheres and his work reflects this locational disruption: witness the titles of his two-volume autobiography, *The Big Sea* (1940) and *I Wonder as I Wander* (1956). This paper examines Hughes's many transnational border crossings and argues that travel, literal and metaphorical, was aesthetically enabling for Hughes: he travelled, he wrote. His writing is correspondingly diverse, ranging from short stories and novels to plays, poems, essays, articles, librettos and memoirs. This generic roaming—travelling, if you will—is frequently and explicitly diasporic or transatlanticist in theme and execution, foregrounding mobility, admixture and connectivity. I focus on writings produced in the 1930s, most of them emerging from his visit to the USSR in 1932-3 and his time in Spain in 1937 covering the civil conflict from the side of the republican loyalists. These works—extracts from *I Wonder as I Wander*, "Air Raid Over Harlem" (1936) and a number of Spanish Civil War poems—establish a thematic and formal coherence, notably through a lexical and imagistic iteration. Hughes's transnational and generic roaming does not so much dwell on the limen as traverse it, forging locational, temporal, and aesthetic equivalences.
Hypertextual Liminality: Piecing Out Subjectivity in Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl*

A classical hypertext now, Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl* (1995) is not conceived to be read, but to be performed in a liminal space where the boundaries between author, medium and reader dissolve; this original and thought-provoking fictional artifact doesn’t devise a proper story, but a Borgesian network of electronically configured “paths” of lexical nodes where the reader chooses to compose both the body of the main character—none other than the female monster in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*—and the narrative itself.

The interaction of two different mediums—text and software—gives way to an assemblage of multiple diegetic levels, a patchwork of subjectivities intended to highlight the fact that technology dismantles conventional narrative certainties; hypertext fictions project virtual spaces of mutable signifiers, thresholds where author, text, interface and user collaborate in the construction of signification, enacting thus a multi-dimensional and decentralized form of subjectivity that is the mark of the digital era.
Liminal Places, Spaces and a Diasporic Genre in London in the 1950s: Dwellings, Staircases, Streets, and Cul-de-sacs

This paper will examine a theoretical problem discussed in the 1980s and 1990s when critics used a set of liminal spaces to define and defend migrant literatures: those of dwelling in a house and in languages; movement up and down staircases; moving through and “dwelling” in the street; and pauses in forward motion: reaching a cul-de-sac. The paper will examine some of the formulations of Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994) and Michael de Certeau *Practice of Everyday Life* (1980, trans. 1984), by testing them on a set of descriptions in novels and social reports of London in the 1950s that privilege the doorway, movements from basements to pavements, staircases to landings; rooms to communal spaces; from "streets as spaces of transit to territories to inhabit". Often Bhabha and de Certeau use the street, stairwell, and staircase as metaphoric passageways but the reader is not encouraged to situate them within an historical or particular geographic context. I will therefore examine the liminal opportunities for plurality, creativity, and transformation within such places and spaces. Texts focused on London in the 1950s will be explored: Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londeners* (1956); George Lamming, *The Immigrants* (1954); and a number of personal narratives from *Windrush, the Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* (1999); and a series of photographs from the period.