



POSTGRADUATE SEMINAR  
IN LIMINALITY STUDIES



April 28th-29th, 2022  
Madrid, Spain

**\*\*DEADLINE EXTENSION: 16<sup>TH</sup> January\*\***

**CALL FOR PAPERS: The Limen in Upheaval:  
The 4<sup>th</sup> Postgraduate Seminar in Liminality Studies**

**Project Description:**

The PS[L]S is an international seminar currently in its fourth year of existence - the term "seminar" is used because the number of participants is kept to an amount which can always fit within one room. From the beginning, the seminar has worked to continue the effort, for one, to redefine what was once referred to as 'marginal' or 'marginalized,' stressing instead the idea that such texts and identities reside rather in the in-between, in the limen; the concept of 'liminality' is one adapted from the anthropological writings of Van Gennep and later Victor Turner towards the field of literary studies. 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. Previous editions have focused on different aspects of the threshold: its nature and (in)definability, whether it can be "inhabited," and questioning its stability and its relationship with process.

**2022 CFP: “The Limen in Upheaval”**

The limen has been defined in previous editions of the PS[L]S seminar as a site of change, process, transition and (in)stability; this year’s conference aims at exploring the concept of upheaval as an as yet unexamined facet of the threshold. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “upheaval” as “a strong agitation or convulsion of society, etc.; a sudden or violent

alteration” (OED). In the consideration of processes of transition - be they individual, societal or even generic - the question arises: is upheaval a fundamental element of all such processes of change? Like the liminal stage condensed within the rite of passage, upheaval often involves a literal or figurative uprooting, an uncomfortable, unsettling experience which renders it impossible to inhabit one’s previous foundations. Such disruptive processes may be argued to involve varying degrees of agitation - from discomfort to outright violence - depending on the capacity of an individual or community to assimilate the transformations which arise from them.

In terms of how this question of the role of upheaval in the liminal translates to our present concerns, we are interested in different perspectives on the way the liminal is a state which inheres a certain sense of discomfort, agitation, or even violence. In rites of passage, as a foundational example in studies of the liminal, the end-goal is usually integration within the structure of society. However, within this process of integration there is also an element of destruction, in which the old must be deconstructed to make way for the new. In the same sense, a societal upheaval or even revolution are larger scale examples of this seeming paradox. When we turn from these more sociological examples to the realms of culture, literature and art in general, a similar pattern might be argued to appear. With the invention of the printing press, for example, a major disruption ensued in the way culture was conceived and transmitted. The seeming triumph of the written over the spoken word appeared to involve a definitive turn away from previous methods of cultural transmission, in order for these to be substituted by a new, canonizing medium. And yet, literary genres such as the Gothic - which effectively combine, or rather integrate, societies’ folkloric heritage with their literary traditions - seem to put into question this turn, or complete substitution of the oral by the written. The same happens when one takes a closer look at more contemporary mediums such as rap, graphic novels, and digital poetry, which similarly appear to inhabit thresholds between one form and another. The floor thus opens up for a discussion of whether or not there exists an unavoidable contradiction between *integration* and *destruction* in the process of transition.

In this year’s edition we are therefore interested in papers which explore these questions - of agitation and upheaval, of integration and destruction - when it comes to the expression of the liminal in literature and art. We welcome interested scholars to consider a variety of questions:

- How do authors represent the discomfort or agitation involved in personal processes of change?

- How does a text's form itself embody the upheaval of transition?
- How does literary genre navigate societal or cultural upheaval and transition? What role does it play in that process?
- What genres are particularly adept at representing cultural upheaval?
- Could an approach to texts of the past through contemporary theoretical lenses be considered a productive critical upheaval?
- We also welcome interdisciplinary approaches to the study of upheaval as an element of transition/the liminal, including (but not limited to) the fields of anthropology, sociology, political theory and history.

We ask interested participants to please send a document including a 300-word abstract, university affiliation, and a short bio of 100 words to **postgradliminality@gmail.com** before the 16<sup>th</sup> of January. Talks will be 20 minutes and, depending on the number of applicants, may be limited in number through selection by our scientific committee. A modest fee of €20 will be asked of all participants; we look forward to hosting the in-person event complete with coffee, snacks and lively discussions.

For more information about the PS[L]S project, including past conferences, see: **<http://janusgateliterature.com/research-seminars/psls/>**