

Although it is difficult to give in only 240 pages a full account of the rich emergent literature of a whole continent with comments, assessments, and samples of the work being dealt with, which the author tries to do wherever she can, the present book is too factual perhaps and exhibits a certain cursory character throughout. The present reviewer would have appreciated that, in the balance between presentation of mere facts and the rendering of personal judgement, the author had chosen to deal more at length with the latter, enriching her contribution with that personal touch that makes even a handbook the author's own. We know, however, that then the book would be longer, built on a different basis, and probably it would not fulfil its main aim as an introductory handbook for the Spanish public. Yet the few samples of poetry or narrative very sparsely included in the book indicate that, if they had been resorted to in a more assiduous way, the book would have gained in appeal to the reader and in liveliness.

Another necessary thing that one misses in this book, especially as it is

conceived as a general but detailed survey of the literature of a whole continent, would be a final index of names and titles. This is something almost compulsory in the English scholarly tradition and, it goes without saying, something extremely useful for consultation. Although still rare in the Spanish tradition, it is a feature that should be imported from the Anglo-Saxon world.

Otherwise, the book is extremely useful and through it the Spanish student of African literature can be introduced to the great (and not so great) names of the African literary canon in English (Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Nadine Gordimer, Alan Paton, Buchi Emecheta, Ben Okri, Amos Tutuola, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, etc.) and their interrelationship with a whole world of men and women, ideas and events in ferment now in that continent which, paraphrasing what has been often said about women's literature, is truly the lost continent of world literature.

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Manuel AGUIRRE, Roberta QUANCE, Philip SUTTON.

Margins and thresholds: An inquiry into the concept of liminality in text studies

Madrid: The Gateway Press, 2000.

Liminality is not a new concept, but the truth is that in the field of English studies in Spain it has not been really discovered, used and developed until recent times. The series proposed and started with this monograph written by Manuel Aguirre, Roberta Quance and Philip Sutton, *Studies in Liminality and Literature*, comes to inaugurate a fruitful, open path for research. Though the

notion of liminality has already been introduced in guides such as Jeremy Hawthorn's (2000) *A Glossary of contemporary literary theory* (London: Arnold), Irena Makaryk's (ed.) (1993) *Encyclopedia of contemporary literary theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), and also in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin's (1998) *Key concepts in post-colonial studies* (Lon-

don/New York: Routledge), among others, none of them – except for Makaryk – has accounted for the anthropological origin of the term and the basic bibliography related to it. Thus the work under review here is much more appreciated precisely because it really echoes the genesis of the concept.

In general terms, the goal of the *SLL* (*Studies in Liminality and Literature*) is theoretical and analytical, and it is basically concerned with the «poetics of the threshold». This first volume considers the rich possibilities offered by the concept of liminality, and strives, on the whole, to elaborate and offer a working theory for the study of texts. It seems appropriate to remember that the concept originally comes from Arnold van Gennep's studies on the rites of passage. In *Les Rites de Passage*, Van Gennep (1909) analyzed and synthesized the whole realm of ritual, and discerned three phases nearly universal: a) *séparation* or preliminal rites, b) *marge* or liminal (threshold) rites, and c) *agrégation* or postliminal incorporation rites. Anthropologist Victor Turner built on his predecessor's insights to make a veritable specialty of liminality, mainly in his *The Ritual Process* (1969).¹ For Turner, and this is important for the later developments of the concept, liminality is not a thin line but an expanded zone. The idea of liminality passed easily into literary study, and it has been used to explore indeterminate liminal states in a wide range of literatures and literary periods. All in all, literary applications of liminality blossomed in the later 1980s, showing its usefulness. On a theoretical level, the recent, compelling account on this issue in Aguirre, Quance and Sutton (2000) should be

put forward as a significant contribution.

In chapter 1, the main idea from which the book starts is that the concept and theory of liminality offers a way to go beyond the debate focused on the polarized opposition between *centre* and *margin*; thus, they start offering a careful distinction between *marginality* and *liminality*, proposing the advantage of the latter. Even though the metaphor of the margin has worked well, it is time to assume that it holds a rather closed binary system that confronts centre with margin in a sort of blind alley. Unlike margin and marginality, *limen* and liminality infer an open and plural system, an active dynamism and mediation, a place of transition and transformation, a possibility to negotiate. Due to the fact that the ideas presented in the first chapter pervade the whole study, it might be interesting to quote and point out the following descriptive definitions:

A *limen* is a threshold between two spaces. If a border is viewed as the line, imaginary or real, which separates these two spaces, then the threshold is the opening which permits passages from one space to the other (6).

[...] by «liminal» we will understand texts or representations generated between two or more discourses, a transition area between two or more universes which thereby shares in two or more poetics. In a second sense, we will also apply the term «liminal» to texts, genres or representations centred around the notion of the threshold, or whose fundamental theme is the idea of a crossover, a transgression or an entry into the Other (9).

Afterwards, three areas are selected for the application of the theory: genre, symbol and structure. Thus, an addi-

1. There is a Spanish translation: Victor W. Turner (1969) *El proceso ritual. Estructura y antiestructura*. Beatriz García Ríos (rev. trans.) Madrid: Taurus, 1988. Van Gennep's original study, *Les rites de passage* (1909), is also available in English: *The rites of passage*. Monika B. Vizedom & Gabrielle L. Caffee (trans.) Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

tional strength of this study lies in the fact that the authors do not only pose theoretical and conceptual contentions in an abstract manner, but really put them into practice, critically applying their hypothesis and showing open avenues for future studies.

Therefore, in chapter 2, the authors direct a formal gaze on popular fiction genres, considered to be located in a threshold area between literature and folklore. Usually, the popular is defined by its separation from the accepted literary canon. However, there is literature that contains characteristics of the popular, facets of folklore: genres such as Gothic and horror novels and stories, detective fiction, the thriller and spy-novel, slave narratives, science-fiction, pulps, Westerns, among other forms most times pejoratively named as, for instance, 'mass culture' or 'paraliterature.' In different degrees and at diverse levels, these genres share features of both systems and poetics: literature and folklore. They belong to a liminal intersystemic area of flux where clear-cut categorizations make no sense. At the same time, postmodernism is also considered as an example of literary liminality, between canonical literature and popular texts (themselves liminal between literature and folklore). Questioning traditional boundaries, postmodernist fiction stands in a liminal area featured by the interplay between the accepted canon and its many others.

In chapter 3 the focus is on symbol, specifically on the figure of woman in myth but also in modern culture and cultural criticism, as being traditionally placed on the passage gateway between culture and nature. So, it seems more appropriate to use the concept of *liminality* instead of that of *marginality* to describe women's position and its symbolic representation, mainly in mythological thought.

In chapter 4, and in order to look at the issue of liminality in the structural

area, the subject is the popular liminal genre of the rock narrative. Because the goal is to investigate liminality as an attribute and function, the focus is placed not only at the level of narrative, but also regarding the structure of a rock concert performance and the consumption of the narrative by social groups, all of which is shown to be shaped with generic liminal attributes which provide this narrative with an archetypal quality.

Finally, chapter 5 poses the main conclusions and possible expansions of this monograph, from the constituent distinction between marginality and liminality. The margin, the exclusion, is necessary to the very identity of any canon, and the threshold, as a contact zone between any two systems, helps the understanding of both. With Aguirre, Quance and Sutton (2000: 69), it is important to conclude that liminality is a functional rather than a categorial concept, depending on various factors, such as culture, moment or viewpoint. The study of thresholds, formal, symbolic, structural, thematic, narrative, ideological, linguistic, cultural, in written, oral, iconographic or performative forms, reveals itself as a useful theoretical and analytical strategy.

Seen in this light, it is easy to imagine the several applications it could produce, dealing with texts and representations traditionally considered as borderline regarding the established literary canon, created from a space in-between, from a fractured liminal location of various structures, forms and voices. In this way, liminality chiefly claims that it would be better to read against the grain of the rhetoric of binarism, going beyond polarizations, looking from the bridge. In a time when it is already assumed that cultural purity does not exist, this study displays a true reassessment of the creative potentialities of liminal zones. Crossing, boundary and threshold markers are highly significant in this interstitial space,

and are also extremely useful to locate and apprehend the text regarding the representation of worldviews in interactional context, in search of dialogue.

All in all, I honestly consider it necessary to value the relevance and possibilities offered by the concept of liminality at the present time of literary studies, engaged in a rich interdisciplinary relationship with cultural studies, comparative literature, translation studies and discourse analysis, among others, without forgetting the growth of interest in thresholds and boundaries,

associated especially with genre studies, postcolonialisms and gender studies. Reading this book, liminality, which could be related to other useful cultural bridging conceptualizations such as Homi Bhabha's 'third space' or Gloria Anzúzar's 'borderland/*frontera*', is presented in an intensive and accurate way, from a conscious picture of its possibilities, from a concise and potential apéritif that conveys a very good taste.

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Anabel BORJA ALBI.

El texto jurídico inglés y su traducción al español.
Barcelona: Ariel, Lenguas Modernas, 2000.

*Legal equivalence is not possible;
legal translation is.*

Anabel Borja

In less than one year of existence, Dr. Borja's book has become one of the most used and useful references in legal translation teaching and practice. It could not be otherwise. Its author's professional profile, her research, and also the remarkable time translation studies is going through have all contributed to the quality of this work, a first step in a series of specialised studies in translation that Ariel has set up to publish.

This book comes into being in the era of the specialised translation. For centuries, the translation of literature, or even of poetry alone, has been the only concern of translation theory. Whereas this area of studies continues to be the most prestigious in an academic milieu, the professional market has been pushing for some decades for the specialised areas to find a place in this

context. Works like the one by Dr. Borja's echo this reality and become a most valuable resource for scientific, technical, economic, or legal translators.

The book aims at studying the legal translation between two major languages: English and Spanish. Following a bottom-up perspective, it covers three areas, which lead to an increasingly deeper view of legal translation as a professional, discourse activity. Thus, the author covers in her research legal language and texts, legal translation itself, and the legal translator.

The first block, which comprises chapters one to five, is a survey of traditional and recent studies of English legal language from a discourse analysis point of view. This part leads to the definition of the features of English legal language as a textual phenomenon. In chapter one, the author suggests a functional definition of 'legal language' as that language which is used in the communication between, from, or directed to public authorities, as well as that used