

In the Interstices: Liminal Spaces, Liminal Selves

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“The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae... are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.... Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon.” -Victor Turner

Much as here at *Plaza*, the mission of the Coastal Plains Graduate Liberal Arts Conference is to encourage graduate student scholarship and professionalization, and to foster a fruitful dialogue between graduate students across the liberal arts as they prepare to enter the larger academic community. This year's Coastal Plains theme was liminality. Liminality is a state of being on the threshold, of being “both” and “neither,” of hovering between two different planes of existence, of straddling the line between inside and outside. Liminal people are tricksters, shape-shifters, border-crossers, part of society and yet held apart. Yet, as Gloria Anzaldúa states, “...we cross into each other's worlds all the time. We live in each other's pockets, occupy each other's territories, live in close proximity and in intimacy with each other... We are mutually complicitous – us and them, white and colored, straight and queer, Christian and Jew, self and Other, oppressor and oppressed.” Contemporary identity relies on such ambiguity and hybridity. Indeed, as Anzaldúa concludes, “the future belongs to those who cultivate cultural sensitivities to differences and who use these abilities to forge a hybrid consciousness that transcends the ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ mentality.” We are thus always already living in liminal spaces, constructing liminal selves, existing “betwixt” and “between,” containing the “both” and the “neither.”

All those who were accepted to present at the 2014 Coastal Plains Graduate Liberal Arts Conference were invited to submit an extended, article-length version of their presentation paper for publication consideration with us. The best and most original of these submissions were chosen for this issue. What has emerged is a delightfully eclectic and hybridized – one might even say liminal – mix of work from literature, Hispanic studies, film studies, and cultural studies. I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed working on it.

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