

中介狀態*

—— 輪廓與脈絡

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(中文摘要由石明宗教授***整理)

摘要

本文首先提出以下問題：遊戲到底是什麼？學者從此文化範疇獲得什麼？對遊戲和儀式，以及媽祖朝聖活動的探索，人們從中學到什麼？為何人們汲汲於尋求這些解釋？解決上述問題之道，乃藉由中介狀態的「輪廓」——它在文化中的作用，與「脈絡」——何時、何地和中介狀態有關的歷史的、政治的和文化的特殊例子，來回答上述問題。因此，本文的目的，是企圖藉由「中介狀態」的介紹，連接中介理論至其他文化研究的概念與理論，以豐富和加深中介理論。

本文牽涉到幾個重要的名詞概念如下：朝聖 (Pilgrimage)、儀式 (Ritual)、遊戲 (Play)、流暢經驗 (Flow Experience)、懷舊 (Nostoliga)、以及真實性 (Authenticity)。另外，關於特納 (Victor Turner) 的「中介」

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(Liminal) 理論，其主要特質是「非此非彼」、「過渡階段」，甚至是和歷史性、民族性相關的。

幾個主要的研究成果如下：1.欲了解中介狀態理論，先從遊戲概念著手，是條重要的徑路，例如「自由的」特質，即使中介狀態和遊戲，甚至朝聖彼此間有不同之處。2.各式各樣的「雪球」，代表著另一個世界，和日常生活不同；中介狀態引領人們進入另一個世界，朝聖活動亦如是。3.運動、遊戲、儀式、節慶及朝聖，有一些共同元素，例如「身體的參與」、「季節式的在一起」，透過這些元素，人們定義或者重新界定我們是誰，進而分享了彼此的認同。

關鍵詞：中介狀態、朝聖、儀式、遊戲、流暢經驗、懷舊、真實性

Liminality: Contours and Context

Synthia Sydnor *

What is this thing we call play? And ritual? How do we, as scholars, make sense of these cultural categories? And in turn, how do we critique our making sense of these, of our invention, labeling and selection of particular ways to understand these mysteries surrounding play? In our explorations of play and ritual, what do we learn of the human condition and why do we seek such understanding?

These are some of the initial questions that I pose when I consider pilgrimage and festival, and one of the ways that I answer these questions is through a particular understanding of the concept of liminality, its contours, or the way it operates in culture, and its contexts, where and when and all of the historical, social, political, cultural particulars of specific instances of liminality. Liminality is one of those cultural concepts that are often said to operate beyond the realms of real-life. In liminality, one can reverse roles, or as in mimesis, imitate, mime, represent, copy, explore differences that at the same time may lead to ecstatic, nonrational play. Although it is common for scholars to imbue the limin with freedom and playfulness, I think that liminal cannot become a nostalgic category. Our very anthropological concepts lend themselves to sophisticated critique; yet, liminality is sometimes linked to purity and utopia. One of the main goals of my essay here today is to link studies of liminality to other vital concepts, theories and ideas in cultural studies, history, anthropology and the like that lend to understandings of liminality a richness and depth.

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Liminality, from the word liminal, at a basic level means “at a threshold,” “not here, not there;” a concrete example is that of person standing in a doorway where they are not still outside, but also not yet inside.

A pilgrim in a pilgrimage is in a liminal space. A pilgrimage is typically thought of as “a journey to some distant place, sacred and venerable for some reason, undertaken or devotional purposes.”¹ Andrea Kirkby wrote about the pilgrimage in a long book that she published on the internet. At the beginning of her book, she says,

*As a pilgrim you are never quite sure what world you are in. You left behind the life you lived before and it is done with; you are in a strange time, the time of angels, a time when all you have to do is walk. Dates become meaningless; a day is merely the passing of the sun from one hand to the other, from behind you to the front. The pilgrim has given up reading the papers, the pilgrim has given up doing work; the pilgrim is just one big foot marching from one place to another, one great yearning for the end and goal.*²

Although pilgrimages are most always entwined with religious tones, Kirby and many other’s descriptions of pilgrimage often involve not --or not only-- religious contemplation, but awareness of otherworldliness because of the physical activity—sometimes extreme physical hardship-- involved.

So too with the concept of ritual. Although ritual usually connotes association with some type of religious activity, thinkers have pointed out that ritual activity does not necessarily assume religious links. David Sansone, who wrote an (in my opinion) important book, *Greek Athletics and the Genesis of*

¹ Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983) 1083.

² Andrea Kirkby, “The Pilgrimage Experience.” *Ultreia*. 1996. Accessed on 24 September 1999 at <<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/andreak/pilgrim.htm>>

Sport argues that ritual is “not always, or fundamentally, connected to religion.”³ Ritualization of behaviors, activities or performances— called “cultural ritualization” by some (I like this label) tends toward exaggeration, stylization and repetition and not necessarily a religious component. The torch-lighting ceremony in the modern Olympic Games is an exemplar of such cultural ritualization. Such images legitimate a certain social order, present a particular version of the past; these rituals stay alive and are embellished in ever creative and changing ways precisely because they are ritually performed, culturally ritualized.⁴ When bodies perform in front of others, such performances forge group cohesion, visually, materially and corporally “acting out” abstract or ephemeral social concepts. It is fascinating that people describe rituals such as the torch ceremony as making them cry, or to feel patriotic. I have written about this social nostalgia, the yearning or homesickness spectators and participants recount that they feel when they witness such spectacles as the Olympic torch ceremony.⁵ Nostalgia is a remembrance or recollection of the past, a past that comes to be imbued with special qualities such as beauty, joy, goodness, love, patriotism, nature. These qualities may be tinged with melancholy, sadness, yearning to return to such a past. Of interest to anthropologist-historians like me is how whole sub-cultures, communities

³ David Sansone, *Greek Athletics and the Genesis of Sport* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) 24-39.

⁴ See also Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1993) 3-5; Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (University of Cambridge Press, 1993) 1-ff.

⁵ Synthia Sydnor, “Man, Play and Games,” *Sport in History* 25.3 (December, 2005): 536-544; Sydnor, “Urban(e) Statuary Times,” Eds. Ralph C. Wilcox, David L. Andrews, Richard Irwin and Robert Pitter. *Sporting Dystopias: The Making and Meaning of Urban Sport Cultures* (Albany: Statue University of New York Press, 2003): 64-80; Sydnor, “Sport, Celebrity and Liminality,” in Noel Dyck. *Getting into the Game: Anthropological Perspectives on Sport* (London: Berg Publishers): 221-241; Sydnor, “Cultural Performance and Sport Mascots,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 17 (1993): 22-43; Sydnor, “Burning Desire: Nostalgia, Ritual and the Sport-Festival Flame Ceremony,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 18 (1991): 239-257.

and nations may be caught up in particular renderings of nostalgia. Nostalgia is a cultural practice, not a given content; its forms, meanings, and effects shift with the context; nostalgia stands in different positions in culture.⁶

The nostalgia is of course not innocent, but reflects sometimes a tragic vision that a group of people choose to redeem from their disintegrating human past.⁷ To critique the understanding and the doing of history in such a way (tragic and disintegrating), I am attracted to the vast work of Walter Benjamin. Listen to Benjamin's words in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History": "to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was.' (Ranke) It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger."⁸

This "flashing up," this "flash," is liminal. It is a historical-cultural space that produces a myriad of meanings, stories, documents and histories from a multitude of genres.

From scholars such as Roger Caillois, Walter Benjamin, Victor Turner, Gregory Bateson, Michael Taussig, Richard Schechner, Edward Bruner, Paul

⁶ Paraphrased from Kathleen Stewart, "Nostalgia— A Polemic," ed. George E. Marcus. *Rereading Cultural Anthropology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997): 252.

⁷ E.g., James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1988) 13; Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Representations* 26 (Spring, 1989): 107-122.

⁸ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans.H. Zohn. *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968) 255. original work published 1936; See also Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, Trans.Quintin Hoare (London: Verso, 1973); Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge MASS and London, 1993); Michael Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, eds., *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*. Volume 1 1913-192 (Cambridge MASS: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996); Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne, eds., *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994) x-xi; Synthia Sydnor and Nathaniel H. Kohn, "'How do you warm up for a stretch class?' Sub/in/di/verting Hegemonic Shoves Toward Sport," Eds. G. Rail and J. Harvey. *Sport and Postmodern Times* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993) 21-32.

Virilio, René Girard, and Don Handelman⁹, I came to understand and appreciate play's nature in this idea of history as a flash of danger. Play can be amoral, dark, and ugly. Caillois' analysis of degraded forms of play such as when ilinx or vertigo morphs into split personality, self-alienation and the 'orchestrated vertigo of the Nazi rallies at Nuremberg'¹⁰ are examples of threats to the social order; but at the same time, we have to recognize that notwithstanding the deviance or perversion of play, play is a special realm of culture just as the liminal is.

In some regard, Roger Caillois recognized this particular semantic of play: he points out the "primitive joy in destruction and upset."¹¹ I recall all of the essays undergraduate students have produced over the years in my anthropology of play class about their pleasure in the pain of being tattooed, burned, or injured; we recognize that this play form figures in literature on sadomasochism and fetishism. In a footnote, Caillois discusses the fan suicides following the deaths of celebrities: "two sisters wrapped themselves in sheets drenched in gasoline and set themselves on fire in order to die as he had." Play theorist George Eisen's 1997 work is relevant here. Eisen argued that "a

⁹ See for example Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, 1967) 106, 93-111; Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of the Mind* (San Francisco, 1972); Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York, 1993); Victor Turner and Edward Bruner, *The Anthropology of Experience* (Champaign IL, 1986); René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*. Trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore, 1979); Don Handelman, *Models and Mirrors: Toward an Anthropology of Public Events* (Oxford and New York, 1998); Richard Schechner, *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* (London 1993); Paul Virilio, *Open sky* (London, 1997); Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge MASS, 1993); Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*. Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge and London, 1999).

¹⁰ Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*. Trans. Meyer Barash (Champaign IL: University of Illinois Press, first paperback 2001) 126 [Originally published as *Les jeux et les hommes*, 1958 by Librairie Gallimard, Paris. English translation 1961 by The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc. Reprinted by arrangement with The Free Press, a division of Simon and Schuster, Inc.].

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

relationship between play and atrocity, violence, aggression and even death is much closer than it would seem at first glance"... Play can be "the atrocity itself, a reflection of the atrocity, and/or an enactment of the atrocity."¹²

Perhaps in contrast to dark play, we might consider Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's ideas about flow.¹³ His thesis: People do not toil at something because of a reward. They toil because they like the feeling of intensity and exhilaration from involvement in specific activities. Flow usually happens not during relaxing moments of leisure or entertainment, but rather when we are actively involved in a difficult enterprise, in a task that stretches our mental and/or physical abilities. Flow is discussed as capturing the very essence of happiness; a process of centering one's involvement in a given reality; a source of personal and social energy; and a state in which one feels exhilarated, satisfied, creative and concentrated, flow involves a sense of discovery and creativity and is said to push persons /society to higher levels of performance. I note the importance of this idea not only to individuals (it is used often in sports psychology), but to whole societies: a society may be transported to states of immense discovery, creativity and energy. While many of flow's characteristics are similar to liminality, they are not discussed in conjunction with each other; analyses of both may be fruitful in providing more lenses with which to understand them.

How and what humans perform in flow, rituals, play and liminality and how these modern and postmodern rituals get caught up in --wrapped up-- in these historical trappings with long, twisted origins/ roots is of course critiqued by many other philosophers such as Jean Baudrillard, Umberto Eco, and

¹² George Eisen, "The Game of Death and the Dynamics of Atrocity," Eds. Peter Klaus and K. Köpping, *The Games of Gods and Man: Essays in Play and Performance*. (Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1997) 275.

¹³ E.g., Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991); Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1997).

Andreas Huyssen.¹⁴ They point out that a museal (collecting, purchasing, displaying, recording, documenting, labeling, protecting, pillaging), sensibility seems to be a key paradigm of our transnational developed world; musealization merges with a new stage of consumer capitalism, in which nostalgia and history are sold and marketed. So within these liminal flashes are collective nostalgia in which a community or sub-culture yearns for a certain kind of past. The yearning is manifested in the valuation of specific images, invented traditions, and re-enactments of selected past representations and ideals. From Susan Stewart, (who wrote one of my all-time favorite books, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*¹⁵ in social nostalgia there is a substitution of the part for the whole (one “part” of the longed for past stands in for the whole past). Again, I use the snowglobe as a ready example, and as you can see from my slides, I specifically have selected images of snowglobes that show sport, play and games.

The cultural and literary critique of social nostalgia, liminality and cultural ritualization crucially also includes work on understanding authenticity. In cultural studies, we do not care so much for determining if something is authentic or not; instead we seek to explore how the very concept of authenticity is always under construction. One of the foundations of my theoretical work comes from one of my mentors at the University of Illinois, Ed Bruner. On authenticity, he points out:

What is the process by which any item of culture or practice achieves an

¹⁴ Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Editions Du Seuil, 1957); Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (London: Semiotext(e), 1983); Baudrillard, *America*. (New York: Verso, 1989).

¹⁵ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

*aura of being authentic? What are the processes of production of authenticity? Authenticity is something sought, fought over and reinvented. . . Rather than ask “what is authentic?”, ask how authenticity is achieved, produced and made believable.*¹⁶

So how is it that something as exotic as the torch lighting ceremony (or a snowglobe!) comes to be so important to humans? And further to our topic of the conference, what is it about pilgrimage and rites of passage that make them so intense and memorable to humans? One of the elements of these cultural activities that I have already pointed out is that they are corporeal and staged. The anthropologist Franz Boas, always proclaimed that “the seeing eye is an organ of tradition,” and indeed, I hold that one of the characteristics of pilgrimage, play, ritual, liminality that we often take for granted are their very bodily performative qualities. In my classes, I use William H. McNeill’s *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Human Drill in Human History* to evoke discussion about a seemingly natural, taken for granted bodily characteristic of sport, play, games, ritual, festivity, pilgrimage: that in these activities humans share in viewing and in practicing human movement and performance. These cultural elements stage for human communities messages about being as one, and about the well being of the participants and community. McNeill argues that keeping together in time, or “rhythmically together”... “is the surest, most speedy and efficacious way of creating and sustaining communities that our species has ever hit upon.”¹⁷ “Rhythmically together” refers to dancing, military drill, exercise, song, playground activities, any type of sports competitions, and any ritualized work activity. “Keeping together in time” provides large complex human societies labeled by McNeill as “kinesthetic

¹⁶ Edward Bruner, “Tourism, Creativity and Authenticity,” *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* 10 (1989): 113.

¹⁷ William H. McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Human Drill in Human History* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1997).

undergirding” which continually defines and refines who we are and with whom we share a common identity. Indeed, non-human/animal play theorists have long posited that one of the functions of play is that it communicates well being of the species’ community.

Up until now I have been laying out the theoretical foundations of my conception of liminality, its contours and context, and the ideas of many others that I consider useful for studying liminality. I have emphasized that corporeality is a hallmark element of liminality. Yet, --paradoxically-- another vital essential of ritual, play, pilgrimage, festivity, is its “out of body” feature. This facet of ritual and play is clearly associated with the liminal as anthropologists and culturalists have studied the phenomenon.

“Threshold-ness”, in-between-ness, “not here, not there”, is a concept that I return to again and again in my writings. Other thinkers too such as Victor Turner, Michael Taussig, Richard Schechner and Mihai Spariousu have tried to understand the function of liminality in universal human rites of passage and mimesis, including in festivals and rituals, and I believe that for all of these liminality itself has cultural borders, “realms” where there are certain freedoms to juggle with the factors of existence. The thoughts of Henri Bergson (from the 1890s) and Homi Bhabha are also influential to my ideas; and following in the traditions of cultural studies, history and cultural anthropology, the interdisciplinary schools from which I work, I attempt to connect my ideas about liminality to understanding and conversing about what it is to be human in various times and places. Bergson reminds us that “space, by definition is outside us; yet the separation between a thing and its environment cannot be absolutely definite and clear-cut; there is a passage by insensible gradations from one to the other.”¹⁸

To continue and summarize thus far, liminal means borderlands, threshold, in-betweenness. The anthropologist Victor Turner from Arnold Van

¹⁸ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*. (Cosimo Classics, 2007 [original 1896]) 202, 209.

Gennep¹⁹ called the liminal “betwixt and between.”²⁰ Liminality is “a realm” where there is a certain freedom to juggle with the factors of existence. The liminal can apply not only to rites of passage of individuals or groups, but to the liminal spaces, the “not here, not there,” that are in theory, in writing, in things like statuary or snowglobes, in culture at large.²¹

I am interested in these gradations between spaces, things like statuary, snowglobes, pilgrimages, and the liminal. Although we understand these gradations in terms of individuals or culture, the liminal can move us from one historical world to another, from various nationalities or ethnicities to others. Here is Mihai Spariosu on this point, but in regards to literature:

*Liminality is a margin that permanently detaches itself from the center (any center), thus providing a playful opening toward alternative worlds that are incommensurable with ours. From this perspective, literature is best seen not as fictional or marginal, but as liminal phenomenon that can not only undermine or reinforce a certain state of affairs in the historical world, but also act as a threshold or passageway from one historical world to another.*²²

Sometimes the limen is between life and art as in theater, or between health and disease as in medicine. But since what we are concerned with is pilgrimage, let me explore the limen in regard to such. The liminal in pilgrimage takes us bodily, but where? In classic studies of liminality, one

¹⁹ Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rite of Passage*. Trans. Monika B. Vizedome and Gabrielle L. Caffee. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1909) 138-139, 170-171.

²⁰ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1967) 106, also 93-111.

²¹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994) 245, 256.

²² Mihai I. Spariosu, *The Wreath of Wild Olive: Play, Liminality and the Study of Literature*. (State University of New York Press, 1997) xii-xiii, 31-32.

would describe this as another realm, as in my opening quotation by Kirkby, “as a pilgrim you are never quite sure what world you are in.” Again, classic work on the liminal is conflated with definitions about play in which “freedom” is emphasized; an example is Victor Turner on play:

*Playfulness is a volatile, sometimes dangerous explosive essence, which cultural institutions seek to bottle or contain in the vials of games of competition, chance, and strength, in modes of simulation such as theater, and in controlled disorientation, from roller coasters to dervish dancing. . . Most definitions of play involve notions of disengagement, of free-wheeling. . . Play can be everywhere and nowhere, imitate anything, yet be identified with nothing.*²³

So, in conclusion, I think it important that we explore the contours of liminality just as much as we have wondered about play. I have tried to give explicit examples of scholarly work that demonstrates that when we say that liminality is a kind of passageway into another world, then that other world too seems as stricken with hegemony, powerful ideas, values and beliefs as real-life. Yes, humans can play around with these power structures in liminal spaces, but then does liminality differ from playfulness? And how might I reach again to studying pilgrimage? Although it seems a stretch, the metaphor of the snowglobe is again helpful here.

On first glance, to many, the snowglobe is the epitome of kitsch taste, industrialization, touristic marker²⁴, miniaturization, mass consumption, stockpiling/collecting behaviors. Yet like pilgrimage, the snowglobe has murky origins with cults, icons and religion. Like pilgrimage and the liminal, the

²³ Victor Turner, 1983, 233-234.

²⁴ Dean McCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1976); Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Collection*. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984) 137.

snowglobe encapsulates the human experience in a dreamy world, a magic circle, as Johan Huizinga labeled play and sport in *Homo Ludens*;²⁵ Susan Stewart calls such souvenirs an inverse display of perfection²⁶.... a moving of “history into private time. The souvenir reduces the public, the monumental, and the three-dimensional into the miniature, that which can be enveloped by the body, or into the two-dimensional representation, that which can be appropriated within the privatized view of the individual.”²⁷

As in “problemitizing” the snowglobe as cultural artifact, my essay has attempted to trouble the concept of liminality-the liminal-the limen. In so doing I tried to enable a rich envisioning of the “betwixt and between,” of the liminal, as its understandings in cultural studies may be informed by ideas related to flow, social nostalgia, dark play, pilgrimage, corporeality, collecting and critiques of history.

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²⁵ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1950).

²⁶ Stewart, *On Longing* 132-133, 137.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 138; 144; 150.

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