

Call for Papers
Annali d'italianistica 45 (2027)

**Rites/Rights of Passage: Liminality, Liminoid, and Limivoid
in Italian Culture**

Humans live in a constant flux, witnessing every day emotional, mental, and bodily transformations linked to social, political, and environmental changes. This process of continuous change implies a condition of liminality—an all-encompassing in-betweenness—that has been studied by anthropologists and has inspired seminal studies in various disciplines. The notion of liminality was introduced by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) in his *The Rites of Passage* (Paris: Nourry, 1909; English translation Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1960; Italian translation Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1981). In Van Gennep's theory, liminality constitutes the second phase of the rite of passage, following the previous phase of separation and before the final one of integration. Liminality is the threshold, the border, the limit, which individuals, a group, or a society must cross to enter a new or renewed condition through ritualistic ceremonies. The conceptual framework set by Van Gennep has been further developed by Victor Turner and Bjørn Thomassen with the concepts of the "liminoid" and "limivoid," respectively.

The anthropologist Victor Turner, in his seminal essay "Liminal to liminoid, in play, flow, and ritual" (*Rice Institute Pamphlet - Rice University Studies* 60.3, 1974, 53-92), expands the concept emphasizing its power to transform and create new cultural meanings, social structures, individual and national identities. In the face of complex societies constantly involved in transformative processes, Turner proposes a more fluid view of liminality: "liminoid." This concept relates to occasional and individualistic practices within the realm of leisure and entertainment, implying a simultaneous drifting between multiple conditions, without belonging to any individual one. Liminal and liminoid experiences are rapidly expanding with new devices introduced by technological developments, such as VR and AI.

Bjørn Thomassen, in his book *Liminality and the Modern. Living Through the In-Between* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), shifts from the "liminoid" to the "limivoid" to analyse the sense of "ontological excess" contained in private and public near-death experiences. In his work, the concept of liminality is turned into a prism to interpret processes of historical, political and cultural transformation. He also applied the concept of liminality to the field of Italian Studies in the co-authored volume *Italian Modernities. Competing Narratives of Nationhood* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016).

This issue of *Annali*, 70 years after Van Gennep's death, will explore the afterlives of the concept of liminality within various fields of study, and its manifestations in different aspects of Italian culture. It does not aim to celebrate liminality, but

to use the concept as a critical lens to question and redefine the rites in and outside the frames of its passages. The purpose is to investigate how these concepts travel in social and cultural fields where “rites” become “rights,” that are reinstated, declined and continuously negotiated within liminal spaces. Liminality is central to different kinds of transformative encounters, in real life or in virtual reality. It takes Italian culture as an observatory, based on recent studies that define transnational Italy as an “in-between” space and Italianness as a sign or lens moving between (inter)national and local spatialities (Emma Bond, “Towards a Trans-national Turn in Italian Studies?,” *Italian studies* 69.3, 2014, 415-24; Charles Burdett, and Loredana Polezzi, eds., *Transnational Italian Studies*, Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2020).

This notion can entail the diasporic experiences of migration and border-crossing. Migrant and diasporic authors are exposed to multiple rites of passage—the journey, the period of awaiting legal status or cultural integration, the acquisition of a new language, entailing the experience of a liminal space, a condition often marked by uncertainty and transformation. Similarly, in border studies the border area is itself a liminal zone, a dynamic and often contested threshold rather than a fixed space. Identities, languages and cultures intersect and blur in and around these spaces.

Rites are also performative and aesthetic processes. They are essential to different stories of transition that resist standardized, socially accepted frameworks for life changes and group norms (e.g., prisoners’ and other marginal subjects’ reentry into society, disability as a prolonged liminal phase, alternative rituals of aging, and self-established forms of initiation). Rites and rights are also reclaimed and put into action: in decolonial studies, highlighting the importance of indigenous knowledge; in ecocriticism, conceiving transition as a collective project; and in feminist and queer studies, contesting heteronormative interpretations of liminality.

Scholars interested in exploring rites/ rights of passage and liminality in Italian studies are invited to submit a proposal for a special issue of *Annali d’italianistica* to be published in the fall of 2027. A 300-500-word abstract and a short biographical note must be submitted by December 31, 2025. Proposals are invited to build on the theoretical concepts outlined above and their more recent developments. Essays are due in the early fall of 2026.

Areas and topics include, but are not limited to:

- Representations of liminality in Italian literature and culture from the Middle Ages to the present day.
- Rites as performative and aesthetic processes in literature, media, and performative arts.
- Transitions and border crossings in postcolonial, transnational, and migration studies.
- Approaches to rites of passage and liminality within posthuman / more than human studies.

- Processes of transformation in environmental studies and ecocriticism.
- Rites, rituals, and indigenous knowledge in decolonial studies.
- Transitions and intersectionality in gender, class and race studies.
- “Betwixt and between” states of liminality (disability, mental and physical illnesses).
- Markers of passage in stages of aging (including menopause, andropause, midlife, giving birth).
- Reintegration and transformation in life writing by marginalized subjects.
- Resistance against (hetero)normativity in works of liminality.
- The in-between of liminal spaces (borders, bridges, airports, hotels, theatres, performance spaces, etc.) and time zones (dawn, twilight, sunset, nocturnal settings).
- Liminal objects (sacred, magical, recycled, disposable, *objet trouvé*).
- Transgression as liminality (begging, robbing, killing, red districts, banlieue).
- Spiritual and religious thresholds (conversion, pilgrimages, mystical journeys, and the negotiation between faith and uncertainty in literary and artistic forms).
- Narratives of exile, return, and displacement (diaspora writing, political exile, and imagined homelands).
- Liminal affect and emotional states (melancholy, nostalgia, desire, anxiety, and the phenomenology of in-between emotions).

Authors should write in the language they are most familiar with, either Italian or English. Typically, articles range between 6,000 and 10,000 words. They should conform to the stylesheet of *Annali d'italianistica* for “Notes” and “Works Cited” (<https://annali.org/publishing/>). All articles will be refereed according to the peer-review policy of the journal (<https://annali.org/peer-review-statement/>).

For any questions and submissions, please contact one of the guest editors:

Sara Boezio, University of Notre Dame (sboezio@nd.edu)
 Matteo Brera, Università degli Studi di Padova / Seton Hall University
 (matteo.brera@unipd.it; matteo.brera@shu.edu)
 Monica Jansen, Utrecht University (m.m.jansen@uu.nl)
 Michela Meschini, Università di Macerata (michela.meschini@unime.it)
 Pia Schwarz Lausten, University of Copenhagen (lausten@hum.ku.dk)

For information, please feel free to contact as well any of the following editors:

Dino S. Cervigni, cervigni@unc.edu
 Olimpia Pelosi, opelosi@albany.edu
 Stefania Porcelli, sp1122@hunter.cuny.edu

