Liminality and the Short Story

Boundary Crossings in American, Canadian, and British Writing

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1 PERIODICAL CULTURE AND SENSATIONALIST STORIES

The majority of short narratives that attracted the readership in the early years of the American Republic were sensationalist. Weekly and monthly literary magazines were filled with original and selected 'small tales' characterized by uncommon themes elevated to the wondrous, human events blown up to the marvelous. An anonymous letter addressed to the editor of *The Philadelphia Repository and Weekly Register* (1800–1804) revealed the profusion of liminal fantasies in the pages of early American periodical publications. The author complained that magazine editors

> prefer such tales as abound with stories of demons, hob-goblins, specters, witches, haunted towers, church-yards, charnel houses, tombs, enchantments, murders, robberies, gods, goddesses, angels, divinities, demigods, heroes, heroines, lovers, &c.—or lovers, gallantries, intrigues, bastards, perjuries, murder, assassination, hair-breadth-escapes, suicides, and an almost infinite chain of ridiculous and wild et ceteras. ("Philadelphia Repository" 261)

Magazine editors quickly learned to exploit their readers' appetite for transgressive short narratives. They obtained factual and fictional stories from all sources available to satisfy a growing taste for sensationalist topics about outsiders, shape-shifters, and marginal characters. While periodical studies discuss early American magazines as virtual coffeehouses (Gardner 47), an ideal literary space to negotiate a Republican order among readers and writers alike, this chapter reassesses early periodical publications as a space that embellishes the abnormal, eccentric, weird, and incredible in order to build a periodical business based upon liminal fantasies that could be freely tapped by readers.

In the 'rational age' of the Early Republic (1790–1830), abnormality was inherently alluring. Human nature was imagined as going berserk in foreign settings. There were, however, numerous exceptions, and, as magazine fiction shows (even prior to Washington Irving and Edgar Allan Poe), the

domestic and the foreign overlap in stories about liminal figures. In this context, liminality relates to periods of social transition, when "subjects pass through a period and area of ambiguity, a sort of social limbo" (Turner, *Ritual to Theatre* 24). These changes are frequently described in terms of spatial symbolism understood as a movement or transference from one place to another, usually crossing a "threshold which separates two distinct areas" (25). Early American magazines teem with stories about mobility and fellow human beings in liminal states—in between the accepted social structures. Not unlike later nineteenth-century short stories (Nathaniel Hawthorne's tales, for example), these early liminal texts reveal the complex nature of human affairs often at odds with social reality.

In this chapter I follow up recent directions in periodical studies. However, rather than looking at the specific conditions under which magazine publications operated, or how they performed authorship, this chapter examines the magazines' contents that consisted to a large extent of sensationalist short narratives (Pitcher, *Fiction, Anthology*). Critics frequently explain the expansive magazine market in terms of a literary altruism that motivates journal editors, patrons, and readers alike. According to such a reading, the increasing production and distribution of magazines in the Early Republic is driven by idealistic intentions of civic-minded printers and publishers who consider the periodical the most effective vehicle to promote models of literary citizenship. Rather than being a literary business conditioned by changing literary expectations, or an editor's intention to make a profit, critics claim that periodicals seek to democratize the American mind. Such an interpretation of periodical publications conceptualizes the magazine as a communitarian space for exchanging "republican principles of freedom and social equality" (Weiner 102). Disregarding the manifold stories and the sometimes messy content matter of miscellanies, critical attention is being paid to exalted editorial statements, prefaces, and specific text sections, as well as to the civic messages conveyed by the magazine's paratexts such as title pages, mottoes, and illustrations.[1] In addition, scholars explore the periodical career of noted authors such as Charles Brockden Brown and Susanna Rowson, or highlight new types of collaborative authorship and its cultivation via a network of corresponding agents (Haberman). In contrast, this chapter highlights the uses of sensationalist short narratives in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American magazines. Often accompanied by morally instructive remarks, readers could easily grasp the story's imaginary happening because it accords with what has been called "light reading" or "small tales" ("Philadelphia Repository" 261) that appealed to a growing audience fascinated by short narratives about murder, crime, or strange incidents.

In 1796, for example, *The New-York Weekly Magazine; or Miscellaneous Repository* (1795–1797) printed a short, anonymously published narrative titled "An Account of the Murder of Mr. J—Y—, upon his family, in December, A.D. 1781." Although the magazine paid homage to Republican virtues, the editors equally satisfied their readers' growing appetite for sensational accounts of crime and murder. Execution sermons and confession narratives were the leading literary forms used to portray perpetrators and to control domestic fantasies about crime in the colonial period. This 'small tale,' written by Margaretta Faugeres, marks the movement toward a more profane but graphic short narrative on crime. The story recasts an actual familicide that occurred in 1781 in upstate New York. Misguided by religious delusions, a farmer named James Yates killed his wife and their four children. Despite the strong religious subtext—Yates had converted to the Shaker religion—the murder is set within Gothic conventions and highlights a monstrous lunacy in the face of an inscrutable evil as one of the key features of the new carnal literature of crime, a genre that Charles Brockden Brown later relied upon while working on his crime story "Somnambulism. A Fragment" (1805).[2]

While present studies stress notions of origination of authors and stories, this chapter focuses on literary magazines in the context of a culture of reprinting and the circulation of texts within the pages of early American periodicals. From the perspective of a literary history that reviews the period's magazine business, the first part discusses the relationship between brevity and liminality evident in the pages of early American magazines. By looking at 'small tales' reprinted throughout *The New-York Weekly Museum,* I argue that the early American magazine frequently functions less as a virtual coffeehouse for exchanging polite thoughts of like-minded correspondents, Republican editors, and readers, than as a hothouse of transgressive stories about individuals whose behavior is outside the norm. I also consider aspects of liminality in the context of early American miscellanies and how Turner's concept is fruitful for a reading of early short fiction. The second part explores the emergence of what I call the liminoid tale. It particularly pays attention to a specific form of short narratives—the tale of premature burial—which was widely circulated in the period's periodical publications and became a key textual commodity for magazine editors and readers alike.

This chapter also intends to show that both the liminal and the liminoid coexist in a culture of reprinting. The transatlantic circulation of different versions of stories brings to light a fundamental change at the level of expressive culture in post-revolutionary America. The rigidities of normative practices prevalent in colonial society gradually eroded, while new opportunities for leisure and optional venues for readers "to kill time" arose ("Philadelphia Repository" 261). Pragmatic embeddings of liminality, such as rituals due to specific church calendars or public initiation rites, did certainly not dissolve immediately, but the expanding culture of reprinting offered readers countless options to select among and play with transgressive phenomena individually or collectively, as stories were frequently read aloud or freely shared among friends. On the one hand, I argue that literary magazines provide readers with short narratives containing liminal

beings, transgressive agents, and hybrid creatures, and, on the other hand, the transatlantic circulation of different versions of those narratives heightens their moral ambiguity. 'Small tales' not only embarrass existing classifications and values, or what Turner calls "normative structure" (*Ritual to Theatre* 52), but they also function as "a commodity, which one selects and pays for" (55). Whereas the liminal is grounded within the desired membership of individuals frequently passing entrance tests as found in secret societies, for example, literary magazines provide "'free' liminoid entertainments" (55). Turner puts it succinctly: "One *works* at the liminal, one *plays* with the liminoid" (55). The culture of reprinting and circulation arranges a play frame to toss around liminality in a variety of short forms, or what Turner calls "liminoid genres" (55). Without being exclusivist, the periodical business creates "liminoid settings and spaces" (55) that are both auxiliary and adaptive in making a larger societal system more tolerable. Literary magazines and the plethora of 'small tales' balance the conservative mode of the liminal, which tends towards redressive action, and the liminoid as a rebellious mode of novelty. While the liminal can lead to no more than a "subversive flicker" (44), the tale's ludic character of aesthetic signification represents potential alternatives in forms of textual brevity and variety. Tales of premature burial contain a ludic dialectic of liminoid entertainment that evolves from the transatlantic culture of reprinting.

2 EARLY AMERICAN MAGAZINES AND LIMINALITY

The New-York Weekly Museum, which had one of the longest print runs in the history of early American magazines, is a good example of a periodical publication that moved "betwixt and between" (Turner, *Forest* 93) all tastes and compelled its readers to indulge in liminal experiences, while pretending to promote public virtue. It was edited by John Harrisson, his wife, and later his son from 1788 until 1811. From its inception, the periodical's motto read, "With sweetest flowers enrich'd from various gardens cull'd with care" ("Masthead"). The editors "cull'd" from many sources and rampantly pirated tales from British magazines without acknowledgement. John Harrisson succeeded in selling his 'culled fiction' to a steady number of subscribers.[3] By the first decade of the nineteenth century, the magazine provided its readership with a wild mix of genres ranging from sensationalist fiction to moral essays and journalistic reports. Another of Harrisson's editorial principles was brevity. Harrison acted under the rule *multum in parvo* and embarked upon what Oliver Goldsmith derogatively called a "magazine in miniature . . . hop[ping] from subject to subject" (53). *The New-York Weekly Museum* consisted of four pages; the first two were reserved for stories, followed by news, advertisements, and obituaries. Using a very small font, the stories were crowded together in the columns of the opening pages.

The New-York Weekly Museum marks an important stage in the development of periodical publications as a popular form of entertainment within a context that has been described as a "culture of reprinting" (McGill 4). It is based on a system of production and reproduction that prefers textual iteration rather than origination and relies on a highly fluid transatlantic literary marketplace characterized by a constant circulation of short unauthorized prints. Brevity evolved into an aesthetic practice that redefined the interpretive demands placed upon the readers since reprinted 'small tales' achieved a remarkable mobility across elite and mass-cultural periodical formats (Curnutt 1–13). Thus, in the pages of *The New-York Weekly Museum,* reading did not become more extensive, but more diverse. Harrisson's magazine marks the shift from the earlier single-essay periodical to a popular form of the periodical, the miscellany. To entice the reader into its textual world of reprints, this new periodical format follows the economic dictates of shortness that cater to the desultory reading habits of period readers, and in doing so, it changes not only the function of fiction, but also its demands, particularly regarding variety and brevity. In addition, Harrisson's 'small tales' center upon the abnormal, unnatural, eccentric, and weird, revealing the editor's awareness of the audience's heightened interest in representations of liminal phenomena, which the magazine widely exploited. Abnormality sold, especially when it had a potential for violence that could be vicariously tapped by readers. Human nature was imaged as running amuck in terrifying settings, thus disclosing a human parade of otherness, a bizarre world that contains undesirable agents and makes possible a sphere of radical deviation.

A typical weekly issue usually offered the reader an extravagant mix of sensationalist tales and news articles. In one of the weeklies of May 1802, the front page story, "The Adultress Punished: A Tale," echoes a strikingly macabre scene taken from Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron* (1558) in which an unfaithful woman is forced by her vengeful husband to drink out of her dead lover's skull. On the following pages, the reader encounters a vignette titled "Hardened Villainy," which magnifies a personal moment of a remorseless young murderer who committed atrocious crimes in Bordeaux. The succeeding anecdote "Cosmo De Medici" gives currency to a vague rumor about numerous killings in the Grand Duke's family. A few lines below, the reader's attention is drawn to a short narrative set in the context of ancient Greece: "Inhumanity" adopts Seneca's tale and describes how the Athenian artist Parrhasius had a slave tortured so that he could have a model for a painting of the bound Prometheus for the Parthenon in Athens. A final news section contains the story of Russell Bean (1769–1826), a feisty Tennessee rifle-maker, who, upon returning to his home after a long absence, found his wife had been seduced. In retribution he cut the ears off her infant. Harrisson's reprints fed the readers' appetite for violence and irrational acts committed by humans ancient and contemporary—something rather more pungent than the scent of 'sweetest flowers' promised in the magazine's motto.

According to the mutually shared Republican fantasy, editors could justify the inclusion of such narratives because they offered the reader exemplary lessons in feeling sympathy for victims of violence, unforeseen incidents, and personal disasters. To call upon human misfortunes to evoke fellow emotions was certainly a morally useful cure. And yet, while Harrisson's reprinted 'small tales' teach his readers dramatic lessons of "human depravity" ("Force" 2), they also spell out the transgressive nature that lies beneath the surface of human life itself. For example, "The Force of Hatred," published in one of the February issues of 1802, delivers the story of an elderly man who, despite being crippled with gout, avenges himself on a childhood friend who wronged him years before. Invited as a guest to the elderly man's home, the unwitting former friend is ultimately killed by his host, who confesses:

> Hatred invigorated my limbs: decrepitude yielded to the demand of vengeance: in the middle of a sleepless night, I crawled on my hands and knees to his chamber door: with a palpitating heart I listened to his breathing, to be assured he was asleep; and with a razor, he had borrowed of me, I cut his throat from ear to ear—I then crept back to my chamber with horrible satisfaction. (2)

The magazine's many stories about murders and sociopaths unfold a liminoid sphere that defies the existing order of things and allows the reader to step outside accepted classifications and norms. Reading itself becomes a threshold experience of human action and behavior, often marked by psychotic indifference. The plethora of 'small tales' thus creates a state of liminal reflexivity—a creative playground for society—that renders unresolved social tensions, conflicts, and anxieties made meaningful through the reader's engagement with short forms of narration.

According to the editors of *Liminale Anthropologien,* a recently published collection of essays, liminality is central to human development (Achilles, Borgards, and Burrichter 7–8). The human being, in a permanent state of becoming, needs zones of transition and in-betweeness across both time and space (van Gennep 11). Expanding such anthropological insights, Jochen Achilles, in his contribution to the collection, refers to liminality as a process that negotiates between convention and rebellion in a setting of competing norms (147). The example he gives is Nathaniel Hawthorne's tale "Young Goodman Brown" (1835), which exemplifies the coexistence of, on the one hand, the human need to draw upon normative standards such as good and evil, represented by heterotopian spaces such as the wilderness and the Puritan settlement and, on the other hand, the desire to exceed such normative orientations (Turner, *Forest* 99). Accordingly, liminality in stories such as "Young Goodman Brown" confronts the reader with ambiguous classifications caused by "inconclusive differences" (Melville 139).

In his early work Turner calls liminality a "midpoint of transition . . . between two positions" (*Dramas* 237). It is a temporary phase rather than a permanent state. In his discussion of the youth culture of the sixties, however, Turner compares liminality in ritualistic societies with modern movements and notes that these movements "try to create a communitas and a style of life that is permanently contained within liminality. . . . Instead of the liminal being a passage, it seemed to be coming to be regarded as a state" (261). For his analysis of liminality in art, Turner introduces the term 'liminoid,' which in his view is the "successor of the liminal in complex large-scale societies, where individuality and optation in art have in theory supplanted collective and obligatory ritual performances" (*Anthropology* 29). The term 'liminoid' refers to experiences that share characteristics of liminal experiences but are optional and do not involve the resolution of a personal crisis as in initiation rites. The 'liminal' is part of society, an aspect of social or religious ritual, while the 'liminoid' is part of art's potentialities. Turner states that truly liminal rituals are diminished in modern societies and that liminoid rituals, which can be encountered in film, drama, and literature, are analogous but secular phenomena.

Rather than analyzing representations of liminality in early short narratives, I would like to use the term 'liminoid' in a modified manner to highlight the culture of reprinting and its material dependence on circulation that grew out of the post-revolutionary periodical business. The strong presence in American periodicals of reprinted foreign texts reveals "the generic code of American magazines where foreignness serves to emphasize a story's literary aspiration" (McGill 155). Thus, the emergence of the liminoid tale does not transport readers beyond national borders as much as remind them that they inhabit a fictive space, a space clearly marked as such in popular monthly or weekly magazines, where indefinite settings are standard fare. As shown previously, literary magazines spell out "'liminoid' settings and spaces" (Turner, *Ritual to Theatre* 55) in which moral ambiguities are heightened by the circulation and movement of different versions of a text. Poe, who himself was deeply immersed in the culture of reprinting, later called these stories "species of indefinite definiteness" ("Devil" 271).

3 THE LIMINOID TALE; OR, THE MAGAZINE AS PLEASURESCAPE

The liminoid tale emerges out of the eighteenth-century literary market of mass-circulated and reprinted short narratives that sometimes had long print-runs in a wide range of periodical formats. On the one hand, the magazine provides a play frame for what Turner calls the "subjunctive mood" (*Anthropology* 25–26), which makes the reader leave the tedious world of everyday life and enter the realm of excitement and adventure. On the other hand, the liminoid tale feeds on a passion among readers for thrilling stories

and plots. In contrast to the novel and its realistic settings and characters, the tale is characterized by "its tendency to suspend 'novelistic' concerns with objective reality" (Haggerty 86), narrative intensity, and its use of setting as affective devices. Atmosphere rather than temporality and ontological confusion (i.e., liminal beings and transgressive agents such as the living dead) shape the liminoid tale. By negating novelistic expectations of length and realistic concern, the liminoid tale brings its brevity in line with its affective ends and extends the potentialities of the liminal sphere to the emotional reality of the reader.

The mass of liminoid tales also creates what Michael Warner has recently called "publics" that are related to "the way texts circulate, and become the basis for further representations" (68). They develop "reflexive circulation"—a reflexivity about their circulation through controversy—as can be seen in the letter addressed to *The Philadelphia Repository* at the beginning of this essay. Their effective style is a matter not of origination, but of augmenting stories. They do not rely upon the author but enhance the reputation of the source where they originate, namely the magazine itself. Finally, their circulation also establishes an intertextual environment of citation and implication that can be noticed in any issue of *The New-York Monthly Magazine.* Thus, portability, elaboration, duration of circulation, and variety become the trademarks of the liminoid tale fostered by the editors' eclecticism and their role as primary agents for the distribution and reprinting of short fiction.

In this sense, I suggest a reading of the magazine's various fictional performances as a realm of transgressive sensuousness, perhaps best described as a pleasurescape for carnal sociality. For this purpose, I would like to focus on a particular type of 'small tale,' the story of premature burial that emerges first in the context of an early eighteenth-century French compilation of criminal cases. These tales were then circulated and enhanced throughout the pages of British and American magazines and were reprinted up until the mid-nineteenth century. In the September 1746 issue of the *American Magazine & Historical Chronicle,* a 'small tale' appeared, titled "A Revival from the Grave. Taken from a French Work, Intitled, *Causes, Celebres,* &c. tom 8." The reference made here is to François Gayot de Pitaval's many-volumed compilation of judicial cases and court decisions, *Causes célèbres et intéressantes, avec les jugements qui les ont décidées,* published in Paris from 1734 to 1743. The collection contained numerous exemplary tales to feature human conduct. Gayot's compilation allowed readers to delve into sensational trials and provided an unparalleled source for the study of gender, class, marriage, adultery, and divorce.

The case history recounted in volume eight of Gayot's *Causes célèbres* (1736) portrays the children of two merchants in Paris (Milanesi 79–85). They intend their offspring to marry and encourage their youthful love, until the reversal of fortune and a better prospect for his daughter's hand changes one merchant's expectations, just when the other merchant's son

is absent from Paris. The young lady reluctantly marries, deplores her lost love and reversal of happiness, sickens out of grief, and dies. She is laid to rest, and the aggrieved young man visits her grave, intending to die with her. He unearths the corpse and—finding signs of life in her—embraces the young lady, and she revives. They run off to England to avoid a conflict with her husband. After some years they return to Paris where she chances upon her husband who reclaims her. The ensuing legal case is decided in the husband's favor and the lovers once again escape to England. For Gayot the tale concerns the rightfulness of the husband's claim because the marriage dissolves after he has buried his young wife and she has been 'legally' seen as a ghost for several years following her entombment.

But how does this French story of a threshold experience make it into English magazines and through its circulation help shape 'liminoid' fantasies in Anglo-American literature? Given the recorded cases of vampirism that allegedly occurred in Hungary in the 1730s—better known as "Vampyrus Serviensis" in medical tracts of the period—occurrences of premature burials were intensely discussed in the learned circles of eighteenth-century Europe. As a result of this considerable interest, the Danish-born French anatomist Jacques-Bénigne Winslow publishes a short Latin dissertation on dead bodies and premature burials in 1742 that was translated into French by Jean-Jacques Bruhier. Bruhier expands Winslow's booklet into a two-volume European steady seller including tales taken from Gayot's compilation. An English version appears in London under the title *The Uncertainty of the Signs of Death, and the Danger of Precipitate Interments and Dissections, Demonstrated* (1746). In addition to numerous illustrations, it assembles short tales about liminal experiences of "Persons who have return'd to Life," as the title page suggests. Among these tales is the case-history of our two lovers. It is there that the editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine* encounters the story and reprints it in 1746. As this magazine was widely read in the British colonies, the first 'American' reprint appears in *The American Magazine & Historical Chronicle* in the same year. From then on, the story appears in American magazines along the Atlantic coast for more than eighty years. Depending on the changing readerly tastes, it is promoted under such titles as "A Story of a Young Lady First Buried and Afterwards Married" in *The American Magazine of Wonders and Marvelous Chronicle* of 1809 and eventually published as an "Account of an Extraordinary Adventure" in the *Rochester Gem and Ladies' Amulet* in 1838. While being reprinted as an ideal filler for editors always eager to lure the audience with minimalist sensationalism, the story's simple plot branches off into a longer and more narrative-driven version. Lengthy renderings and adaptations of the story appeared in the 1790s and were reprinted in Anglo-American magazines until the 1820s (Scheiding and Seidl).

French writer Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian draws upon Gayot's tale and fleshes it out into a ghost story in his collection *Nouvelles nouvelles* (1792). Florian titles his story "Valérie: Nouvelle Italienne." In the same year

an English translation appears in London as *New Tales from the French of M. Florian*. American editors pirate the increasingly popular anthologies of short tales emerging in the 1790s in England and borrow from them without acknowledging their sources. The London version appears serialized with dramatic cliff-hangers in American magazines in 1797 and 1799. Three years later, a condensed version appears in Harrisson's *The New-York Weekly Museum*. Both the French adaptation and the English translation come with an introduction that emulates the both sensational and empiricist tone of earlier tracts about ghosts and apparitions, such as Joseph Glanvill's collection of sensational stories in *Saducismus Triumphatus: or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions* (1681). The story proper tells the young lovers' tale in the style of a Gothic romance. While Florian's version controls the transgressive nature of the living dead by quoting authorities from classical antiquity in the story's introduction, the abridged reprints transit from the dogmatic to the literary use of the supernatural tale, leaving out the introduction and unfolding the events in a context of oral storytelling and personal conflict. The enlarged tale has a strong focus on character, dialogue, and internal conflict. Plotted as a Gothic romance, it ends with a festive ritual and the lovers' reunion.

The "horrid tale" ("Valeria" 209) is told from Valeria's point of view, and the story's setting, an old French castle, functions as a Gothic effect. A group of young friends meet at a house party and begin telling each other stories of "the marvellous, ghosts and apparitions" (209). Valeria, a young Italian lady, introduces her story by calling herself a ghost. She unfolds a fascinating tale of a corpse alive. After having been refused permission to marry her lover Octavian, Valeria, a helpless victim of delicate virtue, is deceived by her father into marrying Count Heraldi, a ruthless impostor. Discovering the deceit immediately after the wedding, Valeria faints and becomes delirious. She recalls in vivid colors how "the disease rapidly increased, and after a paroxysm of sixty hours" she expired (213). Octavian obtains access to the family tomb; he kisses Valeria and feels her breathe. He warms her in his embrace and takes her to his house where a physician "answered for my life" (214). The story ends in reform. The incidence of burial alive and Valeria's later appearance as a ghost cause her father to repent his actions and her former husband to relinquish his claim.

This version appears in the first 1806 volume of the British magazine founded by John Bell, *La Belle Assemblée, or Bell's Court and Fashionable Magazine Addressed Particularly to the Ladies* (1806–1837). The story is reprinted in Baltimore a year later by Eliza Anderson who was the first woman to edit a general-interest magazine in the United States. In 1806 she founds *The Observer* and adopts the pen name 'Beatrice Ironside' for her satirical and witty editorials. Within the pages of her magazine, Anderson fought numerous journalistic vendettas with critics who were outraged by her constant violations of the norms of Republican decency. Like earlier editors, Anderson recognizes the story's sensational potential. As a business-minded editor she, like Harrisson, was continually in search of reprintable stories that would keep the magazine's subscriptions going. In the Early Republic, editors created an expansive circulation for text commodities, and their magazines catered to a public that did not read for "profit, but to 'kill time'" ("Philadelphia Repository" 261). This practice of reprinting also illustrates how the liminoid tale could figure forth potential continuities and discontinuities among the diverging claims and expectations on the part of the editors and readers. Thus, within the periodical frame of *The Observer*, the liminoid story is not simply a romance with a happy resolution for lovers, but one in which the threshold-crossing and reintegration of the protagonist evokes ambiguity. Valeria's final reprimanding of her parents' and former husband's behavior contests prevailing notions of domestic authority and paternal power as questionable standards of communal life. These moral ambiguities become even more ambiguous by the various accentuations of different versions.

4 MAGAZINES AND THE LIMINOID

What follows from this analysis? First, perhaps we are only now beginning to understand the ambiguous and ludic textual manifestations that the culture of reprinting and circulation produces throughout the pages of early American magazines. Second, and perhaps ironically, periodicals are ephemeral and fragile publications, written hurriedly and for financial gain, but function nevertheless as sites that possess both an aura of transgression and multiple meanings for readers. The liminoid tales that are stored in these literary periodicals provide an extensive journey into times and spaces. Poe's narrator in "Ligeia" remembers meeting her "in some large, old, decaying city near the Rhine" (25). The liminoid tale consists of pregnant margins, the cracks of society, and thresholds of dissolution and indeterminacy through which sociocultural order is said to be (re)constituted. And finally, few eighteenth-century periodical editors and writers have retained their seats in the fame machine of companions and anthologies. Therefore, this chapter has attempted to show that it is time to revise this judgment, to return to a unique moment in early American literary history and reappraise the culture of reprinting and circulation fueled by early American editors and their periodical business.

NOTES

1. Rejecting the idealistic school of periodical studies, Lanzendörfer recently argues that "printers and publishers and editors were not 'ambivalent' about the role of the periodical, they were downright contradictory, readily able to keep before the public a variety of idealistic motivations which successfully

(if in complicity with their readers) erected a façade of idealism beneath which lay little more than the desire to make a profit. They performed their part in a mutually-accepted fantasy of disinterested virtue" (12). In general, the field of periodical studies is inadequately theorized (see the contributions in Brake, Jones, and Madden). Powell's call to study periodicals as a "formal genre of their own" (242) has not yet received an adequate critical response. He also requires an expansion of the field's narrow canon with its focus on a small sample of well-known magazines such as the *Tatler* and *Spectator* in England, or the *Massachusetts Magazine* and the *New York Magazine* in North America (Kamrath and Harris 221–364).

2. Faugeres's account of the family's slaughter also imitates the language of captivity narratives, which is in tone similar to the well-known epistolary narrative *The History of Maria Kittle,* authored by her mother, Ann Eliza Bleecker, and published posthumously by her daughter in 1793 (Harris 98–106).
3. John Harrisson published a number of early anthologies containing short fiction that he sold under titles such as *The Entertaining Novelist or, New Pocket Library, of Agreeable Entertainment. Containing, a Variety of Entertaining Stories, Miraculous and Interesting Adventures, &c. Founded on Well-Attested Facts* (1795), or *Select Stories, or Miscellaneous Epitome of Entertainment, Selected from the Newest Publications of Merit* (1798).

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