

THE AVATARS OF THE MARGINAL MAN

Abstract: At present, terms such as “margin”, “marginal” and “marginality” are part of a lexical series fuelled by ideological tension. A structure of partisan walls has been built around the concept of marginal, one which enables the perpetuation and acknowledgement of difference and, last but not least, which allows us to unmask the – ubiquitous – mechanisms through which marginalisation is established. Although I do not set out to prove that these strategies of recovering the marginal are provincially dogmatic and revengeful, it must be noted that they do treat a long line of sociological traditions on the marginal man superficially. Rooted in Simmel’s essay on the stranger and redefined by Robert E. Park and Everett Stonequist, this direction of analysis² is rarely the object of serious interest in cultural studies. In most approaches, marginal occurs in free variation with marginalised, and what promises to be the analytical fruitfulness, recovery and understanding of difference, is often converted into a relationship that is unilaterally determined and imitates the form, but not always the subtlety of Hegel’s master-slave dialectic. The term “marginal”, as it is used in classical sociology – difficult, diffuse and hard to manipulate, centred on filtering a cultural situation through the conscience, emotions and intellect of an actor is substituted with a passive entity that is (directly or insidiously) rejected by an agent (sketchily presented).

Keywords: marginality, literary canon, cultural studies, biculturalism, in-betweenness state.

I will start with a rather trivial quote that claims to be a mission statement for the project of cultural studies: “Cultural studies assume that capitalist industrial societies are societies divided unequally along ethnic, gender, generational and class lines. It contends that culture is one of the principal sites where this division is established and contested: culture is a terrain on which takes place a continual struggle over meaning, in which subordinate groups attempt to resist the imposition of meanings which bear the interests of dominant group” (Storey 3). The quote is part of a reader that brings together defining texts from this multiform field and, while partially nuanced, I believe it sums up some of the aims of this project which, according to John Fiske, is mostly political because, as Fiske unequivocally and slightly deceivingly states by starting off with what needs to be proven: “The term culture, as used in the phrase 'cultural studies', is neither aesthetic nor humanist in emphasis, but political” (125)³. We are talking about a political context which cultural studies, despite the various histories, multiplicity of point of views or deriving its own premises and interests from the British tradition in the Leavis-Hoggart-Williams-Hall line, shares with other movements, which declare

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²Which, in short, defines the marginal as an individual caught between two cultures and marked by characteristics of both, without ever being or feeling (and this is an important distinction) a member of either one. Although Simmel and Park talk about a phenomenon of migration or, in more general terms, about the contact between the two forms of civilisation, Stonequist nuances the discussion by introducing a cultural dimension that is not related to race or ethnicity, but to social mobility, in general. The concept resulted from this broadening of topic has a much wider spread and I believe it can be applied to other situations of transition between or overlay of (at least) two identities.

³ By political I mean “partisan, socially involved” against the view of neutrality as a scientific ideal.

themselves part of an unorthodox Marxism preoccupied with uncovering hegemonic processes⁴ and possibly understanding how culture is produced. In such a context the frequency of the following synonymic or descriptive series is not in the least surprising: dominated, alienated, subordinated, oppressed, excluded, marginal(ized). If, generally speaking, it is quite clear in what sense of the word these adjectives are being used and which ideology they serve (and I will give one quote that is suggestive in this respect⁵), I find that the adjective “marginal” seems to be introduced with the sole purpose of intensifying a message destined to cover all possible formulae of a power relationship by marking one term as ‘positive’ and the other as ‘negative’, as a result of a process of violence, be it symbolical or otherwise. The mediation between the two terms is achieved by invoking notions such as cultural resistance or adjustment, assimilation and reconversion tactics for the ideological pressure which the dominated are subject to. The only dissonant aspect of the context created above seems to be centred on the adjective “marginal”, which undergoes a semantic compression, being reduced to a single meaning – the passive one, of marginalised – though its semantic potential is more generous, and the social situations in which these nuances can be identified are numerous. While in the case of adjectives such as “dominated” or “oppressed” there is no need for further explanation – what they denote is also what they state – and the impact of the two terms is accentuated due to this economy of discourse, the term marginal is more problematic. Reading the series above, one gets the impression of only a small logical step forward, a natural, normal transition from one term to the other, which only increases the degree of persuasion and theoretical consistency of the entire series.

Of course, sufficient objections have been made against a cultural model which, in its Marxist lineage, divides the cultural space in two camps between which there must be divergent interests, many of which even come from the cultural studies sphere or from theorists who have been assigned to it: romanticising the marginal or the outsider – the Rousseau model, the victimary rhetoric, that is, the mirroring process of the domination discourse, resulting in the margin becoming the new centre, the one-dimensional distribution of power as stemming from one source, etc. I will not insist on detailing these objections because most of them are well known.⁶ Cultural studies also provides answers to these dilemmas and accusations, the most important of which are diluting and nuancing the strong term of “culture” or contesting an elitist model of the culture of minority that can be seen, at present, in F.R. Leavis’s essays and actions. His opposition to this argument promises a supposedly dynamic culture model that avoids splitting the notions in inertial binomials – centre/margin, dominant/dominated – by using the resources of popular culture, for example, or other forms of remodelling social pressure⁷. My aim here is not to demonstrate to which extent these projects rise up to the challenge of overcoming the limitations of the Marxist tradition or, rather, to verify whether this dynamic resembles the trajectory of electric current in an electric panel where all the positions are pre-set. I will also not deny the validity of post-colonial studies or studies that focus on race, gender or sexual orientation issues. I do, however, intend to analyse with intellectual puzzlement the uncertain situation and atypical position of the term “marginal”, a position which, despite its demand for disambiguation and clarification, usually remains fixed alongside other adjectives, as if the only way it can be used correctly and attributed value is if it is part of the series mentioned earlier. If we acknowledge that “Of all social phenomena, marginality, can hardly be thought of as bounded by gender, race, religion, ethnicity, class, or other defining categories” (Billson 30), then it would be odd

⁴ Of course, in a Gramscian understanding of the concept, meaning that constraint and approval are porous, co-dependent processes. According to Tony Bennett, the Gramscian dimension of the cultural studies can be summarized as follows: “the Gramscian tradition in cultural studies is thus distinguished by its concern, first, to produce subjects opposed to the manifold and varied forms of power in which they find themselves and, second, through its commitment to a politics of articulation, to organize those subjects - however loosely, precariously, and provisionally - into a collective political force which acts in opposition to a power bloc.” (Bennett 311).

⁵ “This social circulation of meanings always entails struggle and contestation, for those with social power constantly attempt to repress, invalidate, or marginalize meanings that are produced by and serve the interests of subordinate groups and that therefore conflict with their own” (Fiske 143).

⁶ Many of these features are present in a reference encyclopedia, such as this one: Ed. Martin Coyle, Peter Kelsall, Peter Garside, John Peck, *Gale Encyclopedia of Literary Criticism*, Gale Group, 1990, pp. 744-748.

⁷ For instance, Dick Hebdige, in his well-known *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. Routledge: New York, 1978.

to obliterate all other instances of marginality and to use one single interpretation in a non-critical and monopolising way, especially when the explicit purpose of analysing cultural forms is programmatically aimed at diversity and complexity. In a context characterised by new anti-determinist visions that are preoccupied with making the base-superstructure model void, or are part of Stuart Hall's proposal to judge the significant structures of cultural discourse through a tripartite formula (dominant-negotiated-oppositional), this narrow understanding works as the hidden, self-evident and necessary premises for expressing other perspectives – one which is not currently being researched⁸.

In many discourses, “marginal” appears in free variation with “marginalised”, as if it were implicit that the two are identical⁹. It is true that marginal can be synonymous with marginalised in one of its occurrences where, strictly speaking, there is a marginalising agent acting, consciously or not, but definitely abusively against a subject. Of course, this model has roots in the Master-Slave dialectic described by Hegel as a reciprocal and bivalent chain of identities, where the master, in order to validate himself, must relate to the slave's position; or, in a modified form inspired by Gramsci, as Pierre Bourdieu understands the notion of doxa and the way in which it functions.¹⁰ As a side note, it must be said that not even the term “marginalised” is neutral or devoid of dissonance. There are forms of marginalisation that do not involve oppression by a dominant group, are not consequences of hegemony, maintaining complex rapports with the process of exclusion¹¹.

By making this reduction, a series of positions in which the adjective “marginal” is not synonymous with “marginalised” and cannot be easily introduced in the above mentioned series is no longer part of the debate (or the very possibility of a debate in this respect is eliminated). There are forms of marginality that, nonetheless, cross the barrier of antinomies between the dominant and the dominated groups, regardless of the subtlety of the respective domination.¹² The main theoretical problem when using this concept originates, in my opinion, from the persistence of a crack in the foundation of any attempt at demarcating and placing it, once and for all, within an explanatory frame; this foundation crack manifests itself in at least three cases, creating or emerging from cognitive mismatches.

Firstly, from an etymological and positional point of view, marginal is simultaneously characterised by permanence, indexicality and ambiguity. It is part of the perceptual scheme we apply to or by the help of which we process empirical data and, at the same time, it is a structural part of objects and phenomena, which defines them and gives them a form. If we exclude objects, margin is

⁸ In a nutshell, what strikes me as a deliberate confusion can be summarized in this way: “marginal” is synonymous with ‘marginalized’ only in some contexts. Furthermore, ‘marginalized’ does not necessarily mean ‘oppressed’. It is legitimate to focus only on these conceptual ramifications, but this raises the question why, after these certain uses of the term are selected, those who select them do not feel the need to recreate this semantic tree and to explain why it is necessary to privilege only certain instances of the term ‘marginal’.

⁹ In a non-exhaustive list, we can find examples of this equivalence in Hutcheon, Linda – *Poetics of Postmodernism, Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration*, Tyson, Lois– *Critical Theory Today*, Brottman, Mikita – *High Theory / Low Culture* etc. The titles are, more or less, randomly chosen, but I tried to select those titles that offered a wider theoretical scope or a synthesis of current theoretical debates.

¹⁰ This argument is synthesized by Bourdieu in this phrase: “The sense of limits implies forgetting the limits. One of the most important effects of the correspondence between real divisions and practical principles of division, between social structures and mental structures, is undoubtedly the fact that primary experience of the social world is that of doxa, an adherence to relations of order which, because they structure inseparably both the real world and the thought world, are accepted as self-evident” (Bourdieu 471).

¹¹ For example, the marginalization or exclusion from a group that is considered inferior or marginal such as a football supporter's faction. There are also other situations where this identity between terms doesn't work: the marginalization of an employer in an office because he made a series of repeated cognitive or technical errors, the marginalization of someone based on affects, tastes, different lifestyles etc.

¹² These forms are also socially codified: temporal marginality (I think it is self-explanatory) ritualic marginality (in case of monks, priests etc.), economic marginality (and not necessarily referring to the working-class, but for example, to teenagers), procedural marginality (in every decisional process someone will occupy an auxiliary position) etc. All these forms of marginality derive (both their existence and their meaning) in the hard fact that society is built and function around the interaction of differences.

present at all times, but it is also dynamic, as it poses a problem of rapport and perspective, and changes its position depending on the observer or the dislocation of the centre. Before making a reference to the well-known ideas of Bataille and/or Foucault about the transgression of limits, it should be stated that ambiguity is embedded in the core of the concept, since the margin is, simultaneously and empirically, an internal and external dimension, existing both inside and outside. Margin can be, metaphorically speaking, the optimal place for subversion and semantic dislocations¹³ but, likewise, taking precedent before this philosophical argument often invoked in cultural studies, any identity is negotiated at the margins¹⁴. This halo of indeterminacy probably renders the term unfit to be politicised, while its subsequent derivation enhances its force of expression, annulling, at least partially, the term's intrinsic ambiguity.

A second set of confusions stems from using the three dictionary meanings of the concept. From the empirical status of the term "margin", common to all perceptual phenomena, to its meaning of "secondary in importance" and finally to the moral features of the term and the predominant ideological thesis, there is a diffuse gradualness, a progression within a continuum of representations. A semantic play is created here: the figurative meaning loses its figurative trait, being absorbed by the literal nucleus and becoming its natural extension, and those who unveil this figurativeness, this artificial, derivative characteristic of the concept end up neglecting its literal roots. Those who use it non-critically do so because the notion seems to follow the static, absolute configuration of the world, comprising of centre and margins, while those who dislocate it or assign to it a metaphorical condition neglect the fact that there are also marginal experiences which go beyond the incidence of the metaphor.

The third set of confusions implies a perfect overlay between the nominal and the virtual¹⁵ identity of those considered marginal and/or marginalised, which resembles the wet fish paradox – the question whether the fish is wet as a result of a perspective that divides the universe into categories that are not also relevant for the fish itself or the fish is principally, objectively wet, a fact the creature must also be aware of, regardless if this act of acknowledgement requires placing the fish on dry land at any cost. Regarding marginality, we can thus distinguish between a methodological marginality, deduced in the lab or in cultural studies centres, and a practical one, recognised and problematized as such by the individual assigned as marginal. Nothing guarantees, a fortiori, the overlay between what we think of as marginal or marginalised groups and the way in which they define themselves and relate to what has been processed into a set of norms and identities. One version of this gap is the discrepancy between a quantitative, statistical, methodological approach, preoccupied with how we can determine the areas of marginality in society by using scientific instruments, and with the individuals pertaining to these areas, and a qualitative and analytical approach: how does a marginal man think, how does this individual perceive himself and understand things?

Ignoring this distance and assuming a perfect identity between these two approaches creates the shallow impression that those with marginal incomes or those who live in the suburbs, for example, inevitably possess a rough core of internalised marginality and that they naturally propose a set of values marked by irreducible difference and a distinct understanding of the world, which is rejected precisely because of its specificity. What is lost as a result of these confusions is, for instance, the minimisation of the contiguity inherent to the term "marginal/marginalised" to the point of it being cancelled out. Being marginal, as opposed to being an outsider, implies a minimum degree of adherence to the values of the group in accordance with which this status is established. Marginality includes both the idea of difference and the idea of belonging. You can only be at the margin of a place you belong to, a space with which you have at least one element in common. It goes to say, then, that there is no logical reason why the debates on marginality should primarily require a nosological

¹³ See, for instance, Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror, An Essay on Abjection*. Columbia University Press, 1982.

¹⁴ At least this is what Anthony Cohen believes; see a whole chapter dedicated to this identity issue in Jenkins, Richard, *Social Identity*. 3rd ed. Routledge, 2008, the chapter *Understanding Identification*.

¹⁵ I use Richard Jenkins's terms. In a very short description, 'nominal identity' refers to the name, the category, the label while virtual identity stands for the experience of the subject, her/his reaction, projections, internalization of the label etc. (Jenkins 44, 100).

approach, a list of antisocial aberrations or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, only the exhortative discourse embodied by the politics of recognition.

The second, often avoided aspect is the term's multidimensionality, in addition to the neutral, socially codified forms, which are, in my opinion, necessary. If we go back to Greimas's semiotic square, we notice that, of the four resulting pairs, the complex notion of "central plus marginal" seems the most suited for analysis too, and, possibly, the most frequent: it implies that, on the one hand, an individual who is marginal, given one particular system, occupies a central position in another system. However, even more subtle is the process of convergence and symbiotic adjustment: individuals who, regarded from the point of view of their system of values, concomitantly belong to the bourgeois world and to a bohemian one, or to both the middle-class and the hippie movement, and vice-versa, to a group apparently lacking in social power but one who, by virtue of vertical mobility, imitates, exaggerates or incarnates the values of a class considered superior.

Thirdly (and I will deal with this aspect extensively), these reductions and omissions seem more curious as they ignore a sociological tradition of the term, reclaimed from Georg Simmel through Robert E. Park, one of the founders of the Chicago School of Sociology. The concept of "marginal man" is used in the article *Human migration and the marginal man*, published in 1928, inspired by Simmel's essay on 'the stranger', and also tooted in the symbolic interactionism by way of Cooley and Mead. The flashing and fragmentary meditations of Simmel shape the image of an individual who is simultaneously near and far, and unifies both familiarity and estrangement into an uncomfortable and improbable whole – he is "so to speak, the potential wanderer: although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going" (Simmel 402). This concept was further developed by Robert E. Park and Everett Stonequist in the 1920s-1930s and connected to larger social phenomena, such as migration, missionarism, invasion or acculturation. American sociologists of the Chicago School were more interested in the circumstances from which such a personality could emerge rather than in analysing how the marginal man functions, even if he was portrayed as suspended in a state of "in-betweenness"¹⁶, a temporary state, problematizing and intensely experiencing a situation of cultural conflict characterised, thus, by "(...) spiritual instability, intensified self-consciousness, restlessness, and malaise" (Park 893). In Park's sociological view, however, the marginal man is a centrepiece, a stage-consciousness: "It is in the mind of the marginal man-where the changes and fusions of culture are going on-that we can best study the processes of civilization and of progress" (ibid.). In his study, *The Marginal Man – A study in Personality and Culture Conflict* (1937), although Stonequist is still interested in mapping the way in which the junction and conflicts between social, ethnic, etc. groups produce social contexts which, in turn, generate an instance of marginality, he broadens the concept to include intercultural contexts as well. Nevertheless, the definition offered by Park¹⁷ is no longer simply a racial differentiation phenomenon, as the author puts it, but a phenomenon of intersecting moral codes or traditions, each of these two directions being prone to further division and classification as research directions. Consequently, the bicultural situation will no longer be necessarily defined as the relationship between and overlay of macro-cultural forms, but it will also be understood in view of a relationship between and intertwining of cultural codes, concepts of selfhood, feelings and moral representations, projections and goals. Likewise, marginality can be gradual, involving various stages and end results.

The image of the marginal man that derives from these founding studies portrays an accepted but not quite accepted individual, who is tolerated, but tacitly rejected, rejected but not excluded, excluded, but only from certain points of view, placed in a position that allows him to see, but not in a key position, having the know-how, but unable to put it to use, wanting or being forced to functionally

¹⁶ These characters belong, in order, to these novels: *Moara cu noroc* by Ioan Slavici, *Rădăcini* and *Concert din muzică de Bach* by Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, *Sfârșit de veac în București* by Ion Marin Sadoveanu, *1916* by Felix Aderca, *Pădurea spânzuraților* by Liviu Rebreanu, *Huliganii* by Mircea Eliade.

¹⁷ "There appeared a new type of personality, namely, a cultural hybrid, a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples; never quite willing to break, even if he were permitted to do so, with his past and his traditions, and not quite accepted, because of racial prejudice, in the new society in which he now sought to find a place (...)" (Park 887).

belong to incompatible or difficult to harmonise worlds, a complex, diffuse situation, dominated by ambiguity and reflexivity. One of the concept's qualities, defined as such, resides in the fact that it is able to preserve and simultaneously problematize the primary semantic connection to the original ambiguity of the "margin/marginality" term, because it is an open concept that allows plural vectors, capable of generating multiple situations and interpretations, and is not reduced to situations which are valid only for sociological and historical researchers. For that matter, this perspective has been criticised because it introduced an ambiguous, fuzzy¹⁸ concept, an umbrella term that can include everything, but I believe a (not necessarily disinterested) interpretation error has been committed here, because the concept aptly describes, with all possible scientific arguments required in backing a hypothesis, a complicated situation.¹⁹ It is true, nonetheless, that the intermediary state, the phenomenon of double inclusion or the anxiety created by the choice cannot be easily fitted to suit the Marxist model, if this is the ideal standard of clarity. What is gained, in exchange, is a degree of instability with the potential to provoke questions and find solutions, an emphasis placed on social and discursive interstices, and inarticulate gaps and asymmetry. Raymond Williams' triad, 'emergent-dominant-residual', is applicable to this view of the inner part of an individual, because it involves managing a crisis situation without the individual automatically being capable of (or even interested in) making an accurate distinction between the three models, or without his own considerations and options being confirmed by reality.

From this point of view, literature, even the literature of the narrow Western canon, which has perpetuated itself without valuing the difference – if we endorse this description – offers not only examples, but also a tradition, if we transpose Stonequist's approach²⁰ into a literary topos. Situations such as the one in which an individual wishes to belong simultaneously to multiple groups (and, here, we can refer to a real group or a group of ideas), and rejects the values of a group, even if he still internalizes them, and is rejected by the group to which he aspires, or when an individual is incapable of understanding and connecting the values of a group to his own representations, are a recurring theme for meditation, as well as a pretext for literary exploration, especially as an epiphenomenon of modernisation, if we accept the truism that this is a process which amplifies and intensifies the mobility of both individuals and cultural forms and representations²¹.

Of course, the literary tradition of marginality should not be ignored. It manifests itself, for instance, "in the myths of modern individualism"²², as a picaresque formula or in the bildungsroman. In the latter example, marginality functions as an abandoned term, a point of origin from which an inexorable centripetal move forward is being made through slow progression, a substitution, be it an artificial one, between one cultural code and another, all culminating with the progressive conquest of the desired centre. This centripetal model can, nonetheless, be questioned and contested or undermined by sabotaging, contesting or parodying the progression, by considering it a step closer to the margin or by rejecting inclusion, despite or because of the desire to be included.

In this new theoretical light, however, we are talking about novels and characters that are marked by the problematic coexistence of two or more plans, the simultaneity of two moral or value codes which are experienced and handled at a microcultural level, and are built or deconstructed in filtered and problematized circumstances. The advantage of such a reflection of (on) the margin brings

¹⁸ See Dunne, J. Robert. "Marginality – A Conceptual Extension". *Marginality, Power and Social Structure*, Ed. Dennis Rutledge, pp 11-24. Dunne solves this ambiguity by centering the debate on marginality around another concept, "resource flow", an interesting proposal, especially for economists.

¹⁹ The existential experience described in this theory is, indeed, ambiguous and requires multiple interpretations and perspectives, but the concept itself is precisely and accurately defined. Moreover, Park uses it as a milestone or a reference point that needs further arguments and proofs.

²⁰ I choose Stonequist's definition over Park's, as it is more generous and coherent.

²¹ Rene Girard's famous analysis from *Desire, Deceit and the Novel* identifies in the triangular desire and its epiphenomena, resentment, snobbery etc. presents similar features to the experience of marginality I describe above. Girard's student, Edward Lawrence Gans brings a whole new approach to the "centre - margin" debate, seeing this couple as a fundamental stage of an original generative scene, hence the name of his new field of study, generative anthropology.

²² For Ian Watt, these myths are incarnated by Don Quijote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe and Faust.

the focus on a crisis situation or a conflict requiring a solution, firstly from the one in medias res. The individual becomes a “problematizing” agent instead of a mere consciousness being put into motion, from within or from outside, by the hegemonic strings of some discourse or another or by the supposed and all-explanatory resistance against “the dominators”. This form of bifocal marginality occurs frequently as a complex existential script, in instances from a period that is closer to the context in which it is being formulated by Simmel, let’s say between 1850 and 1925.²³ An easy example is, of course, that of Dostoevsky’s ‘the underground man’. But how can we comprehend the marginality of characters like Bartleby, Madam Bovary, K. or Hans Castorp if we ignore the fundamental inner duality of these characters, the relative interpenetration and incomplete merging of at least two discourse and/or axiological orientations inherent in the characters’ definitions of the self and of the world?

One of the typical situations described by Stonequist presupposes that the individual is in contact with both groups or that he internalises and has cognitive access to both representations, while being caught in an aporia, having to deal with a psychological block as a result of this double determination. However, the marginal individual does not have to be exceptional, master both codes or participate divergently, but informed in both discourses, the only missing element being an external validation, a socially accepted label for this state of in-betweenness. This state can manifest itself in other ways as well, and I will offer only a couple of such possibilities found from Romanian literature: the two groups / models can be incompatible or assimilated fragmentarily and with tension within an individual, generating a lot of chaos and fatal confusions (Ghiță, in *Moara cu noroc* by Ioan Slavici); they can be experienced diffusely, but at different poles, as the desired model is opaque or presented as a mute aspiration that powers only small mimetic reflexes or islands of failed emulation (for example: Aneta Pascu, in *Rădăcini*, by Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu); they can lead to a superior synthesis (Iancu Urmatecu in *Sfârșit de veac în București*, by Ion Marin Sadoveanu); they can be problematized as a permanent procrastination, a mismatch of representations and actions, which results in identity disintegration or erratic pilgrimage (Costache Ursu, in *1916*, by Felix Aderca or Apostol Bologa, in *Pădurea spânzuraților*, by Liviu Rebreanu); they can stem from an equivocal situation in which original values are being rejected, but remain constitutive parts of the same whole as the desires and actions of the individual who is searching for superior, transgressive, etc. forms (the Anicet brothers, David Dragu, in Mircea Eliade’s *Întoarcerea din Rai* and *Huliganii*), and so on. There is an array of diverse arrangements and combinations that depend solely on the authors’ resources and imagination, These combinations are more complex than I can expand on here and more complicated than a determinist model would allow us to anticipate. However, I believe that these illustrations, be they as a mere logline, provide satisfactory research and comparative analysis leads. Assuming that the sociological discourse is related to the literary one, complementary and interactively correlated to it, such a transfer can express and describe – not exhaustively, but from a different angle – a cultural phenomenon which is becoming ever more meaningful in modernism, but can also be seen in parallel with other theoretical descriptions and approaches. This phenomenon covers both homogeneity and pluralism, not only as ideologies promoted as desirable from one university to another, but as actual answers to an identity and identification challenge.

This work is not an attempt at suggesting that the promoters of cultural studies are wrong to discuss about marginalisation and domination, or that these structures are not a part of everyday life that deserves to be depicted and understood. The problem occurs when a term such as “marginal” is stripped of all its potential meanings, some of which have a long theoretical and literary tradition. Focusing on the phenomenology of the ways in which marginality is explored and resolved in and through literature may serve as a model for a more encompassing discussion on the meanings of marginality. This sort of discussion should not be an impediment for cultural studies, especially when this discipline claims to take its inspiration from social constructivism and aims at exploring the cultural diversity and the creative alternatives and tactics employed for producing and reconfiguring

²³ There is a certain difference between the marginal man and the alienated man. One of them is that the marginal man is adapted and functional at least in one of the communities of values he confronts with.

culture. It is a way of unblocking particular theoretical zero-sum games and to leave behind the certitudes of the “resolved symbolic”.²⁴

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²⁴ For Nicholas Birns, the “resolved symbolic” means a stagnant form of interpretation, the inertia of significance.