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 analysis[1] 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).

---

[1]Which, 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.