The Centre as Margin
Eccentric Perspectives on Art

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Introduction: (Re)framing Art History: art beyond boundaries

Joana Antunes, Maria de Lurdes Craveiro
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For disciplines related to Art and Humanities, and concerning Art as an active, and creative process, margins are no longer a place of misfit, nor marginality a condition of exclusion. They have become, in fact, part of the central concerns of a wide range of researchers, thinkers and artists, sometimes far beyond the reach of academies. Borders, boundaries, interstices, places between and beyond, whether strange or contaminated are now, maybe more than ever, physical and mental spaces of a(n) (un)controlled alterity that enhances and privileges new perspectives on unexplored territories, unforeseen protagonists, and themes devoid of the (ever so necessary) status of a dignified study subject. Between the most current objects of desire of contemporary thinkers and researchers, the fluidity and porosity of the contact zones between centre and margin teams up with the allure of ontological uncertainties and epistemological tensions, pulverizing categories and diluting classifications.

With the liminal discourse firmly established as part of the conceptual framework of the Humanities, margins and thresholds became part of the vocabulary of social, cultural, and visual studies alike[1]. Without being exclusive of one discipline or another, these terms and the corresponding concepts have definitely entered the art world and Art History's postmodern narrative. Negotiating conflicted situations such as exclusion and inclusion, normalization and transgression, premeditation and spontaneity, the mainstream and counterculture, borders are more than binary actors in the conceptualization of art, particularly if considered, as suggested by Boer to the broader context of cultural phenomena, "not in

[1] One of the most encompassing perspectives on the border or liminal discourse in contemporary culture may be found in Inge Boer, *Uncertain Territories: Boundaries in Cultural Analysis* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006).

their definition of *what* they are and *where* they are, but instead […] as a *function*"[2].

The fertility of these *functional* thresholds, or liminal zones of contact is proven by the multidisciplinary dialogue established between the arts themselves, and between them and any other area of human action[3]: thus, the visual arts and music[4], art and media[5], art and commerce[6], art and law[7], art and psychology[8], art and neurosciences[9] are among the multiple binomial relations established with or without explicit reference to a liminality as a conceptual framework. Likewise, national and international borders, whether natural or cultural, have been surveyed in order to

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[2] Boer, *Uncertain Territories*, 9.

[3] For a recent, multidisciplinary approach see, for instance: Christoph Behnke, Cornelia Kastelan, Valérie Knoli, Ulf Wuggenig, eds., *Art in the Periphery of the Center* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2015).

[4] Peter Vergo is one of the authors who has been crossing the disciplinary boundaries of art history and musical studies to understand the aesthetic, mathematical, conceptual, and philosophical common ground of the arts: Peter Vergo, *That Divine Order. Music and the Visual Arts from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Phaidon, 2005); Peter Vergo, *The Music of Painting. Music, Modernism and the Visual Arts from the Romantics to John Cage* (New York: Phaidon, 2010).

[5] See Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, Hans Lund, Erik Hedling, eds., *Interart Poetics. Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media* (Amsterdam & Atlanta: Rodopi, 1997).

[6] Michele H. Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press,1995).

[7] See, for instance, the work of Desmond Manderson and Cristina S. Martinez on law and visual culture: Desmond Manderson, ed., *Law and the Visual: Transition, Transformations, and Transmission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018); Desmond Manderson, Cristina S. Martinez, "Justice and Art, Face to Face", *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities*, 20, no. 2 (2016), 241-263; Cristina S. Martinez, "An Emblematic Representation of Law: Hogarth and the Engravers' Act", in *Law and the Visual: Transition, Transformations, and Transmission*, ed. Desmond Manderson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 75-100.

[8] Mark Turner, ed., *The Artful Mind: Cognitive Science and the Riddle of Human Creativity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[9] See Jonathan Fineberg, *Modern Art at the Border or Mind and Brain* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015). For a concise overview on the theoretical application of the neurosciences to visual art, see Mengfei Huang, "The Neuroscience of Art", *Stanford Journal of Neuroscience*, 2 (2009), 24-26.

understand its historical implications, and to pinpoint the features of a contemporary "border aesthetics"[10].

By assessing the limits of a Global Art History[11], the discipline (along with the art world) had to put itself in the uncomfortable place of defining and highlighting peripheries, enacting a dialogue with long-established centres of artistic production and theoretical discussion on art. In the past few decades, and particularly from the dawn of the new millennium, the so-called Western World, with its rhizomatic centres well established in territories such as Germany, France, Italy, Great Britain, and the United States of America, has been struggling to find new centres in its old geographical, cultural or historical margins, whether in Latin America, in the Iberian Peninsula, in the Balkans, or in the Middle East, along with the discussion of postcolonialist and postmodernist narratives.[12]

This new focus on territories, previously virtually invisible from the great art historical narratives, has had important consequences in the postmodern re-writing of Art History, not only by broadening its scope and shattering its traditional methodological approaches, as *mirrored*, for instance, in the *New History of Art* of Julian Bell[13], but also by creating a dignified space for a research niche for local art histories, not far from Ginzburg's microhistory[14], and mainly in unconformity with the overpowering models of established protagonists - such as Italy for the Renaissance period, France for the Baroque, or the United States for Pop Art, Abstract Expressionism or Conceptual Art, just to name a few immediate correspondences. Nevertheless, its shortcomings are obvious, as defining the periphery implies the acknowledgement of a certain territory's marginality, in relation to a predeterminate centre that seems

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[10] See Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary, "Natures of Borders: From Historical to Prospective Epistemologies", in *Cartographies of Nature: How Nature Conservation Animates Borders*, ed. Maano Ramutsindela (New Castle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014) 31-53; Johan Schimanski, Stephen F. Wolfe, eds., *Border Aesthetics. Concepts and Intersections* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn, 2017), 13.

[11] James Elkins, *Is Art History Global?* (New York & London: Routledge, 2007).

[12] The presentation of the journal ARTMargins is perhaps illustrative of this re-centralizing new focus on "art practices and visual culture in the emerging global margins, from North Africa and the Middle East to the Americas, Eastern and Western Europe, Asia and Australasia."
https://www.mitpressjournals.org/toc/artm/1/1

[13] Julian Bell, *Mirror of the World. A New History of Art* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2007).

[14] See, for instance, Carlo Ginzburg, "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It", Critical *Inquiry*, 20, no. 1 (1993), 10-35.

historiographically stable and pre-established. Nonetheless, this acknowledgement of a peripheral status is not one-sided, as it may be put at the service of a critique of traditional, western-centric art history[15].

While listing the plethora of authors - whether academics or artists - and works dealing with liminality and the margin would be a rather sterile exercise, it is important to note the contribution of medieval studies to the effective placement of the margin in the centre of art history's concerns. Although "no single discourse of mastery will exhaust our understanding of borders"[16] - or margin, or any other liminal space or status - medieval art has been providing us some of the most important insights regarding the utility of these concepts and, above all, their discussion. With medieval *marginalia* offering prodigal case studies to the wistful eccentricities of the medievalist, the margin has become more than a place of paradox[17]. From the pioneer works of Lilian Randall and Lucy Sandler, who recognized and systematized the images painted in the margins of gothic illuminated manuscripts, to Michael Camille's paradigmatic *Image on the Edge*[18], the second half of the 20th century was marked by a growing

[15] The association between African art and a kind of primitivism that first seduced the western art world is still an academic atavism of art historiography. For a thorough discussion on this topic, see Sunanda K. Sanyal, "Transgressing Borders, Shaping an Art History. Rose Kirumira and Makerere's Legacy", *Matatu*, 25, no. 1 (2002), 133-159.

[16] Mireille Rosello, Stephen F. Wolfe, "Introduction", in *Border Aesthetics. Concepts and Intersections*, eds. Johan Schimanski, Stephen F. Wolfe (New York & Oxford: Berghahn, 2017), 1.

[17] From the margins of illuminated manuscripts to the outer borders of medieval buildings, the concept of medieval marginalia has been tacitly expanded, even if without the necessary appraisal of its conceptual validity and practical functionality. Nevertheless, some remarkable works have been approaching liminal imagery in medieval art, such as: Lucy Freeman Sandler, *Illuminators and Patrons in Fourteenth-Century England: The Psalter and Hours of Humphery de Bohun and the Manuscripts of the Bohun Family* (London: The British Library, 2014); Mark Cruse, *Illuminating the Roman d'Alexandre: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264. The Manuscript as Monument* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011); Michael Camille, *The Gargoyles of Notre-Dame: Medievalism and the Monsters of Modernity* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Laura Kendrick, "Making Sense of Marginalized Images in Manuscripts and Religious Architecture", in *A Companion to Medieval Art*, ed. Conrad Rudolph (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 274-294.

[18] Lilian Randall, "Gothic Marginal Illustrations: Iconography, Style, and Regional Schools in England, North France, and Belgium 1250-1350 A. D." (PhD diss., Radcliffe College, 1955); Lilian Randall, *Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); Lucy Sandler, "Formal Principles of

enthusiasm towards the marginal, apparently heterodox, hypothetically transgressive, and rather startling images found in borders, corners, interstices of medieval objects and buildings such as corbels, capitals, gargoyles, choir misericords, and so on. At the same time, oral and popular culture became the centre of the historian, art historian, philosopher and anthropologist's attention, who presented concepts such as the culture of laughter and popular religion[19] - with a link to folklore that was not strange in the context of modern art, since the vanguards themselves were drawn to the transgressive (and marginal) authenticity of folk and primitive art.

This connection became so deep and persistent that soon millennial historiography would borrow a specific word from literature to identify all the images, places, messages and behaviours implied by the margins of medieval art: *marginalia*. A made-up word, *marginalia* made its first documented appearance in 1819, with the publication of excerpts of the notes written in 1804 by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in the margins of the *Works* of Thomas Brownes, destined to be read by Sara Hutchinson[20]. An inventive invented word, *marginalia* would soon become a literary genre by itself: "readers seem to find that its Latinity confers a degree of seriousness and erudition that "notes", "remarks", "comments", and even "annotations" lack".[21] One of these readers was Edgar Allan Poe, an audacious marginal writer who loved "an ample margin" where to leave his "purely marginal jottings" for he believed that "In the marginalia, too, we talk only to ourselves; we therefore talk freshly - boldly - originally -

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Marginal Illustration in English Psalters of the Thirteenth Century" (MA thesis, Columbia University, 1957); Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge. The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992). See also Jeffrey Hamburger, "Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art: review", *The Art Bulletin*, 75, no. 2 (1993), 319-327; Jean Wirth, "Les marges à drôleries des manuscrits gothiques: problèmes de méthode", in *History and Images: Towards a New Iconology*, eds. Alex Bolvig, Philip Lindley (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 277-300.

[19] Louis Maeterlinck, *Le genre satirique dans la peinture flamande* (Bruxelles: G. Van Oest, 1907); Louis Maeterlinck, *Le Genre Satirique, Fantastique et Licencieux dans la Sculpture Flamande et Wallone. Les miséricordes de stalles: art et folclore* (Paris: Jean Schemit, 1910); Claude Gaignebet, Dominique Lajoux, *Art Profane et Religion Populaire au Moyen Âge* (Paris: PUF, 1985); Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

[20] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Marginalia I", in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. George Whalley, 12 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), cxv.

[21] H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 9.

with abandonnement [sic] - without conceit."[22] This very freshness and boldness of the written *marginalia* seems to mirror the vivid qualities of the humorous, provocative, playful, and surprising images that usually border medieval art.

The idea of marginal and mainstream as concurrent territories of artistic practice, particularly in the context of contemporary art, has set its place in the discipline's discourse although, as Donald Kuspit puts it, marginality is just as vanguardist and revitalizing as "the concept of 'marginal art' is virtually indefinable"[23]. Even though the relationship between art, the margin, and the liminal is not solely defined by the tension between marginal and mainstream, Kuspit's reading on these concepts is still noteworthy: "[it] is a social construction that says more about the mainstream's creative desperation and pursuit of novelty than it does about the sociohistorical - or, for that matter, stylistic - reality of what it labels marginal"[24]. For it is, indeed, a label as many others, the notion of marginality, along with its corresponding *locus* and the subtlety of the condition of liminality, requires at one time caution and commitment. With fluid connections, centre and margin share a metamorphic nature, particularly contended and debated when the nature of art itself seems to be implicated in the establishment of new (marginal) artistic categories, such as Folk Art, Outsider Art (or Art Brut), or Psychotic Art[25].

The margin as a place of exclusion does not cease to be a place of contact and transience. Thus, the condition of marginality implies that of liminality, with limits and thresholds engaged in various forms of interaction between the official and the marginal, the norm and its transgression, erudite culture and folklore, the privileged and the excluded, the normalized and the bizarre, the metropolis and the village, the master and the craftsman and, ultimately, the artist and the observer. In each case, liminality enhances contact as much as ambiguity and

[22] Edgar Allan Poe, "Marginalia", in *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 5 (New York: Armstrong & Son, 1884), 175-350, 178.

[23] Donald Kuspit, "The Appropriation of Marginal Art in the 1980s", *American Art*, 5, no. 1/2 (1991), 132-141, 132.

[24] Kuspit, "The Appropriation of Marginal Art in the 1980s", 132.

[25] David Maclagan, *Outsider Art: From the Margins to the Marketplace* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009).

hybridism, two other categories particularly treasured by contemporary art, art history, and visual studies alike[26].

Beyond the strict terminology of liminality, many of the themes now cherished by art history and visual studies are intrinsically liminal in the sense that they evoke ambiguous realities, previously, and sometimes tacitly, marginalized themes and subjects, assumed as secondary or superfluous, that aspire to grasp the transgressive and the paradoxical, the monstrous and the anomalous, the hybrid and the undefined, the minority and its corresponding dynamics of exclusion and inclusion. Reclaimed by postmodernity itself, the grotesque and the ugly, which have lurked in the shadows for many decades, now have a place on stage[27]. The margins of society, from any historical period, have been closely examined in search of cripples and beggars, criminals and thieves, prostitutes and pimps, witches and heretics[28]. Cultural and ethnic minorities, along with the phenomena of migration and integration, are also part of the new concerns of art and art history[29]. And the sexual body and the gender discourse have definitely slipped from the margins to the centre, at the

[26] The fluidity of the concept of liminality, as well as its connection with ambiguity, has been firstly developed by Arnold van Gennep and then by Victor Turner in the field of cultural anthropology. For each of the authors, see the reference works: Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960 [1909]); Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage", in *The Forest of Symbols* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967). See also Bjørn Thomassen, "The Uses and Meanings of Liminality", *International Political Anthropology*, 2, no. 1 (2009), 5-27.

[27] Laura Lunger Knoppers, Joan B. Landes, eds., *Monstrous Bodies / Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2004); Asa Simon Mittman, Peter J. Dendle, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Andrei Pop, Mechtild Widrich, eds., *Ugliness: The Non-Beautiful in Art and Theory* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014); Frances S. Connelly, *The Grotesque in Western Art and Culture: The Image at Play* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[28] Jelle Koopmans, *Le théâtre des exclus au Moyen Age: Hérétiques, sorcières et marginaux* (Paris: Editions Imago, 1997); Sophie Brouquet, *Les marginaux du Moyen Age: ladres, brigands, ribauds, gueux et mendiants au Moyen Age* (Rennes: Ouest-France, 2018).

[29] As an example of emancipatory, socially commited research, *The Image of the Black in Western Art* is a series of volumes, prepared since 1960s, and now re-published by Harvard University Press, with the recent addition of a volume dedicated to the *Image of the Black in African and Asian Art* (2017). For a comprehensive approach to the contemporary phenomena of migration and alterity, see: Juliet Steyn, Nadja Stamselberg, eds., *Breaching Borders. Art, Migrants and the Metaphor of Waste* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014).

same time that feminist studies reclaim a place for women in the history of art and culture[30].

When applied to visual culture, or when extracted from the realm of images and art, all these themes require a methodological and epistemological apparatus that usually reaches beyond the limits of Art History itself. One of the concepts that more recently has made its entrance in the context of art studies is that of *parergon*, as formulated by Jacques Derrida after its first appearance in Kant's *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*[31]. Likewise, just like *marginalia*, it is a neologism with a classical accent. However, on the contrary, *parergon* corresponds to a pliable, fluid, and dense concept that applies to all artistic media in any historical period and cultural context. It is, thus, a meeting point to art historians, artists, philosophers, anthropologists, among many other scholars specializing in different periods, allowing them all to grasp liminality, marginality, superfluity and ornament without the insufficiencies of the very idea of margin (and centre). Understood as a hybrid in itself, the notion of *parergon* stands for something (anything) that is added to an artwork, delimiting and enunciating it, diluting it in the transitional space, between the fiction of artistic representation and the corporeal reality of the observer. The *parergon* improves an artwork by ornamenting it and broadens its value and its sense by adding new discursive fragments. *Parergon* is, as follows, the accessory and marginal *extra* without which the work (*ergon*) still exists, but not without suffering an amputation, a loss, an unbalance. This *hors-d'oeuvre*[32] has been tacitly assumed by some art historians as a privileged place or condition to artistic creation and inventiveness - a place where *art works*. Besides the frame, which is the ultimate boundary between the pictorial fiction and the observer's reality, there are still other margins where artists have sought to inscribe liminal discourses. Hence the efficiency of the gigantic snail painted by Francesco Cossa at the border of the Dresden *Annunciation*[33] and cleverly spotted - or actually seen - by Daniel Arasse.

[30] Some interesting works, with different focuses and approaches to gender in visual culture, are: Jane L. Carroll, Alison G. Stewart, eds., *Saints, Sinners, and Sisters: Gender and Northern Art in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2003); Katarzyna Kosmala, *Sexing the Border: Gender, Art and New Media in Central and Eastern Europe* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014); Caterina Nirta, *Marginal Bodies, Trans Utopias*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2018).

[31] Jacques Derrida, *La Vérité en Peinture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978).

[32] Derrida, La Vérité en Peinture, 63.

[33] Francesco del Cossa, Annunciation, c. 1470-1472, Tempera on panel, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden, Germany.

Indeed, if "Cossa's stroke of genius was to have pointed to the *limits* of representation by putting his snail at the threshold of this same representation, at its limit"[34] is because this same limit is simultaneously an entrance and departing point in and from the visual fiction thus created by the artist. As a fictional device, the marginal snail is a parergonal addition - at the same time superfluous and necessary - and a reminder of the creative power of liminal spaces and eccentric perspectives.

Presentation of the Volume

Despite its epistemological broadness, the current theoretical and methodological centralization of margins has commonly been encapsulated inside the scope of each academic discipline and cultural realm, compromising dialogue, exchange, connection and friction: mandatory conditions to a sound understanding of the most remote and controversial areas of artistic creation, in its multilayered nature.

This much-needed dialogue, along with the urge to grasp the margins from (still) another point of view, is at the heart of the volume *THE CENTRE AS MARGIN. ECCENTRIC PERSPECTIVES ON ART*, a collection of studies which strives to open the debate on margins precisely from the centre. Not the centre as stage for an artificial, uprooted performance of the margin, but as a physical, symbolical, ideological space of its actual infiltration - or even as a potentially marginal space. Since the margin spreads wherever it finds a gap, the challenge is to find it at the centre, through fissures, migrations, appropriations, inversions, dialogues, and usurpations.

In fact, this volume is the result of a just born, long-term project, which first saw the light at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Coimbra in May 2017 through the first International Conference *On The Margin*, dedicated to *The Centre as Margin*, where the various contributors of this volume first met. Resulting from recent research developed from the privileged epistemological viewpoint offered by the margin, the volume here presented brings together the contributions of young researchers along with the work of career scholars. Likewise, it does not obey a traditional or a rigid diachronic structure, rather being organized in three major parts that organically articulate the different essays. Within each of these parts in which the book is divided, papers are sometimes organized according to their timeframes, providing the reader with an encompassing (though not encyclopedic) overview of the common

[34] Daniel Arasse, Take a Closer Look, trans. Alyson Water (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013), 30.

ground over which the various artistic disciplines build their methodological, theoretical, and thematic centres and margins.

In a framework progressively focused on the tangible, material, and spatial implications of the margin made centre, we will begin by exploring liminal themes, objects and methodological approaches in the art world (Part I). Through a number of case studies (Part II), we will question liminality's discursive, narrative, and semantic potential, between pure visuality and meaning, order and unpredictability; while approaching the centrality of some of its most eccentric, bizarre and monstrous creations, with the human body as a model and vehicle. Still in this part of the volume, we will address the role of textiles as definers of identity, markers of boundaries, inverters of status, simultaneously superfluous and indispensable (as the notion of margin itself). On the last part (Part III) we will finally root the margin at the centre, providing it with a place and a primary sense of space.

The first part of the book, dedicated to the fluid exchanges between the margin and the centre that transforms them both in interchangeable spaces, is composed of essays that deal with marginal subjects from liminal methodological approaches. The first chapter is thus dedicated to a marginal copy of Hieronymus Bosch that intertwines painting and literature to access the ultimate challenge of depicting the invisible. In this essay, Maria José Goulão explores the means and the implications of envisioning and depicting the matter of dreams, the *topos* of the vision and the idea of the afterworld, while expanding the framework of History of Art itself. From the different versions of the *Visions of the Knight Tondal*, to the "visual palimpsest" crystallized in an anonymous painting made after Bosch's nightmarish sceneries and kept in a Portuguese collection, Goulão moves from the heart of art historiography to the very limits of its territory with History, Theology, Visual Anthropology, and Literature, in order to finally retrieve a "geography of the hereafter".

From Bosch, the early modern painter that never left medieval imagery, bringing its margins to the very heart of his paintings, we cross the borders of Art and History, to enter the realms of Musicology and Philosophy, through an approach to Robert Schumann's *Davidsbündlertänze op. 6* from a Deleuzian perspective. By applying the rhizomatic concept of image of thought to the margins of Schumann's work, Ana Isabel Nistal Freijo explores the multiple (and decentralized) territories of creation and identity, through the multiple pseudonyms, the recurrent quotations and the poetic hybridity between music and literature. The *decentering* thus proposed by Nistal Freijo defines the margin as an indispensable place

and medium of expansion, multiplication and self-definition of Schumann's op. 6.

Moving further to the margins of modernism, Jessica Schouela approaches a central work of an artist whose role in the definition of modern concepts of art, architecture and design is (still) usually kept at the margins of Le Corbusier's eloquent protagonism. Through Amédée Ozenfant's *Foundations of Modern Art*, Schouela explores the definition of a modern identity through the ever-marginalizing mechanisms of alterity, choice and exclusion. Defining what is (or should be) modern through the example of what is not, becomes thus an evident process of creative self-construction that not only deals with art and art theory, but also with anthropology and ethnography, in a deeply sociological dialogue between civilization and primitiveness, present and past, elegance and excess, white and black. Nevertheless, this dialogue, whether mute or conflictive, is not always univocal, and Schouela's essay works precisely in its liminal lines of rhetorical power.

In another dialogue, this time between the contemporary photography of Joel-Peter Witkin and the 19th century work of Félix Nadar, Carla Alexandra Gonçalves questions the transgressive limits of the representation, (re)construction and ontology of the body through the image itself. Moving between the realms of art and science, artwork and document, Gonçalves presents the body simultaneously as a subject and an object of artistic creation, locating its operative existence *in-between*. Between the ultimate intimacy that the individual body requires and the utmost exposure inflicted upon the public body (whether a medical body or an art-object body), lies the dynamic tension that connects the centre and the margin.

Following this path of cross-disciplinary dialectics and liminal methodological approaches, the first part of this volume closes with an essay that calls upon the contributions of Philosophy, Sociology, Anthropology and Ethnography along with Theatre and Performance, to consider creative marginality as a form of counter-discourse between central and established forms of power. "From Nonsense to Avant-Garde", Ricardo Seiça Salgado invites us to give a closer look to the marginally resistant history of a Portuguese 62-year-old theatre group : Coimbra's Academy Theatrical Initiation Circle. Through art and politics, Salgado delves into both the conceptual and operative potential of marginality to dramaturgy and social life alike.

The second part of this volume offers a comprehensive approach to the many possibilities of the liminal discourse in Art through specific case studies that are nonetheless thematically organized in three main areas.

The first one is dedicated to the role of order and continuity – and its interruptions and tensions – in the very borders, extremes and margins of artworks. Framed by a broad medieval chronology that goes from the Celtic and Insular Early Middle Ages to the 15th century, it is crossed by a general focus on the problems and limits of interpretation and meaning, calling upon aspects such as narrativity and visuality, programming and randomness, closeness and distance, intimacy and public display.

In the first essay, Beatriz Loureiro presents center and margin as both spaces and concepts, mostly understood as "enhancers of meaning" operative in Celtic literature and art. From the non-linear narratives of the Otherworld, occasionally visited by exceptional mortals, to the non-figurative ornament of personal objects, Loureiro draws a path where ambiguity, metamorphosis, and juxtaposition work as perceptive anchors that give sense to both centre and margins. Especially concerned with the theoretical frame(s) and conceptual apparatus that may enlighten and further intertwine these marginal expressions of literature and material culture (both visual and artistic in their own right), this incursion through symmetry, sinuosity and circularity moves far beyond the Irish Celtic territories from which it departs.

This eccentric way of establishing order and mnemonic coherence beyond linearity or figuration is once again tested in Lúcia Rosas' essay on the programming, order and meaning of Romanesque capital sculpture. Usually considered highly symbolic and cryptic, Romanesque sculpture is frequently placed in one of two extremes: the mere ornamental function or the illustration of highly complex theological figures and narratives. By beginning to question the role phytomorphic motifs – perhaps, the most marginal(ized) of all categories of visual display – Rosas approaches one of the most complex realities of Romanesque art: the relation between architectural space and its sculptural decoration. Using a case study particularly dear (but nonetheless obscure) to Portuguese art historiography, the church of St. Christopher of Rio Mau, Rosas will test the apparent randomness of these motifs' placement, while simultaneously approaching figurative and historiated capitals to further explore organizational schemes, narrative links and liminal dynamics.

Through this same realm of marginal, little explored study objects and subjects, Ana Cristina Sousa's essay gives further development to the inquiry into the meaning of medieval liminal iconography. Dedicated to an exceptional 15th century Flemish tomb and effigy made of copper, silver and gold panels, Sousa's study sheds light over an artwork that has been neglected by historiography. Kept mute, and almost invisible, the tomb of the young son of the king João I, commissioned by Isabella of

Portugal, Duchess of Burgundy, is bordered by profusely carved panels with a display of ordered chaos and fantasy not very distant from those of medieval *marginalia*. To look and to (finally) question these images, allowing them to *speak*, is thus one of the major contributions of this essay that centralizes the margin to affirm its sense and purpose.

Beyond the limits of the human, the next set of case studies is dedicated to the visual and rhetorical power that resonates from the display of the bizarre, the extraordinary, the diabolical, or simply *the other*. The illustrative qualities of the monster, a composite, undefined and uncategorized, eccentric and marginal being, have turned it into a major concern of art history, literature, as well as many other disciplines of the Humanities. In this case, the aim is not to grasp the monstrous expression as a synthesis of the anthropological relation between centre and margin, but rather to use the monster as a tool to enlighten the mysteries of creation and the very human nature.

Along these lines, the fourth essay focuses on the monstrous creative *persona* of the eccentric 17th century Mexican nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, approached through three poetic portraits that clearly illustrate the composite, disjunctive, highly idealized and frequently interventive role of the monster. In this essay, necessarily anchored by the literary formulas that give body to Sor Juana's works, Octavio Páez Granados clearly stresses the visual efficacy of the poetic portrait, while simultaneously addressing fundamental topics such as Sor Juana's disruptive approach to the standards of beauty of her time, the role of women in the artistic and intellectual milieu, the tensions of the relationship between the centre and the margins of her own society, and the sibylline, hybrid and monstrous nature of baroque aesthetics itself.

Without leaving the Baroque period, Mariano Casas Hernández leads us through a much-needed study of 18th century misericord iconography. Focusing on the choir stalls of the Cathedral of Salamanca, this essay deals with one of the most marginalized expressions of a very popular and actually over-centralized marginal theme: choir misericords. Usually approached in their medieval and early modern expressions, misericords kept on being a favourite place and popular space for the display of profane, fantastical, and composite motifs during the modern period. Whether playing with the plastic ductility of wood and displaying the artist's free imagination or drawing on established models common to other artistic media, and whether simply ludic and ornamental, functionally apotropaic or deeply meaningful in the context of theological thought, these sculptures are part of a vast marginal universe that lies at the very heart of liturgical space. Casas Hernández essay sheds light on the

eloquence and meaning of these images, centralizing them to better connect their expressions to 17th and 18th century readings on demonic forces, well rooted in theories of "nature as a vehicle of corruption".

Returning to the human behind the monster, or the monster as a staged condition of the strangeness of alterity, Paola Pacifici explores the iconography of the double. Located between nature and culture – at the fruitful intersection of both, more than at a no-man's land – the display of human oddities and marvels brings the wondrous monster of classical literature and science to the verge of the 20th century culture. Anchored in the interdependence between the textual description and the visual illustration of the monster, Pacifici underlines the broad temporality of the image, usually crystallized in models that serve many different textual sources, whether literary or scientific. Bringing the monster to the present time, Pacifici presents it as a liminal, and frequently marginalized projection of otherness that requires an audience to exist, since "there is no *private* monster".

Without ever leaving the human and bodily dimension of the artistic experience of the margin, the following studies are exclusively dedicated to its textile outer projection. As a border between the intimacy of the body and the world in which one interacts with the other or as a physical delimitation between spaces - the textile is a fluid, ductile, and volatile expression of the many modalities of interaction between centre and margin. The last three essays of Case Studies on Liminality cross a huge temporal span to lead us through some of these modalities.

Barbara Margarethe Eggert leads us through the marginalization of women in 13th century convents, and the potentially transgressive role of the liturgical vestments and precious textiles produced by them and worn by their highest rank representatives. Focusing on a preserved set known as the Göss Vestments, Eggert questions the many roles of textiles as boundaries between spaces of privilege and exclusion, to propose the protagonism of the Göss Vestments in the "demarginalization strategy" enacted by the abbess Kunegunde II. Dealing with relational binomials such as opacity and transparency, visibility and invisibility, optic and haptic, Eggert's essay also draws our attention to the performative and ritual role of these textiles, along with their ostensibly expositive potential, which allowed their commissioners and wearers to weave and embroider on them their own personal convictions and expectations, sometimes re-writing history and re-inventing hierarchies.

Separated by almost seven centuries, Kunegunde II and Lygia Pape were both women that used the powerful liminality of textiles to express their own ideas of order and identity, and to renegotiate the relationship

between centre and periphery. In the next essay, Jacqueline Witkowski approaches Lygia Pape's textile experiments as a form of communicating and materializing her dissent towards the artistic, cultural and socio-political background of the 50s, 60s and 70s in Brazil. Between the crystallized mental structures of colonialism and the oppression of a dictatorial regime, the weaving experiences of Pape, with their performative and bodily nature become, as argued by Witkowski, a reminder of the indigenous roots and marginalized communities of a country that only recently rescued her memory and work from the margins of art historiography interests.

The last essay of this second part, presented by Nuno Nogueira and Inês Simões, sums up this communicative power of textiles as liminal coverings (or dividers) of the body by focusing on garments, their planning and structure and, mostly, their interaction with the body. Establishing a theoretical framework that goes from Derrida's reading of the Kantian *parergon* to Csordas' *cultural embodiment*, Nogueira and Simões further explore the historicity of the relation between body and clothing - and the margins of both -, stressing its role in the definition of posture, behaviour and, ultimately, identity. Neither intrinsically part of the body nor detached from it, neither really bi-dimensional nor three-dimensional, tangible but fluid, necessary but superfluous, garments "contextualize the body" and are hence a paragon of the central qualities of the margin.

With three essays that chronologically bridge the late medieval and the modern period, the final section of this volume summons the limits and challenges of spatial categories: from the domestic setting to the religious space and the urban planning. In the first essay, Marta Simões establishes a conceptual framework for the study of the domestic space that draws on the *warburgian* notion of atlas to map the objects, behaviours and patterns recurrently observed in painted depictions of domestic interiors between the 15th and 16th centuries. Searching the margin at the very core of the centre of each miniature, engraving or panel painting, Simões focuses on two unexpected study cases: a blue-squared pillow (a usually invisible object at the background of the painting), and a devotional image of the Virgin and the Child (a painting within the painting). By focusing on the details that enliven the overall setting of domestic pictorial spaces, Simões simultaneously inverts the usual analytical approach that tends to opacify the role of objects in a composition (unless their symbolical meaning is too obvious to be forgotten), and creates a net of linked margins that give sense to the domestic scenery, expanding its interpretative potential.

This search for a place for the margin within the visual fiction of a graphic space continues in the essay of Berrin Terim, who proposes to *read Filarete from the margin*. Dealing with various layers of marginality and marginalization, Terim approaches the controversial figure of Antonio di Pietro Averlino, disregarded by centuries of art historiography, to enquire into the margins of his Treatise on Architecture, for a long time considered a poetical or metaphorical *oeuvre* rather than a proper theoretical approach to architecture and urbanism. Handling both text and images as complementary parts of the same creative process, Terim delves into the centre and the margins of the *Codex Magliabechianus*, preserved at the Central National Library of Florence, to capture the graphic forms of the *idea* that presides over the enticing project of Sforzinda. Assuming it as a hybrid work, Terim proposed Filarete's Treatise as a narrative of architecture – not a representation of something yet to be, but "as an end in and of itself."

Still in the realm of architectural space, Maria de Lurdes Craveiro's essay focuses on the multiple roles of the narthex in the period of the Portuguese Catholic Reformation. Dealing with a geographical reality that is still little known beyond its own historiographical boundaries, this essay sheds light over the functional and symbolic nature of an eminently liminal architectural element. Neither completely closed nor open, not yet the space of the church but also not the profane space around it, the narthex was, since the Paleochristian period to the 17th century (and beyond), a place of initiation and exclusion, of preparation and penitence, of anticipation and participation, of mourning and memory, of presence and circulation. Drawing on the long tradition that equates the narthex with the Christian building, and thus stressing its role as an identity mark, Craveiro further clarifies its role in the Humanist culture of 15th and 16th century Portugal. By testifying the persistence of this element during the 17th century, whether in great architectural enterprises or in little chapels and hermitages, Craveiro not only presents the narthex as a fundamental device of the "theatricality of religious sociability", central to the devotional strategies of a reforming church, as she also affirms the dilution of the frontiers historiographically established between Humanism and Counter Reformation.

With the artistic phenomenon, and its multiple demeanours and behaviours, resonances and dilutions, as a common ground, the Centre as Margin will hopefully be a comprehensive and multidisciplinary discussion platform, encouraging the dialogue between different disciplines, on all timeframes, supported by the interest to deal with the complex nature of the (inter)relationship between centre and margin. One of the main (and

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