

# Identity Issues



Identity Issues:  
Literary and Linguistic Landscapes

Edited by

Vesna Lopičić and Biljana Mišić Ilić

**CAMBRIDGE**  
**SCHOLARS**  

---

**P U B L I S H I N G**

Identity Issues: Literary and Linguistic Landscapes,  
Edited Vesna Lopičić and Biljana Mišić Ilić

This book first published 2010

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2010 by Vesna Lopičić and Biljana Mišić Ilić and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-2557-3, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-2557-3

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface .....	ix
Exploring Identity Biljana Mišić Ilić and Vesna Lopičić	
Introduction .....	1
Why Has Identity Become an Issue? Vesna Lopičić	
<b>Part One: Literary Landscapes</b>	
Chapter One.....	13
Anonymous Heroes: Nationalism and Identity in Svetlana Broz's <i>Good People in an Evil Time</i> Nataša Tučev	
Chapter Two .....	23
Identity, Intimacy, and History in Ian McEwan's <i>On Chesil Beach</i> Zorica Đergović-Joksimović	
Chapter Three .....	33
'Kim Could Lie Like an Oriental': Imperialism and Identity in Rudyard Kipling's <i>Kim</i> Danijela Petković	
Chapter Four.....	51
The Beautiful Teeth: Multicultural Identities in Zadie Smith's Novels Emilija Lipovšek	
Chapter Five .....	59
Imagining the Black Atlantic: Trans/Racial Identity in Jean Rhys's Writings Cristina-Georgiana Voicu	

Chapter Six.....	71
Towards an ‘Other Sense’ of Identity: Political Subjectivity in Margaret Atwood’s Poetry Colin Nicholson	
Chapter Seven.....	95
Marlowe’s <i>Dido, Queen of Carthage</i> : Subversion of the Patriarchal Identity Milena Kostić	
Chapter Eight.....	113
Canadian Identity as Expressed by the Poet Robert W. Service (1874 – 1958) Walter Epp	
<b>Part Two: Linguistic Landscapes</b>	
Chapter Nine.....	127
Identity-related Issues in Contact-induced Historical Changes Junichi Toyota	
Chapter Ten.....	139
Glocalization and Bilingual Language Practices Jovana Dimitrijević Savić	
Chapter Eleven.....	157
Interdependence of Language and Identity: Perspectives of the Globalising World Nadežda Stojković	
Chapter Twelve.....	163
Living a Lie: The Link Between Language and Unhappiness Angela Lait	
Chapter Thirteen.....	177
From Oceanic Feeling to Image Schemata – Embodied Mind and the Construction of Identity through Binary Conceptualisation Mihailo Antović	

Chapter Fourteen .....	195
Grammatical Devices for Encoding and Concealing Identity Biljana Mišić Ilić	
Chapter Fifteen .....	215
Finding Myself: Loanwords as Aids to Identity-Building Elham Afnan	
Chapter Sixteen .....	229
The Identity of a Metaphtonymy – How 'Two Eyes in One Head' became a Cyclops Nadežda Silaški and Biljana Radić-Bojanić	
Chapter Seventeen .....	251
The Manifestation of Authorial Presence in Academic Writing as a Sign of Cultural Identity Savka Blagojević	
Chapter Eighteen .....	265
Language, Identity and Standard: Some Implications and Problems in Teaching English Ivana Čorbić	
Chapter Nineteen .....	275
Language and Professional Identity in an Engineering Community Miloš Tasić	
Contributors .....	285
Index .....	289



PREFACE:  
EXPLORING IDENTITY

BILJANA MIŠIĆ ILIĆ AND VESNA LOPIČIĆ

The complex and multifaceted phenomenon of identity has been a challenging topic of numerous literary, linguistic and interdisciplinary explorations, as is convincingly evidenced by a host of recent articles, monographs, collections of essays, as well as many conferences devoted solely or at least partly to examining this intriguing issue.

In spring 2009, the international conference *Language, Literature, Identity* was held at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia, with the ambitious aim to provide the floor for presenting various literary and linguistic explorations of identity. Along with the two volumes of Conference Proceedings, the editors wanted to put together one more publication, containing several selected articles presented at the conference as well as some specially written for this occasion, which most illustratively depict the variety of the examined identity issues and of the research approaches.

The turn of the new millennium, when general globalization flows have coupled with the general destruction of value systems, only emphasized the burning relevance of the question of identity. Identity, whether personal, group, ethnic, religious, national, professional, or any other, is something that is no longer given or constant, but needs to be defined, established, maintained, constructed or reconstructed, and can be lost, searched for, questioned, reinvented or reaffirmed in the turmoil of confusing and conflicting influences and forces.

The present book, *Identity Issues: Literary and Linguistic Landscapes* is a collection of twenty articles, set out to explore the notion of identity as a constantly relevant, intricate, many-sided phenomenon. Understanding identity in a very broad sense, the authors approach it from different angles, highlighting its various aspects. After the introductory essay by Vesna Lopičić "Why Has Identity Become an Issue?", which provides a historical and sociological background in very broad and general terms, there follow the articles divided into two sections. The first section offers literary explorations, discussing identity issues of class, race, nation and

history, as highlighted in several literary works, while the second one contains various linguistic studies of the relationships between language and identity.

Section One, *Literary Landscapes*, offers insight into the topic of identity from the literary point of view. Literature, regardless of the genre or the period when a particular book was written, is essentially concerned with identity in a particular social and historical context. Most of the works examined in this volume belong to the contemporary Anglo-American literature, but there are a few from other periods and other literatures as well. However, they all share the key objective – to expose various inner and outer challenges to the human nature and to search for the indestructible constants of humanity. In that sense, all the literary works examined here are the studies of identity.

The first paper in the literature section focuses on a book which is not a work of fiction. Nataša Tučev explores the notion of identity as related to nationalism and the attitude towards the Other in the documentary material collected by Svetlana Broz and presented in the book *Good People in an Evil Time*. The testimonies comprising the book pertain to the civil war waged in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1990s, in the circumstances when, as Broz puts it, 'the rhetoric of the nationalist leaders calling for national homogenization sounded just as frightening as the exploding shells'. Svetlana Broz's interlocutors recall 'anonymous heroes', those men and women whose acts of heroism consisted in saving the lives of, or providing valuable help to, people not in their own ethnic or religious group. Their examples demonstrate that it is possible for an individual to resist nationalist rhetoric and define his/her identity in more comprehensive terms. In a more general perspective, Nataša Tučev also refers to several literary essays (by S. Heaney, G. Orwell and D. Kiš) in order to examine the authors' insights regarding national and meta-national identity and their moral implications.

The paper "Identity, Intimacy, and History in Ian McEwan's *On Chesil Beach*" by Zorica Đergović-Joksimović analyzes how these concepts are interwoven in the novel where one of the most intriguing contemporary British novelists returns to one of his favourite themes – the profound influence of historical and social circumstances on the lives of common people. The decisive impact of the zeitgeist and social mores, represented in the dominant discourse, not only on the formation of the individual's identity but on one's whole life is a frequent motif in McEwan's works. Skilfully interweaving the threads of intimate and social history, McEwan creates a touching, almost sentimental tale about a fatal misunderstanding that would lead to tragic consequences. Adroitly playing with themes and

motifs of his predecessors – above all Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence – McEwan creates an oppressive world in which his characters have to find their real selves and their identities.

The paper "'Kim Could Lie Like an Oriental': Imperialism and Identity in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*" by Danijela Petković focuses on British children's literature, but aims at exploring significant issues such as the 19th century British imperialism, Orientalism and identity. In contrast to adult literature, children's fiction, as John Stephens puts it, 'belongs firmly within the domain of cultural practices which exist for the purpose of socializing the target audience'. As such, children's literature is necessarily closely connected with the specific socio-cultural values that are to be passed down to the young and thus preserved and maintained – that is, with ideology, which in turn affects the sense of personal, national and racial identity.

Emilija Lipovšek in the paper "The Beautiful Teeth: Multicultural Identities in Zadie Smith's Novels" looks into the question of identities of the characters of Zadie Smith's novels *White Teeth* and *On Beauty*, set in the UK and in the US, respectively. The characters have quite different backgrounds in terms of geography, history and political situations but it is nonetheless possible to establish parallels between them, creating pairs of characters from both novels according to several categories of similarities, such as race and gender, age and position in the family, as well as their roles in the novel.

The paper "Imagining the Black Atlantic: Trans/Racial Identity in Jean Rhys's Writings" by Cristina-Georgiana Voicu sets out to examine the issue of the Other focusing on the colonial scene of Jean Rhys's Caribbean writing. The author contends that the place of the Other must not be imagined as a fixed phenomenological point, opposed to the self, but as the necessary negation of a primordial identity – cultural or psychic – that introduces the system of differentiation which enables the 'cultural' to be signified as a linguistic, symbolic, and historic reality.

Colin Nicholson in his paper "Towards an 'Other Sense' of Identity: Political Subjectivity in Margaret Atwood Poetry" deals with the difficulty of creating Canadian identity when influenced by the British/French heritage and contemporary American multi-media domination. Margaret Atwood disapproves of the conventional histories and the American multi-media saturation and in her writing stimulates a fascination with gaps and fissures in the received records that can be of paramount importance for the creation of the nation's identity. However, Nicholson points to an inevitable historical irony that despite Atwood's suspicions of dominant media, her writing extends the unifying instrumentality of English.

That identity explorations are by no means restricted to contemporary literature is illustrated by Milena Kostić's paper "Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*: Subversion of the Patriarchal Archetype", where she sets out to examine Marlowe's calculated subversion of the patriarchal identity in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Marlowe recreates the patriarchal myth from the female perspective by focusing on the differences rather than similarities with the original work, thus emphasizing the significance of the Other (the female sphere), which has been unjustly neglected in the frantic praise of the male heroic ideals of the *Aeneid*. By complementing the patriarchal and matriarchal values, male and female identity, Kostić concludes that Marlowe's play is rather Ovidian than Virgilian in its perspective.

Walter Epp's paper "Canadian Identity as Expressed by the Poet Robert W. Service (1874 – 1958)" puts Service's work into a broader historical perspective and provides a cultural context to elucidate how Service's work continues to contribute to an understanding of Canadian identity, values and political expression. Relating the geographical facts such as the uncontrollable nature of the climate and landmass on the one hand and political expressions of creating a sense of unity and a common self-image of valor and fortitude that cuts across linguistic, cultural and regional boundaries on the other, the author identifies cooperation, compromise and multi-cultural pluralism as significant markers of Canadian identity.

The second section, *Linguistic Landscapes*, brings various linguistic studies of identity, starting with the usual sociolinguistic issues, but also including a range of other research routes, which draw upon insights from psychology, sociology, historical linguistics, cognitive linguistics, lexicology, functional grammar, and applied linguistics.

The relationship between language and identity is most commonly viewed as a sociolinguistic phenomenon (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985, Joseph 2004, Edwards 2009, *inter alia*), where the study topics may include the definition of the identity of a particular language or a language variety (dialect, sociolect), the role of language choice in the construction of a particular identity (national, cultural, personal, ethnic, etc.) or how language resources (phonological, lexical, grammatical or discourse-related) contribute to the expression and interpretation of identity. The first three papers in the second, linguistic section of this volume can be considered as taking such a sociolinguistic stance most closely.

In his article "Identity-related Issues in Contact-induced Historical Changes" Junichi Toyota employs the theoretical framework of historical linguistics to examine one particular type of historical changes, i.e. contact-induced grammatical historical changes and discusses them in relation to speakers' social identity. The author focuses on certain cases

where languages have preserved their archaic grammatical structures in spite of much contact with different languages. He argues here that such exceptional cases can be ascribed to speakers' socio-cultural identity, which tends to resist new structures influenced by other languages. Social identity has not been given much recognition in relation to language contacts yet, and the argument put forward in this paper suggests that they may be closely connected, indicating an area in historical linguistics that requires further research to gain full picture of the possible relationship between social identity and contact-induced language changes.

Another paper devoted to language contacts, "Glocalization and Bilingual Language Practices", by Jovana Dimitrijević-Savić, focuses on the complex relationship between different ways of expressing transnational identities through bilingual language practices. Her ethnographic research of Serbian-English bilingual language practices in the Serbian diaspora in Australia examines the glocalization projects in which members of the diaspora engage on a daily basis. The choice to use, or not to use, specific linguistic features to mark inclusion and exclusion in relation to the overarching host culture and the local, diasporic culture is an act of identity (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985). Due to the migrant setting in which such choices are made, they inevitably signal symbolic (dis)alignment with the global and the local. Serbian-English bilinguals in Australia have been found to use language to express the positioning of their identities in relation to the host culture and the homeland culture, the global and the local, which leads to the use of (un)conscious markers or indicators belonging to a wide range of contact phenomena, from contact-induced changes in Serbian, lexical and other types of transfer from English, conversationally functional code-switching between English and Serbian, to phonological features most properly ascribed to a multiethnolectal variety of Australian English. By choosing to use linguistic features not belonging to the standard variety of any of the two languages, members of diasporic communities thus engage in an agentic social process which constructs an alternative universe of discourse, one in which they can express themselves, their transnational identities in their own terms, rather than being positioned by the discourses of either dominant or minority cultures.

Nadežda Stojković's essay "Interdependence of Language and Identity: Perspectives of the Globalizing World" attempts to explore the relationship between different languages and English as a lingua franca, the globalization phenomenon, and the impact of this situation on the perception and realization of identity. Language is viewed as substance of a culture, which is at the same time the container of its entirety and its

constituent part that allows for further development. The varieties of languages provide unparalleled insights into the diversity of human experience and perceptions, while the coexistences expose its unchanging kernel across cultures. As a repository of history, the sum of human knowledge, language is the primary marker of identity, both individual and collective. Today when English is largely considered not a foreign but a global language, it can be questioned whether English threatens autonomous self-realization or we are witnessing, as this paper argues, new emergent forms of identity.

The remaining articles in the second section approach the relationship between language and identity in various ways, recognizing a range of interaction modes between all levels of language and various aspects of identity taken in a very broad sense, ranging from, for instance, concept formation and grammatical issues to the use of language in various professional environments.

Starting from the observation made by several social commentators that affluence has not brought western populations greater happiness or strengthened their sense of at least professional identity, Angela Lait in the article "Living a Lie: Language, Identity and Unhappiness in the Modern Workplace" attempts to understand how the loss of well-being actually occurs. Lait analyzes a wide range of corporate and creative literature (annual reports, employee communications, business self-help books, craft manuals and autobiographies) and shows evidence that the language associated with a technology-accelerated pace of living and working driven by market conditions prescribes a particular identity for success that in many cases impacts negatively on the individual's sense of self and mental health. It is the middle-class, middle-ranking, public sector professionals who seem particularly affected by the working conditions of the new economy. Their identity, resting on autonomy and a service ethic, is compromised by the values of an audit culture. Their autobiographical identity-recording is thus viewed as a form of resistance and recovery, using alternative language that orders experience according to the regulated organic rhythms and rituals and more productive and stable relationships of traditional cultures.

From a very general perspective, Mihailo Antović in his paper "From Oceanic Feeling to Image Schemata – Embodied Mind and the Construction of Identity through Binary Conceptualisation" discusses the notion of identity against some fundamental concepts of modern cognitive semantics. A Freudian perspective is first accepted, according to which individual identity emerges when the child renounces its original oceanic feeling of oneness with the world and begins to understand that there are

some boundaries imposed on the ego (where the first other object to be conceived of is, as a rule, that of the mother). The school of cognitive semantics expands on this thesis claiming that early binary discretization of bodily interaction with the environment results in subsequent conceptualization of abstract domains. Antović discusses how these constructs, 'image schemata', may influence the construction of adult concepts. In particular, the image schemata VERTICALITY, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL and CENTRE-PERIPHERY are analyzed using examples of visual, musical, and linguistic cognition (in Serbian and English). The analysis suggests that early visual experience is of particular importance for the development of concepts, many of which remain entrenched in the two languages, forming a part of native speakers' identity.

A paper that adopts a strictly linguistic approach in examining the relationship between language and identity is "Grammatical Devices for Encoding and Concealing Identity" by Biljana Mišić Ilić. She gives an overview of grammatical devices that can be used to express identity, defined as the possibility to identify participants that have various roles in the processes we talk about (actions, states, events, relations). Grammatical devices for encoding identity include the grammatical categories of gender, number and person, as well as the combination of syntactic functions and semantic roles. On the other hand, grammatical devices for obscuring or concealing the participants' identity include syntactic constructions such as passivization, impersonal constructions, ergative constructions and nominalization. The paper discusses potential problems stemming from the very nature of the listed grammatical devices, as well as from their use in particular discourses.

In the essay "Finding Myself: Loanwords as Aids to Identity-Building" Elham Afnan starts from her personal experience as a multilingual and multicultural person learning the Serbian language. Her recognizing of Serbian loanwords stemming from various languages and the effects of mingling of languages contributes to her sense of identity. As Iranian-born, she particularly focuses on loanwords from Persian, which came into Serbian via Turkish. Since language is often viewed as the basic tool of a nation's culture, the author believes that examining the origins and the development of the Serbian language can be a way of understanding the Serbian mentality and history for foreigners, while on the other hand the awareness of the richness and diversity of their language may influence Serbs' view of their relationship with the rest of the world.

Linguistic expression of ethnic and national identity is also examined in the article by Nadežda Silaški and Biljana Radić-Bojanić "The Identity of a Metaphonymy – How 'Two Eyes in One Head' Became a Cyclops".

Within the framework of cognitive linguistics, the authors analyze the expression 'dva oka u glavi' ('two eyes in one head'), which refers to the joint relations between Serbia and Montenegro, the two former Yugoslav republics which are now two independent states, but have been historically and especially emotionally considered as sharing a strong sense of common identity. The authors follow the development of this innovative, idiosyncratic, unconventional and metonymy-based metaphor and its creative extensions in the light of the political discourse in which it originated and developed by analyzing a corpus of naturally-occurring tokens gathered during the period of Montenegro's referendum for independence and its subsequent separation from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro.

The remaining three papers examine language and identity in academic and professional contexts, focusing on the role of English as the language of global communication and consequences of this phenomenon. Savka Blagojević in the article "The Manifestation of Authorial Presence in Academic Writing as a Sign of Cultural Identity" compares academic writing practices in English and Serbian, examining in particular authorial presence in academic research articles expressed through the use of first person pronouns and verbs with person-marking inflectional suffixes. Her corpus-based research tries to prove the existence of cultural preferences concerning this issue, which means that the authors from the two examined writing cultures (the English and the Serbian) exhibit differences in the way they present themselves and their research in academic writing. These differences are viewed as characteristics coming from the authors' cultural backgrounds and can be interpreted as a part of the authors' cultural identity.

The article "Language, Identity and Standard: Some Implications and Problems in Teaching English" by Ivana Čorbić addresses these issues from the perspective of a university English teacher and discusses the consequences of English as a global and international language for identity formation and maintenance, attitudes towards the standard language, the impact of English on Serbian, and the possible new teaching and learning strategies.

The book concludes with the article by Miloš Tasić "Language and Professional Identity in an Engineering Community", where he deals with the role of language in the construction and development of professional identity in this specific environment. The influence and significance of the English language as the lingua franca of the modern professional world and the engineering discourse as part of it are considered, as well as their impact on the professional identities of engineering community members. The author further discusses the role of engineering English, with scientific

and computer terminology particularly in mind, and its consequences on the preservation and loss of native language identities. He also advocates the necessity for professional identity adaptation in an engineering community today, due to the ever-growing need for a knowledge of English, yet calls for the raising of language awareness among professional engineers and the widening of the social aspect of their identity.

The papers and essays in this volume, written by authors from Serbia, United Kingdom, Romania, Norway, Japan and Canada, who come from different cultural and academic backgrounds, offer an extremely varied and rich picture of different aspects of human identity. Following the major research routes and trends but also opening some less trodden paths, these contributions are hoped to provide some new insights into literary and linguistic landscapes of identity.

## References

- Edwards, John. 2009. *Language and Identity: An introduction*. Nova Scotia: St Francis Xavier University.
- Joseph, John. 2004. *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Le Page, Robert B. and Andrée Tabouret-Keller. 1985. *Acts of Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



## INTRODUCTION

### WHY HAS IDENTITY BECOME AN ISSUE?

VESNA LOPIČIĆ

Why has *identity* become an issue? Not really that long ago, in terms of ages and within the European matrix, one's identity was a comfortable and warm suit that was slipped on one's body soon after birth and never taken off. Throughout the Middle Ages, Christian faith was a marker of identity sufficient enough to neutralise all other features of identity such as language, origins, tradition, history, culture, geographical location, skin colour, etc. Christendom was the only desirable world so that belonging or not belonging to it entirely defined a person. Identity was marked off in opposition to the Other: Christian to Heathen.

With the rise of the early nation states, this dichotomy was widely multiplied into an ever growing number of oppositions. The emergence of national identity as a significant distinction set one state against another, or all others, and very often took prevalence over faith as a distinguishing factor. The Christian coat was no more suitably tailored to fit all and give shape to the identity (individual, group, national) which now glimpsed new horizons with the oncoming Renaissance and the consequent Reformation of the Catholic Church. Human curiosity probed the cosmic depths and earthly distances thus broadening the mind and making it aware of its own complexities. The spirit of rebelliousness was born and change became a necessity, now always implying the problem of identity. Old and outgrown coats were tossed off, questions had to be asked, and the Modern Age emerged unaware of William Blake who defined it in one Proverb of Hell: "Without contraries is no progression".

It never was this simple, and for that reason there have been numberless studies, ever since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, in all academic fields which have been intensely researching the relevant relationships between identity and various social activities in different historical periods. Yet, there is no doubt that the issue of identity has never been hotter than it is today. It transpires, at least in the field of social anthropology, that two

opposed concepts of identity are now struggling for theoretical dominance. The old one that views identity as a more or less fixed state, as *being*, and the relatively new one, for which identity is a fluid process, a *becoming*.

Defining identity as *being* is based on the confidence in some presumably fixed categories that mark the circumference of one's being. Be they gender, family, religion, class, ethnicity, tradition, homeland, history, language, culture, race, or some other factor, the individual or group was supposed to accept them as given and unchangeable, and live by them. Each one of them or their combination may be, as Levi-Strauss would say, "a sort of virtual centre to which we must refer to explain certain things" (Levi-Strauss 2007, 322). It may be more precise to say that identity is rather an intersection of these categories since neither of them suffice any longer on its own. It is not enough that I am a woman, or a Christian, I need to have at least one more of these characteristics to define and distinguish myself from many other women or Christians. Which of them should be important, which should become my personal virtual centre depends solely on my feeling, on the mental image that I have of myself, which may be my original vision of the essence of my being or a product of different shaping influences: upbringing, education, ideology, culture, historical circumstances etc. However, the etymology of the word *identity* implies "the state or fact of remaining the same one or ones, as under varying aspects or conditions" ([http 1](#)). This further means that identity as the centre of being is a permanent state giving one the sense of self, providing sameness and continuity in one's personality, whether individual or group, over time.

However convincing it may seem that identity is "semantically inseparable from the idea of permanence" (Melluci 1995, 46), we may try examining each of the categories listed in the previous paragraph to determine its degree of permanence. From times immemorial to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, nothing could have been generally more fixed or permanent than the gender received at birth: one is either male or female, and however you felt about the morphology of your body, in the eyes of the public your sex was unchangeable. Not so any more, as evidenced by the growing number not only of homosexuals, transsexuals, cross-dressers, transvestites, drag kings and queens, genderqueers, androgynes, girlfags and gudydykes but also of the persons who surgically and medically went through a complete gender reassignment surgery. In our times of amazing technological discoveries that are transforming the planet, no change seems to be impossible. Genetic engineering will very soon work further unimaginable miracles and thus additionally blur the border between

sexes, species and, to be most inventive, maybe even between the animate and inanimate.

If this rapid advance of science allows for such a radical change of the biological sex as the most fundamental category, then little remains to be said about the remaining categories. Family used to be the axis round which the individual identity revolved, and the basis for all other layers of identity that developed later in life. What happens with the institution of the family in our modern times does not in any way help the consolidation of identity. The rate of divorce is not an adequate measure for the dysfunctional quality of the family nowadays, especially taking into consideration the official estimates of family violence and women and children abuse (cf. Osborne 2006). The number of single parent families is growing and the extra challenges to parenthood that this family organisation implies are hardly beneficial to the healthy development of identity in children. Same-sex marriages further contribute to the disintegration of the traditional family and its image of a safe shelter for the young. Though the family is still seen as the strongest support to identity building, it is obvious that its future is uncertain if judging by the number of single people today.

Dealing with the issue of religion has always been very sensitive, even in the heyday of Christianity in Europe when it was definitely the centre of one's identity. The decline of religion which coincided with the rise of science, the branching of Christianity into Protestant sects, the appearance of various new independent religious beliefs, and the skepticism and materialism of the Modern Age, does not leave much room for hope that religion can serve as the holding centre of identity. Abandoning of one's faith or conversion into another one happen all too easily, only testifying to the weakness of religion to firmly root one's identity. Scientism and Baha'i religion as two possible opposites reflecting the mental condition of the contemporary man with regard to religion illustrate the confusion which is clearly not beneficial to the formation of one's identity. If religion is supposed to reconnect man with himself and offer him the feeling of being a persisting entity, then it has to undergo a serious transformation to regain our confidence.

The withering notion of class can hardly present itself as a foothold for identity, with a possible exclusion of aristocracy. It may be the case even today that belonging to the nobility may help one define himself and gain sufficient self-confidence and stability. With all other classes, however, increased social mobility has led to the levelling of distinctions. Climbing up the social ladder has been an option for many an enterprising person who started believing in himself and his own hard work, entrepreneurship,

resourcefulness, and generally the idea that God helps those who help themselves. Puritan work ethics significantly contributed to the reshaping of the modern man's identity which all started after the Renaissance. On the other hand, the consequent moral confusion caused by the identification of material success with ethical uprightness is a persisting phenomenon, part of the loss and gain of the upward social mobility. Things changed so much that in socialist societies, coming from a low class was often seen as a recommendation and something to be proud of, provided you went up beyond the class of your parents. Strong identification with one's social class is still encountered in labour movement where, for a while, it may induce a strong sense of identity. Yet, it is not cynical to say that class affiliation easily switches if one is fortunate enough to change his social position, and for that reason class is usually insufficient as a permanent virtual centre of identity.

The remaining categories of ethnicity, tradition, homeland, history, language, culture, are all considerably affected by the phenomena of colonisation, economic migrations, and globalisation. They all imply massive population movements and consequent mixing up of cultures and traditions, blurring of the borders between ethnicities, a new perspective on the homeland, suppression or transformation of the mother tongue and, with the post-colonial theory, the idea of different perceptions of history by different cultures. No concept is sacred any more in the sense of being the absolute which can be the axis of identity. They are all relativised, which is probably most evident within the context of globalism.

As a fairly recent phenomenon developing since the '80s, globalisation has undergone considerable changes represented by three waves. As Luke Martell (2007) explains, early globalists envisioned a complete homogenisation of the world, global economy and global governance, free trade, decline of the nation-state and loss of national sovereignty, all with the idea of economic integration. The skeptics who soon followed saw rather an international economy, state intervention and protectionism, regional and international blocs, power and inequality, clashes of cultures and even rise of nationalism. Finally, transformationalists assume a more moderate stance believing the world will be globalised but differentiated, nation-states important but reconstructed, politics globally transformed to lead towards cosmopolitan democracy and hybridisation. What has remained as the basis of globalisation is the free market economy supposed to bring about material prosperity and create a global economic New Atlantis. An individual, in this new world, cannot keep to his old definitions of the self. The new concept of the global man, a cosmopolitan, implies a complete liberation from the cultural heritage or national

identity, discarding of ethnic mentality, ignoring of history and tradition, cultivation of English at the expense of the mother tongue, and feeling at home anywhere in the world. These categories are obviously meant to become irrelevant and anachronistic, therefore not functioning as significant markers of identity.

The ideals of globalisation do not seem to be coming to life since the developing countries do not seem to be developing. The critics of globalisation such as Joseph Stiglitz (2002) or John Ralston Saul (2005) offer convincing explanations why this utopia is failing in practice and agree on at least one point: that the progress of civilisation cannot depend only on economy. It should not preclude the elimination of poverty, prevention of diseases, liberal education, nor preservation of national and personal identity. If the road to progress leads only through blind faith in the power of the market, similar to the road of salvation leading only through belief in Christ, then globalisation is just a version of conventional religion, retailored to be the new religion for the new age.

However, this still-born concept has nevertheless managed to undermine the basic markers of identity. Decentralisation of the patriarchal cultural model does not only liberate but also uproots the modern man, even if only mentally. What has begun with colonisation reaches its culmination in our time of globalisation, and the centre does not hold any more. Whether the world will end not with a bang but with a whimper remains to be seen while right now it is clear that an individual has to labour hard with the issue of identity. Not even race, as a very broad identity marker, can be taken for granted as the unfortunate but world-wide known case of Michael Jackson may illustrate. Though his was probably the case of vitiligo, the negative media coverage which turned it into a race change will definitely encourage other young people to try the impossible. Nothing that anchors one to fixed unchangeable categories, from sex to race, is tolerated since it is assumed that the unlimited freedom of choice must not be curtailed.

Contrary to Melluci's idea of permanence as semantically related to identity, it seems that permanence is no longer intrinsically attached to any identity marker. The question is what is offered as an alternative to the definition of identity as *being*.

The father of the notion of *becoming* as central to our identities, Stuart Hall, stresses the points of difference, not sameness. Despite the continuity and permanence which we would like to identify in the process of identity development, there are obviously ruptures, breaks, discontinuities that need to be acknowledged as an integral part of what we are. The relevant questions are not any more who we are and where we come from (Hall

1996) but what we might become. Evidently, the concepts of being and becoming are referential here. There is no being without becoming and however well-defined one's identity may be at any particular moment, it is constantly in the process of transformation. The flow of being is interrupted by the moments of becoming when the definition of being necessarily changes.

This takes us to Avtar Brah's (Brah 1996) concept of situatedness. Cultural identities are the unstable points of identification, there is no fixed essence but a positioning, and when the position radically changes, so does the identity. The past and the future are connected and the present draws upon the past but not in a smooth uninterrupted flow. We are not what we were, and from the point of what we have become we may see what we had been. Human life, in general, is a journey with sometimes clearly marked stops but also less clearly visible breaks, hesitations, digressions. Each one is a point of change, not only of the rhythm of the journey but also of its quality. The progressing identity develops, takes new turns, assumes new shapes. Hall concludes:

Far from being grounded in mere 'recovery of the past', which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (Hall 1993, 394).

These two concepts of cultural identity, the one of fixed essence shared by all and the other of unstable points of identification, seem to be mutually exclusive but in fact only combined can they produce a reliable insight into this complex phenomenon. Although one's culture is not a well one can return to to have a drink of the same water, it is still a well that can quench the thirst for historical perspectives, for origins, however flavoured by the passage of time and the sequence of events.

As explained elsewhere (Lopičić 2008, 11–13), Heraclitus may be quoted as the forefather of this idea if his river is identified with 'culture': *you could not step into the same river twice*, he says. Heraclitus' river actually refers to all existing things so that his proverb may mean: no man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man. Marc Cohen (2002) explains that Heraclitus had an extremely negative reaction to Milesian thought. For the Milesians, what was real was fixed and permanent but change had to be somehow explained away. They understood changes as alterations of some basic, underlying, material stuff which is, in its own nature, unchanging. This

could correspond to the first concept of fixed cultural identity, or *being*, as given by Hall.

However, Heraclitus reversed this: change is what is real. Permanence is only apparent. Every object is subject to change and is, indeed, always undergoing some kind of change or other. Referring to the image of the river, since the composition of the river changes from one moment to the next, it is not the same river for any length of time at all. Plato believes that Heraclitus uses the river as an example of what he takes to be a general condition: everything is like a river in this respect. That is, nothing retains its identity for any time at all. The person who steps into the river the second time is likewise not the same person who did it the first time. That is: there are no persisting objects.

This explanation applies to the second definition of cultural identity which addresses the difference rather than the sameness. Marc Cohen (2002) says that Heraclitus may be qualified as a Fluxist. All things are in the state of flux, or becoming, according to Hall. Yet, Cohen warns against simplification:

But even if Heraclitus was a Fluxist (which is far from clear) it does not follow that he had to deny that there are persisting objects. If an object is more like a process than like a static thing, then one and the same object can endure even though it is undergoing constant change. If you step in the same river, you step in different waters: the river is still (numerically) the same river even though it has changed (compositionally), in that it (the same river) is now composed of different waters (Cohen 2002).

In the context of cultural identity discussion, the answer may lie in the synthesis of the two opposed concepts, as suggested above. The opposites may be present in the same thing, or coinstantiated. If being and becoming are seen as the opposite states of identity, then the pattern of the 'unity of opposites' may be the right one. Cohen brings this closer to logic. Suppose you step in the water of the proverbial river. What you step in is both the same and different. So the pair of contraries – same and different – are coinstantiated in the same object. What you step in is different water but the same river. Instead of the binary opposition and the prevalent logic of the Western civilisation, 'either / or,' Heraclitus proposes a new logic of 'both / and.' Therefore, the culture that one resorts to through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth is both the same and different. Likewise the identity of an individual.

However, Hall's notion of *becoming* created a snow-ball effect so that a conceptual avalanche has hit the academic world. The public witnessed the Postmodern terminological explosion describing identity as extremely

complex, contradictory, contingent, ambiguous, unstable, fragmented, hybrid, in flux, fluid, flexible, shifting, multi-dimensional, multi-layered, multiple, concentric, constructed, pluralistic, negotiated, narrativised, storied, dialogic, diasporic, transnational, creolised, hyphenated, multicultural, etc. The point is that the modern liberated man chooses his identity in the process of identification, becoming an active subject in the construction of his identity, independent of any grand binding concepts such as gender, family, religion, class, ethnicity, tradition, homeland, history, language, culture, or race. They are all relativised but so is the identity, and that is how it became an issue.

The term itself became so over-used, denoting an incredible variety of meanings, that Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2002, 1–47) decided to offer alternatives. In their article *Beyond Identity*, they also review the two opposed notions of identity, the essentialist (identity as being) and constructivist (identity as becoming), claiming that the prevailing constructivist stance on identity has almost completely dissolved the meaning of the word. It either means too little, or too much. Yet, they do not opt for a new term, a single substitute since it would be as overburdened as the term identity. They rather suggest we consider three clusters of terms which would unburden identity and be more useful as analytical categories: 1) identification and categorization; 2) self-understanding and social location, and 3) commonality, connectedness, groupness. These terms echo different uses of the term identity discussed above and leave the door widely open for further issues related to identity.

Honouring Stuart Hall but in the Post-postmodern tradition of transcendence through human interactions, Ien Ang (2002, 11) believes that these interactions can contribute to:

/t/he incremental and dialogic construction of lived identities which slowly dissolve the boundaries between the past and the future, between 'where we come from' and 'what we might become,' between being and becoming: being is enhanced by becoming and becoming is never possible without a solid grounding in being. As subjects from multiple background negotiate their coexistence and mutual interconnection, the contradictory necessity and impossibility of identities is played out in the messiness of everyday life, as the global and the local interpenetrate each other.

The articles in this volume analyse identity "in the messiness of everyday life", from both literary and linguistic perspectives. These two fields employ different methodologies and rely on different theories in an attempt to ponder and probe the issue of identity. Exploration of imaginative creativity in combination with scientific exactness is offered

in the nineteen articles that follow. However, the well of identity is unfathomable and further identity landscapes open up for further explorations. Tennyson's *Ulysses* speaks in the name of all of us:

I am a part of all that I have met;  
 Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'  
 Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades  
 For ever and for ever when I move.

The interaction of being and becoming will continue to entice travellers to venture into the unknown literary and linguistic lands searching for the golden fleece of identity.

## Bibliography

- Ang, Ien. 2000. Identity Blues. In *Without Guarantees: in Honour of Stuart Hall*, eds. Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg, and Angela McRobbie, 1–13. London: Verso.
- Brah, A. 1996. *Cartographies of Diaspora*. London: Routledge.
- Brubaker, Rogers, and Frederick Cooper. 2000. Beyond Identity. *Theory and Society* 29: 1–47.
- Cohen, S. Marc. 2002. Heraclitus.  
<http://faculty.washington.edu/smcohen/320/heraclit.htm> (accessed May 31, 2008)
- Etymology of Identity* (http 1). <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php>
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. 2007. *L'Identite*, Paris: Presses Universitaires France.
- Hall, Stuart. 1996. Introduction: Who Needs Identity? In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. S. Hall and P. Du Gay. London: Sage.
- . 1993. Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory, A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. New York: Harvester / Wheatshief.
- Lopičić, Vesna. 2008. *Aspects of Autobiography: "The Book of Revenge."* Niš: SVEN.
- Martell, Luke. 2007. The Third Wave in Globalisation Theory. *International Studies Review*, 9, 2: 173–196.
- Melluci, A. 1995. The Process of Collective Identity. In *Social Movements and Culture*, eds. H. Johnston and B. Klandermans. London: UCL Press.
- Saul, John Ralston. 2005. *The Collapse of Globalism and the Reinvention of the World*. Toronto: Viking Canada.
- Stiglitz, Joseph E. 2002. *Globalization and Its Discontents*. New York: Norton.



**PART ONE:**  
**LITERARY LANDSCAPES**

