

## INTRODUCTION

This collection of essays about identity in literature covers a wide variety of contents, from diachronic history to contemporary cultural studies. It opens up with a theoretical introductory essay in which the concepts of identity are related to conquest and colonization processes: the ambiguous and seemingly impossible dialogue between the colonizer and the colonized and the subaltern position in the power pyramidal scale. The America discovered by Columbus becomes a symbolic and global epitome of the construction of the self and the Other by the winners, who turn into the primordial writers of the official history. Thus, the space created to this dialogue is tainted by the disturbances of unequal noises. They are obviously the product of cultural, religious, ethnic and all kind of other prejudices which will always appear whenever a contact between opposites in which subordination takes place is established. Other subjects to be questioned are the multicultural “fallacy” and the complexity of tracing identity back to hybridization times.

Three articles on the representation of the other in 17th-century colonial England discuss the representation of this subjective gaze. All of them primarily use the genre of the play to exemplify their discourse, probably because this is the genre in which the dialogic stands in the front line. In this sense, Violetta Trofimova's & Esin Akalin's essay pays attention to the image of the Ottomans and Black people in the works of Aphra Behn, especially in her play *The False Count: A New Way to Play an Old Game* (1682) and her famous novel *Oroonoko, or The History of the Royal Slave* (1688). Behn's construction of the Other is ambivalent, Eurocentric and innovative at the same time, traditional and contemptuous in her attitude towards the Turkish empire but benign and abolitionist towards the black race; especially in her treatment of the main character, Oroonoko, a hero figure in her work. Caroline Playwright, James Shirley's view of the Spaniards and Portuguese is the subject matter of Luciano García's essay, mainly focusing on the condescending and stereotyped vision of Iberia by the Englishmen of the time. The process of the formation of national identities and the dialogue between imperial forces act as a political representation of the Other, though Shirley's perspective looks more benign and sympathetic, more romantic and “orientalized” towards the Iberian. Fi-



nally, Jesús López-Peláez contributes with an article based on Thomas Heywood's play, *The Fair Maid of the West, or, A Girl Worth Gold* (ca. 1602) to analyse the English Early Modern Identity. Using Juri Lotman's concept of the "semiosphere," the author poses that the process of constructing an English national identity is based on racial, religious and economic differences, such as the racial divide and the colour pyramid, the political ambivalence in the religious construct, and the adoption of capitalism. Again, stereotyping and mockery against the political "Other" (be it the Spaniard or the Muslim), together with the definition of power allegiances, mould a subjective discourse to consolidate a definite contemporary model.

Next two essays deal with the construction of personal identities in the Modernist period under the light of Psychocriticism and Psychobiography. Thus, Paula Rodríguez's "Archetypal Reading of the Cage Symbol in Henry James's Major Phase" offers a study of coherent symbolic forms, such as labyrinths, masks, mirrors, lions, and especially the cage seen as a symbol of the divided self. Echoes of the ancient Greek myths and the Greco-Roman tradition are also traced to evince a more innovative vein in his narrative. On the other hand, Per Serritslev's "D.H. Lawrence's Cosmopoetic Eroticism" inquires into the evolution of Lawrence's masculine identity, from chastity to fulfilment, from the erotic to the sublime, from the human to the cosmic. Describing Lawrence's *opera* in the terrain of sexual utopia, the analysis mingles the aesthetic and the cosmopoetic to make evident the process of eroticism into transcendentalism in the literary *küntlerroman*.

In the centre of the monograph, John Drakakis's comparative study between the famous "proto-postcolonial" play by William Shakespeare, *Othello*, and South African J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) serves as a path towards contemporary literature. The role of "barbarians," considered as both central and peripheral, is seen as the constructed other, permeated by imperial assumptions and at the same time impervious to them due to the same fact. If Drakakis's work is dedicated to the South African, the following two essays analyse the postcolonial South Asian literature in English in the light of the traumas imposed upon the collective and individual identity. In Robert Gnanamony's "Select Reading of Alok Bhalla's Edition of *Stories about the Partition of India*" (1990), a selection of Partition narratives are chosen to study the echoes and consequences of that tragic event that led to a long-lasting process of healing and understanding out of a very traumatic experience of decolonization to the collective essence of the Indian identity. Inversely, the analysis of hybridity made by Jorge Berástegui of British-born-with-Pakistani-origin Hanif Kureishi's filmscript *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1984), directed by Stephen Frears, centres upon the individual interracial choice of the main character, a young British-Pakistani homosexual, owner of a laundrette together with his white lover in London suburbia and how this fact is mediatized by the environment. The consequences of the diaspora in the metropolitan hostile social environment are portrayed to conclude that class dialectics is still necessary to study the discourse strategies of the colonizer and the colonized.

The cycle of Neil Gaiman's graphic novel, *The Sandman*, is the subject of Andrés Romero Jódar's essay. Here, the quest for identity is twofold: on the one hand, there is a confrontation between the different norms and values of the old



and the new world; on the other, the crisis of identity suffered by the individual is the result of his attempts to escape from predetermined behavioural patterns. Consequently, the complexity of reality and identity and the presentation of a plurality of narratives create new comic standards and a new image of cultural identity. Changing from the United States of America to Canada, Esther Sánchez-Pardo González's "Constructions of the Modernist "I" in Miriam Waddington's Poetry" gives a full account of the author's exploration of female identity and subjectivity from the perspective of the "Jewish me." Thus, the lyric "I" engages in a dialogue with the outer world in a process of constant transformation and rupture of the colonial and patriarchal standards. It is a painful process but leads to a better comprehension of the models imposed and the political position of women writers in the social milieu. To end with this section, Susana Vega González's analysis of Haitian-American Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* (2004) proves that geographic and psychological exiles create a world of alienation, estrangement and dislocation. The fragmentation of the self affects those who experience it in the fractured context of migration from homeland and becomes part of the thematic and structural levels of the novel. Again, the political and the personal constructions work together to depict the sequels of tyrannical power and the urgent need for spiritual liberation of the Haitians both inside and outside Haiti.

Finally, Enric Monforte ascertains whether the gay and queer theatre in contemporary English stage is transforming nowadays into more radical views. In his analysis of the evolution from Kevin Elyot's *My Night with Reg* (1994) to Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and Fucking* (1996), he poses that such a change implies a transition to angrier queer voices in the specific context of the *fin-de-siècle*. Items such as the self-exploration of stereotyped gay images, the avoidance of stable and monolithic gay identities or the confrontational and consciousness-raising stances are touchstones in this essay.

Identities: broken, recomposed, deconstructed and reconstructed, questioned or self-invented. At the core of this monograph stands the idea that the self is nowadays in a process of constant and permanent exploration at collective or at individual scale, at biographical or at fictive levels. The dialectics of the quest for truth and beauty in the portrait of the self or, on the contrary, the mimetic game to acquire the Other's image work as a mark in the construction of the global and the singular, the veritable and the fake, the simple and the problematized contemporary agenda. Such construction is nowadays in progress and needs a constant revision in the minds that perceive it, not to be distorted or wronged. And we hope that these pages may help out.

