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*Culture and Power: Identity and Identification* is an edited volume of eighteen essays selected from the contributions presented at the 14<sup>th</sup> Culture and Power Conference. Organized by the Iberian Association for Cultural Studies (IBACS), this conference engaged an international group of scholars working transdisciplinarily in the field. The introduction of this type of cultural analysis in Spain has been the main aim of IBACS, this book demonstrating that, as Professor John Storey mentions in his preface to the volume, the attempt to keep cultural studies alive in Spain has successfully been accomplished. The importance of transdisciplinarity was previously highlighted by the editors of the first volume of *Culture and Power*, published almost twenty years ago: “Postmodern cultural analysis is more aware than ever of the irreducible diversity of voices and interests, while, at the same time, it also recognizes the increasingly globalized forms which seek to harness, exploit and even curtail – this diversity” (Cornut-Gentille and Hand 1995, 14).

The heterogeneous yet neatly edited compilation of essays successfully tackles the intricacy of this concept by providing different perspectives and methodological approaches. “Identity” as a form of cultural practice is often defined through a complex set of relationships which constantly shape and re-shape the contingent discursive construction of its categorization, depending on the context in which it is developed. Identities are thus artificially constructed in a matrix of power relations. In Stuart Hall’s words, “identities can function as points of identification and attachment only *because* of their capacity to exclude, to render ‘outside’, abjected” (1997, 5; emphasis in original).

Basing his views on Hall’s notion of “articulation” (1986, 128-29), Lawrence Grossberg maintains that the main objective of cultural studies scholars is to unravel fractures, differences and heterogeneous elements that have been fused in an apparently homogeneous and harmonious “whole” (2010, 22). Grossberg thus advocates a cultural analysis centred on a “radical contextualism” through which only an interdisciplinary, multifaceted approach can account for the complexity of the conjuncture; the conjuncture being understood as the complex formation of discourses and practices in a concrete historical moment (Koivisto and Lahtinen 2012, 276). In this sense, it is important to contextualise not only

the content of the analysis, but also the theorists' own arguments and positions; as Mica Nava states, it is not just a matter of a "cultural-history interdisciplinary approach," but a question of what Raymond Williams called "arguing against" (2013, 30).

The present volume provides insightful views on "questions of cultural identity"—to use Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay's title (1997)—by exposing fractures within apparently homogeneous cultural icebergs which can only be discovered if observed from various angles. The editors have divided the book into five thematic sections according to the main concern of the papers, although, as they admit, alternative arrangements might have also been possible, considering the intrinsic interrelations of discursive practices at stake in the construction of cultural identities. One of the strengths of the book therefore is that its sections and chapters could be read independently, depending on the reader's main concerns, or as a whole, which would provide the reader with an accurate overview of the recent multifaceted debates on identity formation.

The first section opens this debate with four chapters that set out to present an overview of the main discourses on identity in current postmodern and global societies. The first essay tackles the question of the crisis of the concept of identity, which also affects the contingent nature of past identities. Although lacking originality, it provides a general background which frames the concerns put forward in the subsequent essays. The author provides a good description of Bauman's theories on "liquidity." However, Bauman's recent works should have been included, especially *Liquid Fear* (2007), which would have enhanced the analysis of contemporary identity crises in the uncertain context of globalisation.

Leticia Sabsay's chapter on sexual politics and liberal individuals is strategically placed in second position, as her complex analysis on queer theory sheds light on most of the studies presented in the book. She warns against the re-ontologization of the subject which challenges the transgressive critique of queer theory in identity politics and ensures the centrality of heteronormativity. Sabsay hinges her argument on the Butlerian notion of the de-centred subject. According to Butler, the fixity of the body is constituted by its materiality, yet materiality can be understood as an effect of power which constructs the notion of the abject. The subject therefore, is constituted through practices of exclusion and abjection (Butler 1993, 2-3). This conception of the body as a crucial site for identity construction and transgression reappears in the following chapter, in which Begonya Saez Tajafuerce analyses the crisis of metaphysical subjectivity through the experience of non-identity and (self-)strangeness, or being one's own other, through Denis' film *L'intrus* (2004). The ideas raised in the chapter are quite promising; nevertheless, they are not supported by an appropriate theoretical background, although the previous chapter does actually provide this. The section is closed with a chapter on individual and collective identities shaping the concept of the nation in the colonial discourse. The chapter offers a basic overview on the topic which will be further developed in parts three and four.

The second section of the book compiles four articles that revise representations of womanhood in literature, historical records and films. María Eugenia Sánchez Suárez

and Beatriz González Moreno present contesting views of femininity in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British literature, respectively. While Sánchez Suárez proposes a re-reading of the eighteenth-century heroine, which endows her with stronger and more defiant attributes than those traditionally associated with such characters, González Moreno critically revises Mary Shelley's ambivalent bread-and-butter work. This recovery of "counter-histories" on femininity and female identity in Britain is then complemented by Maria Isabel Romero Ruiz's insightful study on the imposition of middle-class values on marginalized women through charitable institutions at the beginning of the nineteenth century and its social and political implications, which remained inscribed in the female diseased body.

Last, but not least, the section is closed by María del Mar Ramón-Torrijos, who returns to the question of the body as a site where contingent discourses of identity are developed, as represented in the phenomenon of chick-lit and, more specifically in *Bridget Jones's Diary* and its film adaptation. The chapter offers an excellent cultural analysis of the phenomenon against the background of postfeminist debates and contradictory messages about female identity. The analysis of the "post-feminist paradox," which combines pre-feminist and feminist values, recalls Angela McRobbie's "double entanglement" of postfeminism (2004, 255). This idea links the contingent female representations examined in this study with the different analyses of "feminine identities" carried out in previous chapters of the section.

Even though the essays in the third part of the book are devoted to the analysis of hybrid identities from a postcolonial theoretical approach, none of them leave aside the question of female identity. While Lukasz Hudomięt centres his analysis on the double standards of sexual politics during British colonial rule in Africa and the literal and metaphorical meanings of miscegenation, Carmen L. Robertson examines the polarized representations of Aboriginal women in the Canadian printed press as either passive and assimilated Pocahontas-like Indian princesses or threatening "squaws." Although Robertson narrows the scope of her analysis to articles published in the press from 1969 to 1973, her contextualized historical overview of the matter, within a postcolonial theoretical framework, facilitates an immediate association with the pervasive binary representation of female identity and forced identification within the colonies.

Particularly interesting is Salvador Faura's study on the female Moroccan author Najat El-Hachmi and the novelist's portrayal of Catalonia as a "diaspora space" (Brah 1996, 178). Faura makes use of a postcolonial approach to analyse the multiple, hybrid identities at stake in El-Hachmi's *L'últim patriarca*. Unravelling the complex influences and relationships established in *glocal* contexts, the essay examines how Catalan multiple identities intertwine with Moroccan colonial history as well as with an Islamic culture inherited by a woman who challenges some aspects of Muslim patriarchal tradition without fully subscribing to western values.

Part four gathers together four essays devoted to the study of collective identities in relation to the discourses of the nation. In the opening chapter of the section, Roberto del

Valle Alcalá provides a comprehensive and critical analysis of the intellectual abstraction and actual experience of “the common” as reflected in two novels by Raymond Williams. The complex analysis of the conjuncture in these two novels paves the way for the studies of representations of collective identities in the media presented in the following chapters.

José Igor Prieto-Arranz focuses his analysis on the representations of Spain on British television, exposing the stereotypical representations of Spanish identity in the British “imaginNation” and its socio-economic implications in the ITV series *Benidorm* (2007-). Guillermo Iglesias Díaz also delves into recent Spanish history to unmask the ex-centric meanings of Galician hidden identities, cleverly using postcolonial theories to carry out an in-depth analysis of the contested construction of these (re)imagined communities represented in Reixa’s film *O Lapis do carpinteiro* (*The Carpenter’s Pencil*).

Visual representations of collective identities are also Hugh Ortega Breton’s target; however, the analysis of the British espionage melodrama *Spooks/MI-5* is carried out using a psycho-cultural approach, which succeeds in bringing out the importance of emotions in the processes of collective identification. Through the analysis of certain episodes from the series, the author drives the reader’s attention to the political consequences of the tripartite paranoid discourses (victim-perpetrator-protector) on terrorism.

The book closes with a section devoted to print media, re-covering gender, class and national identity issues dealt with in previous sections. Caroline Bainbridge’s chapter is closely related to the second section of the volume on women’s identities as well as Carmen L. Robertson’s essay on female representation in the press. Picking up the debates on feminism and postfeminism, Bainbridge warns of the denigratory turn on women taken by print media commentary in the US and UK press as a result of the patriarchal structures at stake in the journalist profession, as well as of the progressive “tabloidization” of the press. “Tabloidization” is also the main concern of María José Coperías and Josep Lluís Cómez-Mompert in their both comprehensive and detailed analysis of British broadsheets, pointing at the evolution of the press and journalism itself resulting from a deliberate process in which socioeconomic and politico-cultural interests endanger quality journalism, if not, indeed, journalism itself.

Roberto A. Valdeón continues in the same vein by foregrounding the evolution of journalism in the “infotainment society” and the importance of representations of self and other cultural identities in the press. Combining translation and cultural studies, he analyses the competing images of Spanish identity projected in the English version of *El País*. The images promote a vision of modernity, yet this is filtered through traditional imagery of Spain mainly targeted at tourist readers of the newspaper. This analysis is inevitably linked to the stereotypical portrayals of Spanish identity in the comedy *Benidorm* as exposed by Prieto-Arranz in part four.

Even though not all readers may be interested in every chapter of the book, and some essays lack originality in that they simply provide descriptive overviews of well-known concepts relating to identity, this compilation also includes some insightful analyses of a wide variety of cultural products in concrete contexts. The volume therefore invites

readers from different academic backgrounds to reflect on an enriching, multifaceted and transdisciplinary study of fissures and fractures which puts to the test hitherto unchallenged discourses on identity and identification.

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