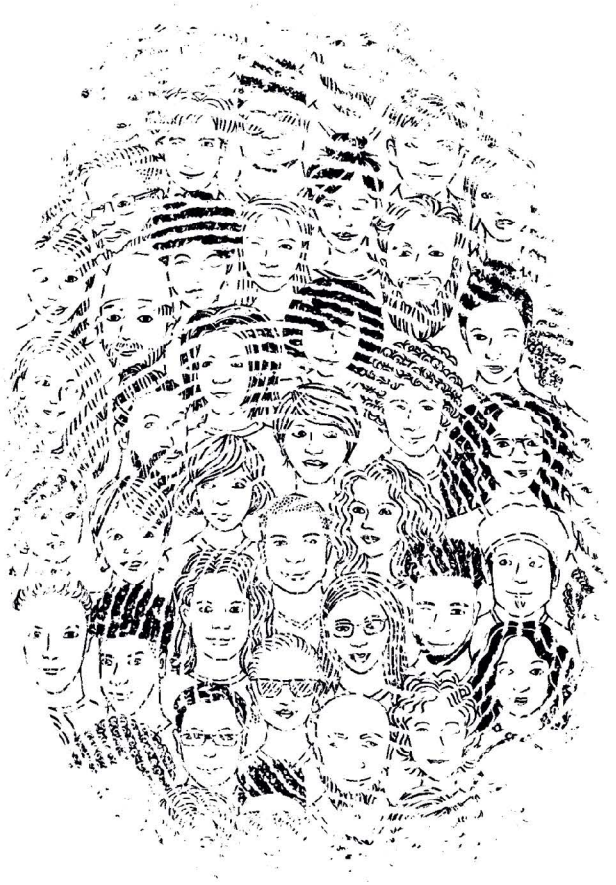
Magdalena Grabowska
Piotr Kallas
Seán Moran

IDENTITIES IN TRANSITION

Religion, Gender, Locality, Ethnicity



Gdańsk University Press

IDENTITIES IN TRANSITION

Religion, Gender, Locality, Ethnicity

Magdalena Grabowska
Piotr Kallas
Seán Moran

IDENTITIES IN TRANSITION

Religion, Gender, Locality, Ethnicity

Gdańsk University Press
Gdańsk 2020

Reviewer
dr hab. David Malcolm

Technical Editor
Agnieszka Kołwzan

Cover and Title Pages Design
Filip Sendal

Typesetting and Page Layout
Michał Janczewski

This publication was financially supported
by the Faculty of Languages of the University of Gdańsk
and the Institute of Applied Linguistics of the University of Gdańsk

ISBN 978-83-8206-006-5

Gdańsk University Press
ul. Armii Krajowej 119/121, 81-824 Sopot
tel./fax 58 523 11 37, tel. 725 991 206
e-mail: wydawnictwo@ug.edu.pl
www.wyd.ug.edu.pl

Online bookstore: www.kiw.ug.edu.pl

Printed and bound by
Zakład Poligrafii Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego
ul. Armii Krajowej 119/121, 81-824 Sopot
tel. 58 523 14 49, fax 58 551 05 32

Contents

Preface

The present monograph is an academic endeavour to delineate a variety of depictions in relation to the universal and all-encompassing notion of identity which defines who we are and what qualities we possess. At the same time these properties which determine who we are help us distinguish from each other.

The topics undertaken here correspond to what Tadeusz Paleczny (2008) deems the dimensions of identity, namely the spiritual, the mental and the cultural. In particular, the attention of the contributors focuses on such notions as religion, gender, ethnicity and locality. Due to its multifaceted nature, identity has been the subject of philosophical and sociological ruminations since time immemorial. Even now its complexity poses many questions and a clear definition is still elusive.

The very name "identity" derives from the Latin word *identitatem* meaning "sameness, oneness, state of being the same" (entry: "identity," *Online Etymology Dictionary*) which clearly brings to mind the idea of similarity.

Identity connotes sameness which in turn refers to a link between the world and the consciousness, between outer and inner, objective and subjective, real and ideal, material and spiritual, and between

nature and culture. The phenomena that identity embraces include the individual and the group, mental and social, rational and irrational, inborn and acquired, or the rational and intuitive. Identity contains a synthesis of the relationship between the human and the world. It enables movement in the world of various cultures and is our spiritual, intellectual and emotional picture (Paleczny 2008).

In the post-war period identity gradually began to function as a synonym of self-definition and fulfilment. There appeared a belief in personal uniqueness and self-exploration which coincided with the growing significance of socioeconomic status as a determinant of who we are. According to Roy Baumeister (1987), individuals, after painful years of wars defined by hostility and alienation, have learnt to accommodate and unlike earlier epochs, post-war identity has been visibly transformed into more internalised self-knowledge.

The significance of identity in postmodern times, according to Anthony Giddens (2008), results from the development and evolution of social institutions which create opportunities to live a much safer and satisfying life than that in previous eras. However, due to the inability to choose between global aspirations and local existence, the individual feels insecure. This lack of confidence stems from reorganised social relations, and the constant struggle against marginalization, diversity and exclusion.

The chapter entitled *Religious Identity in the Narratives of Non-Normative People in Poland – Interview-Based Study* discusses identity from two perspectives, namely gender and religion. Its main thrust is directed towards understanding the sense of religious identity which LGBT Polish people declared during the course of interviews. The main objective of the research focuses on if and how non-normative people who admit certain attachment to the Christian religion manage to reconcile both identities.

The second chapter, entitled *The Armchair Flâneur: Peter Ackroyd's Imaginative Explorations of Bygone London's Complex Urban Identity*, is an attempt to identify, label and describe a new avatar of the flâneur (a figure whose "classic" incarnation, first captured by Charles Baudelaire, was well known to the literature and philosophy of the late 19th and early 20th century). We posit that the flâneur may inhabit both real and fictional worlds. The latter specimen might perhaps be labelled "the armchair flâneur" (just as E.A. Poe's Chevalier C. Auguste Dupin, the master of "ratiocination" or analytical reasoning who first appears in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* in 1841, is an "armchair detective" *par excellence*). The phrase "armchair flâneur" thus denotes those who indulge in passionate urban exploration without leaving their rooms, depending on their intellectual faculties rather than their senses and letting their minds wander across vast expanses of space and time. The aim of the present paper is to consider and appraise Peter Ackroyd's own brand of "virtual flânerie," as practised on the pages of his numerous historical fictions or "fantasies." Ackroyd (born in 1949), the paramount London writer of his generation, is better placed than almost anyone to be our guide to the city's past and present (and even, on one occasion, the future) – in a word, to his home city's complex and evasive "character" or "nature," i.e. its true identity.

The next chapter, entitled *"A Tale of Two Cities": Louis Aragon and Virginia Woolf Walk the Streets of Interwar Paris and London*, is inspired by two fascinating and revealing literary treatments of interwar London and Paris. It offers a closer look at two literary works, Louis Aragon's *Le Passage de l'Opéra* (1926) and Virginia Woolf's *Street Haunting. A London Adventure* (1927). Aragon's text constitutes the first part of *Le Paysan de Paris* (published in 1926

and translated into English by Simon Watson Taylor as *Paris Peasant*), while Woolf's was first published in book form in 1930 in *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*. Both texts are intimate studies of the two capital cities, of great documentary and historical value; both represent their authors as consummate flâneurs, i.e. keen and informed observers of urban life and architecture in general, and enthusiastic witnesses of street life in all its endlessly variegated forms in particular. Finally, both texts under scrutiny show their authors to be sensitive, fiercely "patriotic" inhabitants of their respective cities, possessed of a fervent "local patriotism," i.e. of what the Italians call *campanilismo* (Aragon and Woolf were children of their cities as well as of their literary-historical period, the age of modernism). London and Paris have distinct identities. The aim of the chapter is to present, compare and contrast two ways of looking at cities, of exploring the qualities which constitute these separate identities, and of writing about them. In our view, these activities represent the single most penetrating and rewarding approach to the modern metropolis. Since the cities of London and Paris are not merely the two greatest capitals of Western Europe, but have also been cultural centres of immense prestige and far-reaching influence for many centuries (in the words of Harold Bloom, true "cities of the mind"), such a study may be doubly interesting.

Chapter four considers a little-known but intriguing figure from modern Irish history, Francis Sheehy Skeffington, and his vital contribution to the struggle for the political enfranchisement of Irish women. The campaign was a divisive one, and Sheehy Skeffington (as well as the women's movement as a whole) drew criticism from Nationalists for the refusal to subjugate Votes for Women to the demand for Home Rule. Although Sheehy Skeffington was personally acquainted with the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising, his vision of

Ireland was radically different from that of Patrick Pearse or James Connolly, based as it was on pacifist nationalism. He may have been a committed advocate of a self-determined Irish identity, fashioned and thriving independently of Great Britain, but his anti-militarist principles prevented him from engaging in what Pearse called the "blood sacrifice" of insurrection. Ironically, he died trying to preserve the nobility of that uprising.

One hundred years later, the Republic of Ireland is drawing strangely closer to his vision of a free Irish identity, rather than Pearse's Catholic Ireland or Connolly's socialist workers' republic: neutrality has been a corner stone of the state since its founding (and was a particular thorn in the side of the British during the Second World War), the power of the Catholic Church seems to be slipping into irreversible decline over a relatively short period of time, and a series of popular votes has seen the reversal of constitutional restrictions on abortion, same-sex marriage and divorce. Even as a vegetarian, Sheehy Skeffington would no longer raise eyebrows in Ireland, north or south.

Clearly, male support for the women's suffrage cause was not universal and opposition manifested itself in many forms. Chapter five looks at the particular case of H.G. Wells. Alongside the science-fiction which made and upheld his reputation, Wells produced novels which discussed topical questions of the day, women's rights included. The article looks briefly at several works where the main female protagonist's struggle for recognition is firmly tied to the whims, and by extension the wallet, of an older male. While far from being Wells' best or most famous works, these novels do nonetheless unmask a slightly unpleasant side to his nature what many of his peers saw as an unhealthy, predatory obsession with women other than his wife/wives and a disconcerting honesty in discussing this obsession,

as demonstrated in *The New Machiavelli* (1911) or more forthrightly in *Experiment in Autobiography: Discoveries and Conclusions of a Very Ordinary Brain (Since 1866)* (1934). A *Guardian* review of David Lodge's, *A Man of Parts* (a semi-fictious biographical novel based on Wells, and published in 2012), neatly summarises the apparent enigma of his sexual appeal:

> Lodge's title suggests both Wells's unusually broad portfolio of interests and also a recurrent obsession. Short, unshapely and not always able to produce respectable middle-class vowel sounds, H.G. Wells was perhaps the least likely sex machine in literary history. His two marriages were to women who were hardly on speaking terms with desire, but he more than made up for this in his spare time. The interest in strong, independent women was sincere, but it was hardly impaired by their regular sexual availability. The secret of his success seems to have been a winning combination of pheromones, which gave him the aroma of walnuts (according to Rebecca West's testimony) or honey (Elizabeth von Arnim) (Mars-Jones 2011).

With the advent of the women's suffrage movement, Wells found himself faced with a band of women strong and self-confident enough to challenge his views. Sometimes he dismissed them with the conventional stereotype of unfulfilled spinsters, e.g. Mrs Miniver in *Ann Veronica* (1909), but in one instance, he was driven to defend his opinions in the feminist press. Both of these cases are quoted in the article.

Magdalena Grabowska
Piotr Kallas
Seán Moran

Works cited

Baumeister R., 1987, "How the Self Became a Problem: a Psychological Review of Historical Research," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 52 (1).

Entry: "identity," in: *Online Etymology Dictionary*, https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=identity [accessed: 10.11.2019].

Giddens A., 1990, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Mars-Jones A., 2011, "A Man of Parts by David Lodge – Review," *The Guardian*, 17.04., https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/apr/17/man-of-parts-david-lodge-review [accessed: 12.12.2018].

Paleczny T., 2008, *Socjologia tożsamości*, Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza AFM.

Magdalena Grabowska currently works as an assistant professor and deputy head in the Institute of Applied Linguistics, University of Gdańsk, Poland. Her interests focus on ethnographic linguistics, specifically on the study of sensitive issues which appeal for social heed, identity and religion being the case in point. Integrating ethnographic methodology into sociolinguistic research she is particularly interested in reconstructing commonsensical definitions, one with fuzzy categorial boundaries and experiential basis. Her current endeavour, the chapter entitled *Religious Identity in the Narratives of Non-Normative People in Poland – Interview-Based Study* focuses on the study of the religious identity in the discourse of non-normative people in Poland.

Piotr Kallas is an assistant professor at the Institute of Applied Linguistics of the University of Gdańsk and lecturer at the State School of Higher Professional Education in Elbląg (PWSZ Elbląg), where he teaches literature, literary studies and literary translation as well as British Studies and the English language. His scientific interests include Jewish themes and motifs in English-language literature, historical fiction, crime fiction, the work of Geoffrey Chaucer and Peter Ackroyd, as well as urban fiction, urban mythology and anthropology, and London fiction. He published *The Pilgrim of Eternity. The Figure of the Wandering Jew in the Romantic Literature of Britain and America* in 2011 and *Narrativity in Action: Language, Culture and Text* (in collaboration with Magdalena Grabowska and Grzegorz Grzegorczyk) in 2017. Work in progress: a monograph on the London books of Peter Ackroyd *(Time and the City: Peter Ackroyd's Historical Fantasies)*, to be published in 2020.

Seán Moran works at the University of Gdańsk's Institute of Applied Linguistics in Poland. Fields of interest include the English and German languages, Irish and British culture and society, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century, and the women's suffrage movement. He is author of *The Stage Career of Cicely Hamilton (1895–1914)*, published in 2017.

Gdansk University Press

ISBN 978-83-8206-006-5