

**Eduardo de Gregorio-Godeo &
Ángel Mateos-Aparicio
Martín-Albo (eds.)**

**MAPPING
IDENTITY
AND
IDENTIFICATION
PROCESSES
APPROACHES FROM
CULTURAL STUDIES**



Peter Lang

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MERJA DE MATTOS-PARREIRA

Hegemonies of Expatriate Identities in Portuguese English-language Press

The language of critique is effective not because it keeps forever separate the terms of the master and the slave...but to the extent to which it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation: a place of hybridity...where the construction of a political object that is new, *neither the one nor the other*, properly alienates our political expectations and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics.

(Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 25)

My research deals with readers' identity construction in "readers write" texts published in Portuguese English-language newspapers, like *The Anglo-Portuguese News (The APN)*, *The News* and *The Algarve Resident*. The key concept of my approach is textual identity construction through a transdisciplinary approach—i.e., culture, society and language.¹ This means that I have examined the theme of identity construction by combining several disciplinary orientations and establishing relationships between them. My basic theoretical argument on identity construction is that, first of all, it is always a relational concept and it is built upon the notion of difference. Difference is actually central for the existence of all meanings. Binary oppositions are no doubt over-simplified because there is always one who dominates: the dimension of power—and the continuous negotiation of it—is omnipresent in all cultural activities. Besides, we only construct meanings (remember Voloshinov's notions of dialogism and heteroglossia) and ourselves (psychoanalytic stance, for instance) through a dialogue with the other. The so-called tourist experience (which would include the category of the expatriate as a

¹ As you will see from the examples I chose for the Appendix, my linguistic theoretical framework follows the Australian School of *Systemic Functional Linguistics*, founded by Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan (Halliday 2004).

long-term tourist) can also be considered as a search for a difference between "one's normal place of residence/work and the object of the tourist gaze," as John Urry has argued (1990, 11). A synthesis of the contemporary decentring of essential identities and a commitment to politics, as in the previous Homi Bhabha quote, may provide the basis for a social theory which overcomes the limitations of the two, giving way to political co-operation and to working and negotiating across differences.

This is also a position held by Dona Haraway, whose commitment to culture-specific knowledge(s) and partial truths does not lead to relativistic positioning. It rather allows for networks of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology. Haraway's *cyborg*, a half-human, half-machine invention, embodies and materialises the breaking of traditional distinctions between human and machine, physical and non-physical. It is a metaphor for the social as a process of limiting the frontiers, of constructing identities out of available material-semiotic resources, including fundamental biological categories, such as the body and gender, which once were considered the basis for essentialist definitions of identities. The knowledge value, in my view, lies in rethinking contemporary identities as multiple semiotic projects—the cyborg's prosthesis, says Haraway, is the making of meanings and bodies (1991)—which can be constructed, deconstructed and, in the process, related over and over again to itself and to other identities. Haraway's cyborg is a central part of contemporary post-industrial information society²—an ideological apparatus that sees the concept of body simultaneously as a natural and a technological device.³

Indeed, the external body (at the cost of the "internal" body) playing the primary role is symptomatic of our cultural age, an era dominated by appearance and representation. In consumer culture, it is

2 I think Haraway's position at this point is comparable with Fredric Jameson's (1984) view, according to which postmodernism is the cultural facet of a new or purer stage of capitalism rather than its overcoming—and that the primacy of information over production (the post-industrial stage) was predictable in Marxism.

3 I find the term *aerobics* and the practice of bodybuilding as clear illustrations of the machine metaphor Haraway writes about.

a moral failure to display an improperly styled body; it reveals laziness, an attitude of moral *laissez-faire*. Body as a commodity, as an object of representation stands for a set of disciplinary practices, ways of doing the body.⁴ In fact, we are once again in the presence of the all-encompassing power, which for Foucault is the foundation of all discourses, of all disciplinary technologies (1979).

In communication studies, the translation of the world into a problem in coding can be illustrated by looking at cybernetic (feedback-controlled) systems theories applied to telephone technology, computer design, weapons deployment or data base construction and maintenance. In each case, solution to the key questions rests on a theory of language and control; the key operation is determining the directions and linguistic choices of the flow of a quantity called information. The world is subdivided by boundaries differentially permeable to information. Information is just that kind of quantifiable element which allows universal translation, and so enables the instrumental power called effective communication (Haraway 1991, 164).

Haraway's most basic claim is that cyborg politics is ultimately a politics of language. And her politics of language stands for the struggle against the notion of perfect communication, against the one perfect meaning, the so-called universalistic stance which denies difference. Consequently, identities are not collections of inherent qualities possessed by individuals but rather constructed positions or interpellations. This means that *places*—not locations!⁵—and *people* are intimately linked. One of the most common representations of place in my materials, through textual representations of various kinds, has been euro-centrism, and, more specifically, anglicised Portugal and its people.

4 There is plenty of literature on the body in cultural studies. The most common orientations to the body are *having a body* (i.e., some sort of disjunction between the body and identity, such as having cancer), *being the body* (body is unnoticed because it causes no problems to us), and *doing the body* (our socio-cultural contexts determine certain acquired body techniques, such as gestures, ways of moving, (un)slenderness, being pale or tanned, and so on).

5 Place is not the same as location. The difference is that places have meanings for us and thus cannot be equated with their mere geographical location.

Some other keywords in my work are, firstly, *recycling*, because I have noticed that many contemporary concepts and ideas that often seem new and innovative to us are actually part of a larger historical process. I thus designate my methodology as genealogical. The circularity of my approach, however, is not merely in terms of cultural circuit but rather in terms of cultural recycling and historicity. Concepts such as ambivalence, criticality, determinism *versus* freedom, and the issue of relevance (or what Foucault calls matters of power) are part of my argumentation. Homi Bhabha, for instance, has expressed this in the following excerpt:

The concept of cultural difference focuses on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural authority: the attempt to dominate in the name of a cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation. And it is the very authority of culture as a knowledge of referential truth which is at issue in the concept and moment of enunciation ... The time of liberation is ... a time of cultural uncertainty, and most crucially, of signification or representational undecidability. (1994: 34-35)

In my materials, I found several manifestations of a cultural uncertainty such as the heterogeneous globalised context of the turn of the millenium, the need for an affirmation of the local against the globalising tendencies. In short, a contemporary permanent identity crisis is present in everyday life topics of "readers write" letters.⁶

According to Max Weber (1992), the development of capitalism was closely linked to inner-worldly Puritan asceticism and self-denial, most clearly represented by Calvinism, Pietism, Methodism and Baptism. In his seminal work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber argued that ascetic Protestantism played a central role in the development of an ethic that led to production and accumulation as a duty towards God: "The Puritan wanted to work in a calling" (1992, 181). He writes:

This worldly Protestant asceticism ... acted powerfully against the spontaneous enjoyment of possessions; it restricted consumption, especially of luxuries. On the other hand, it had the psychological effect of freeing the acquisition of goods

6 See examples of my analysis in the Appendix.

from the traditionalistic ethics. It broke the bonds of the impulse of acquisition in that it not only legalised it, but (in the sense discussed) looked upon it as directly willed by God. (1992, 170-171)

But as cultural studies theorists have shown, both production and consumption are only two of the five moments of one single cultural circuit,⁷ and one does not exist without the other. Without consumption, there would be no production. Therefore, to the productive self-denying activity we may add the consuming self-gratificatory action. Thus, once again cultural ambivalence is at stake here; leaning on the concept of *homo faber*, Puritan ethic simultaneously paved way for the pleasure-seeking activities of consumption, the *homo ludens*.

Following Thorstein Veblen's classic *Theory of the Leisure Class* (first published in 1899), I establish a certain parallelism between leisure culture ("the non-productive consumption of time") and the *homo ludens* expatriate community of the 2000s. Until the late 1980s the Portuguese expatriate community was mainly of British background (often retired former colonial officers and overthrown royalties from the Eastern European countries, ex-diplomats, and so on), well-off representatives of the "sunset-leisure culture," a group of individuals who gain primary gratification from consuming goods and leisure activities (*homo ludens*), rather than from their labour activity (*homo faber*).

Veblen's leisure class avoids having anything to do with productive labour, and time is occupied with activities like studying dead languages, for example. The important issue is to make a clear distinction between a "well-educated" and a "well-trained" person, between an individual who *thinks* and one who *does*.⁸ The pecuniary canons of taste, according to this author, stand for the pecuniary

7 In the Birmingham School theory of cultural articulation, a cultural circuit consists of the moments of representation, regulation, identification, production and consumption.

8 This distinction is of course entirely against Ludwig Wittgenstein's pragmatic philosophy (1997). There is no thinking without doing according to him, and, "thinking as a bodily function" (i.e., doing philosophy) may help us find better methods (i.e., improved therapies) to deal with common issues of everyday life.

power that the leisure class exercises in relation to the working and producing social groups.

In our contemporary societies, almost everybody must work for a living, and a leisure class in Veblen's sense has become apparently non-existent.⁹ Consumption as a manifestation of one's monetary power has come to replace the previously honourable leisure. This shift of emphasis from leisure to consumption, Veblen explains, stems from the underlying societal changes; there is a change from smaller societies of non-strangers to larger communities of strangers, from upper-class feudalism to middle- and lower-class (economic) capitalism, and from unproductive consumption of time to unproductive consumption of goods. In other words, the cosy and friendly *Gemeinschaft* has been taken over by the impersonal and often alienating *Gesellschaft*.

Moreover, one should know *how* to consume in a proper manner; the longer one has been attending educational institutions, the greater one's *cultural capital* is, in Bourdieu's terminology (2009). Therefore, wealth and time are part of cultural capital, too. This is how Hugh Mackay sees the matter:

Consumption is the articulation of a sense of identity. Our identity is made up by our consumption of goods—and their consumption and display constitutes our expression of taste. So display—to ourselves and to others—is largely for symbolic significance, indicating our membership of a particular culture. As Bourdieu puts it, taste classifies the classifier. (1997, 4)

The 1990s saw a drastic change in the expatriate "community." Nowadays, the notion of expatriate has become extremely heterogeneous and more difficult to define. It may be taken to designate all possible—mainly European or "Caucasian" from the former colonies—nationalities and social levels, from handymen and bar employees to long-term tourists, people working in tourism or property sales, in teaching, or as executives and, of course, the representatives of "sunset lives" (King et al. 2000). Also, with the increase of massification, both in long- and short-term tourism, the

9 This, I believe, is a temporary phenomenon because the gulf between the super-rich and the extremely poor is widening all the time.

populational centre has moved from Lisbon (Estoril, Cascais) to the sunny Algarve.

Then how to characterise the identities of these contemporary "post-tourists"? John Urry (1990) presents an extensive list of ways in which the difference between the ordinary and the extraordinary, between "home" and "un-home" may be achieved. Tourism, according to him, is a collection of signs, a constructed gaze:

When tourists see two people kissing in Paris what they capture in the gaze is "timeless romantic Paris." As Culler (1981: 127) argues: "the tourist is interested in everything as a sign of itself ... All over the world the unsung armies of semioticians, the tourists, are fanning out in search of the signs of Frenchness, typical Italian behaviour, exemplary Oriental scenes, typical American thruways, traditional English pubs." (1990, 3)

First of all, there is the unique, original object, an "authentic" Sagres School of Navigation, a site from where the brave Portuguese departed to discover the world.¹⁰ And the tourist experiences it with his own eyes! Secondly, the tourist spots the typical Fado-singing, the great wines and gastronomy, signs he has been expecting to find. Thirdly, he visits museums, whose function is to make ordinary items extraordinary. Or he can do the opposite, gaze at ordinary everyday life in extraordinary contexts. Urry's example is the type of tourism practised in China, where tourists may observe "ordinary" Chinese people carrying out their daily routines in a "communist setting" (1990, 12).

Whereas the "post-tourist's" main concern is a search for signs,¹¹ the "untourist" looks for authenticity. He rejects weekend tours to the European capital of culture and chooses rural tourism in a remote

10 The exact location of Prince Henry the Navigator's School has never been scientifically proved. What is known as a fact is that the Discovery Phenomenon centred on the mythical figure of Prince Henry was not specifically situated in Sagres and that there are several possible locations for the institution, such as the town of Évora. Both the ideological apparatus of Salazar's fascist regime and the commemorations of the discoveries, however, promoted Sagres as the only correct place of this School of Navigation.

11 According to Voloshinov (1986), the ideological sphere coincides with the sphere of signs. All signs are ideological and possess semiotic value.

mountain village instead. He is an eco tourist, green tourist, culturally alternative. His romantic reaction to commodification, however, is also sustained by high economic and cultural capital. Thus his capital in irony could be described as low.¹²

Both the untourist and the post-tourist, then, share a fundamental feature, that of possessing the material and cultural resources needed to become "a traveller." Travellers, in most cases, are a mixture of both. And consequently, both the postmodern and the environmental tourist belong to the category of elite tourism, in opposition to simple mass tourism, which is directed to social groups of lower levels. This is the main difference between the (long-term tourism) expatriates and the (short-term) tourists in the Portuguese context, since Portugal's mainstream (mass) tourist industry is constructed upon the favourable climate. This position of difference was also present in several texts.

Ultimately, all forms of tourism rest upon the notion of *hegemony*. As Caren Kaplan puts it:

Imperialism has left edifices and markers out, whether they consist of actual monuments to field marshals or the altered economies of former colonies. Tourism, then, arises out of the economic disasters of other countries that make them "affordable" or subject to "development", trading upon long-established traditions of cultural and economic hegemony, and, in turn, participating in new versions of hegemonic relations. (1996, 63)

From a Portuguese perspective, the readers of these English-language newspapers in Portugal are part of the globally dominant prosperous English-speaking West. This geographically northern and culturally Protestant domination of the Catholic southern Europe is closely tied to the market relations of cultural consumption. We may see this

12 Terry Eagleton's (2000, 98) distinction between humans and animals, and between culture and nature, is pertinent here. According to the British author, humans are more dangerous than tigers, for instance, because "our symbolic powers of abstraction allow us to override sensuous inhibitions on intra-specific killing." Strangling another human being with bare hands would be uncomfortable but unlikely lethal, while language is a destructive weapon at long range. Thus, "there is an immense abyss between ironic and other animals. Creatures whose symbolic life is rich enough to allow them to be ironic are in perpetual danger."

phenomenon of instigation, for instance, in the contemporary Portuguese soaps and series; the one suffering of the consequences of an action is often somebody holding the values of "the old world."¹³

Portugal is "affordable," perhaps primarily due to its troubled past. And it probably will stay that way, if the present tendency of eliminating the difference between the articulation of "popular" and "populist"¹⁴ goes on for a long time.

Appendix:

Interpersonal meanings in expatriates' "Readers Write" letters

The News, 28/11/97: The challenges of living in Portugal

Dear Editor,

With reference to "South Africans in *The News*", I should like to make the following comments which you may already be aware of:

Some South Africans coming to Portugal are Portuguese or have family living here, some are English speaking only and know no one living here. It is extremely difficult for those people and here are some reasons why:

1. Streets are not clearly marked and it is difficult trying to get a street map.
2. Where do you find emergency numbers and if you phone one of them, will you be understood?
3. How can you find out where to get an electrician?
4. Do you have fumigators here and how do you get hold of one? (or exterminators)
5. Where is the nearest Post Office, Supermarket, Chemist, Municipality, Health Centre?
6. How do you find out which route the busses take?

13 I am referring to television productions such as *Anjo de Selvagem*, *Alves dos Reis*, *O Equador*. The list goes on.

14 When examining the rise of the New Right (1997; 1999), this is one of Stuart Hall's readings of the Gramscian notion of hegemony, according to which "populist" articulations tend to overcome "popular" and get rid of and conceal the fundamental opposition between the two.

And with due respect, don't get too upset if someone is rude to you. When you cannot speak the language and feel strange, you are inclined to be more sensitive.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs A. E. Patmore

P.S. Thank you for a great newspaper!

The basic linguistic device in reader identity construction in the above text is the grammatical mood structure. Interpersonal grammatical metaphors characterise the text as a whole: number 1 presents us the sole coherent declarative mood, and from number 2 to 6 the questions are actually statements. The inscribed writer is stating (or accusing) that is difficult to have access to various daily life necessities, unless one is able to communicate in Portuguese. Finally, the letter ends with a negative polarity imperative and obligation modulation: "don't get too upset if someone is rude to you." The "you" here is close to an impersonal reference "one." The finishing clause's declarative mood is expressed through a mood structure of modalisation, and has once again the subject in the form of *you*, which stands for the *us non-Portuguese speakers*, the readers and producers of the great newspaper (*P.S. Thanks for a great newspaper!*), facing the dangers of everyday life in Portugal.

The title of the following letter coincides curiously with the picture I saw recently in the Portuguese newspaper *Público*. It was a photo from an anti-euro manifestation in London. A man was carrying pamphlet that said "keep the pound, no surrender, stuff the euro, rule Britannia."

The News, 9/5/2000: "Rule Britannia!"

Dear editor

When are some of you going to wake up and realize the British Empire is... no longer?

When are some of you going to understand that any British citizen ABROAD must abide by the law be it financial enterprise or a soccer match?

Your arrogance is just too much!

M. Puga-Lambers, Florida (via e-mail)

The tenor of this text is explicitly between "the old world" and "the new one," between the British (*you* of the text) and the American expatriates. The title establishes an intertextual link with "the old world": *Rule Britannia*, a tune composed by Thomas Arne in 1740, has an iconic status among British national songs. At the height of British imperial power in 1880s, it was described as "perhaps the finest national song possessed by any nation."¹⁵

Compared to the previous text, the "you" of this text is more subjective, straightforward, less distant and thus personalised. Also, both the closing argument (an exclamative mood) and the punctuation (question marks, three dots, an exclamation mark) contribute to the personal tone by adding oral quality to this letter. The effect of the repetition of the interrogative mood "when are some of you going to" is actually an accusation, thus, in fact, declarative mood. The high modulation "must" offers an active (a proposal) rather than an informative (a proposition) linguistic viewpoint. Besides, the two structurally repeated metaphorical or indirect questions are, from the experiential point of view, mental processes "wake up and realize, understand," which stand for cognitive mental activity.

According to contemporary "political correctness" (one of the main "obsessions" of Americans), the writer's first name is not revealed, so no marks of gender. The location, Florida, on the other hand, is made transparent. The "newness" is also emphasised by the fact that this is one of the few letters sent via e-mail. It is unlikely, however, that the sender is e-mailing from Florida, *The News* being a Portuguese expatriate (thus "local") newspaper. "ABROAD" in capital letters, postmodifying the noun group "any British citizen," establishes a cohesive tie with the British Empire. Britons are thus construed as a "bunch of colonial arrogant soccer (and not football!) hooligans and financial crooks."

15 An excerpt from the song: "When Britain first, at heaven's command, arose from the azure main, this was the charter, the charter of the land, and guardian Angels sung this strain: Rule Britannia! Britannia rule the waves, Britons never, never, never shall be slaves ... Still more majestic shalt thou rise, more dreadful, from each foreign stroke, more dreadful, more dreadful from each foreign stroke... To thee belongs the rural reign, thy cities shall the commerce shine, ... all thine shall be the subject main, and every shore it circles thine..."

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