Culture and Power

Culture and Power:
Identity and Identification

Edited by

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**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

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PREFACE

I am honoured and delighted to have the opportunity to write a preface to *Culture and Power: Identity and Identification*. The book is based on papers delivered at the 14th Culture and Power conference, University of Castilla-La Mancha, in 2010. Writing the preface brings back good memories of my time at the conference. It was in fact the eighth Culture and Power conference I had attended. Like all the others, it was an excellent event, both socially and academically.

These conferences are organised by the Iberian Association for Cultural Studies (IBACS). I have been a member of the organisation since I attended its second conference at the University of Alcalá in 2001. I have since then witnessed IBACS's remarkable development in an often-difficult environment. Its continuing success, against some hostility, is largely due to a determined group of talented intellectuals whom I first met in Alcalá: Chantal Cornut-Gentille, Felicity Hand, Sara Martín, and David Walton (IBACS's President). Their determination has kept alive the possibility of cultural studies in Spain. As David has explained to me, there are not as yet (nor have there ever been) departments of cultural studies in Spain. Without a recognised institutional home it exists dispersed across many universities in the teaching and research activities of academics working mostly in English Departments. Knowing this context makes the achievements of IBACS all the more remarkable. Since the formation of the Culture and Power group in 1995 (which led to the creation of IBACS in Valencia in 2000), the Association has managed to establish and sustain a significant network of cultural studies scholarship, including fifteen international conferences and more than twenty books.

I am sure that *Culture and Power: Identity and Identification* will make a significant contribution to the further development of cultural studies in Spain. It collects together an outstanding series of essays on issues that continue to interest the discipline internationally.

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INTRODUCTION

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Questions of identity and identification are among the most important evolving concerns of cultural studies. Many thinkers, theorists and academics working in the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies continue to wrestle with these slippery concepts in their explorations of "the production and inculcation of culture or maps of culture" (Barker 2004, 42). Commonly apprehended as culturally specific and socially produced, identity is often conceived of as resulting from a whole range of different, possible identifications linked to specific modalities of power under particular social and historical conjunctures; hence the unstable and fluctuating nature of identities and identity formation. Indeed the tension between self-description and social ascription has become fundamental in cultural studies examinations of how "both individuals and groups construct, negotiate and defend their self-understanding" (Edgar 2002, 183). Through a process of personal identification with discursively constructed subject positions, identities emerge across a wide range of cultural practices in the course of social interactions involving the use of language and other semiotic systems manifested in cultural artefacts of various kinds. Identification processes entail "a form of emotional investment in the discursive descriptions of our self and others that are available to us" (Barker 2004, 93), so that identity emerges as individuals take up—or resist—the subject positions which are made available in the discourses surrounding them in the course of their social lives. As cultural theorist Stuart Hall puts it, "identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (2000, 19).

The present collection includes a selection of papers on the topic of identity and identification in cultural studies. Incorporating theoretical contributions and practical case studies, this monograph adds to contemporary debates on identity-forging practices from various theoretical positions in different social, historic and national contexts. As shown in

this introduction, the most overtly theoretical discussions on the construction of identities and subjectivities in post-modernity lead to a more central focus on fundamental issues in cultural studies like gender politics and the construction of femininities, the hybridization of identities in the context of postcolonial work, the interplay between collective identities and discourses on nation and nationality, and the crucial role of the media in identity-construction and -representation in contemporary social formations. Although chapters have been thematically arranged in five sections following a certain logic resulting from a number of analogous significant concerns pervading identity theory and cultural studies nowadays, such contributions might have certainly been alternatively grouped in the volume, as the theoretical constructs, disciplinary debates and thematic concerns recur across the different chapters of the volume.

Taking a somehow more theoretical stance, the first section of the monograph includes four contributions which illuminatingly problematise identities in post-modernity. As Katherine Woodward points out, "postmodernism challenged the encompassing nature of the grand theories of modernity and suggested that the notion of a unified self at the heart of social relations could not be maintained" (2002, 21). In the first chapter of this section Rafael Luis Pompeia Gioielli revisits the so-called 'crisis of the concept of identity' "in pursuit of a new understanding for the issue in face of the postmodern thought and the contemporary socio-cultural dynamics". Touching upon such major issues in the discussion of identities and the postmodern condition as the transition from modernity to post-modernity and the progressive process of identity de-regulation in late modernity, Gioielli advocates Bauman's notion of 'liquid identity' as best characterizing the fluid experience of selves in postmodern times. According to Rafael Luis Pompeia Gioielli, "when the modern metaphysical truth fades and we find ourselves in a society marked by plurality and intersected by migratory flows, by communication networks and by global consumerism, what yesterday was allegedly regulated, is now released". This is certainly the context of glocalization processes in the world today, where the idea of a 'liquid identity' has come to replace formerly regulated notions of identity in pre-postmodern times.

Laying a strong emphasis on gender and sexual politics, Leticia Sabsay's chapter posits the postmodern re-ontologization of gendered and sexualized subjects in terms of identity. As substantiated by Sabsay's paper, this form of re-ontologization that we are witnessing "sustains both heterocentricity and the liberal conception of the individual by which political representation is supported". Drawing upon Judith Butler's theory about performativity, the paper significantly argues that this reinforcement

of heterocentricity underlies the agenda of new gender and sexual politics. After unveiling the mechanisms whereby the liberal perspective of identity is linked to heterosexual norms, light is cast on "the persistence of mononormativity as the legitimate form for sexual public appearance in order to show how the performativity of normative power works". The article argues that, in acknowledging the very existence of change following social transformations, liberal perspectives of identity end up excluding what may be disputed or challenged in the context of sexual politics. Sabsay concludes that we should then maintain "our awareness of the need for expanding our concept of freedom and equality: not so much in the name of our autonomy but in the name of the others through whom we are constituted".

Begonya Saez Tajafuerce explores some of the philosophical bases of postmodern debates on identity permeating work in various areas of cultural studies today. The paper analyses Clair Denis's film *L'intrus* (2004), which, based on the homonymous novel by Jean-Luc Nancy (2000), revolves around the personal odyssey to exotic lands in search for a new heart embarked upon by Louis Trébor, a man whose heart will no longer keep him alive and is told by doctors that his only chance to survive is a heart transplant. The resulting experience of violent, radical and irreducible strangeness undergone by Trébor is theorized by Saez Tajafuerce as one of 'non-identity' which is yet fully constitutive of his own identity. The personal journey instantiates contemporary post-metaphysical notions of subjectivity conceiving of the body as "the discursive ever changing site for subjectivity to be expressed and, thus, made real". Following Saez Tajafuerece's arguments, as Louis Trébor goes through an experience of self-strangeness pursuing an illegal heart transplant from a Russian woman leading a group of criminals involved in organs trade, his self somehow becomes a form of one's other. The theoretical implications of this analysis show that post-structuralist approaches to identity—and readings of identity characteristic of the postmodern condition—may also be contemplated from a post-metaphysical philosophical orientation where the tenet that one is one's other means "that one is in a constant and reciprocally constitutive relationship to oneself as another, that is, as someone who escapes any rule or attempt of normalization within the relationship".

The last contribution in this part of the volume, by Cristina-Georgiana Voicu, pays attention to the issue of cultural identity on the whole. By considering the formation of national identities in particular, her article elaborates on work attempting to bridge the gap between individual and collective identities. In examining the relationship between individual

identity and collective identity, Voicu criticises both the views of those claiming that "individual identity and collective identity are conflicting and that collective identity is not likely to replace the individual one" as well as the position of those considering that "collective identity is constructed on an entirely different basis than individual identity and the two can coexist". In contrast, Voicu argues that the creation of collective identity entails forging memories in a way which is similar to the formation of individual identity. However, she adds, "although collective identity is to a large degree based on principles of popular sovereignty and civic rights, it still needs a shared 'culture' to connect people at an emotional level"; hence her conclusion that, while being similarly forged, collective and individual identities do not necessarily clash.

Though gender issues are central across many of the chapters of the volume, the second section of the book lays a strong emphasis on the construction of femininities—a topic which appears in other chapters like Caroline Bainbridge's or Carmen Robertson's—especially on a revision of what might be taken as 'old' and 'new' images of womanhood in various forms on high and popular culture in Britain since the eighteenth century to date. Following the Foucault-based theory on the construction of discourses of identity within the specific historic conjunctures of social formations under power circumstances, the analysis of gendered discourses has become a major concern for cultural studies. The study of femininity as discourse has thus triggered a great amount of work exploring how "women actually work out their subject positions and roles in the process of negotiating discursive constraints" (Mills 2005, 77). So, in the first chapter of this section, María Eugenia Sánchez Suárez challenges the traditionally simplistic representation of the 18th century English heroine as "chaste, passive and uncomplaining" (McGirr 2007, 78), and attempts to emphasize certain features of such heroines that seem to have gone unnoticed in their representation. Framed by a thorough analysis of the legal and economic position of eighteenth-century women in England, the chapter depicts the eighteenth-century historical perception of women's identity. In considering how "some women writers successfully proved that it was possible to subvert certain power structures while apparently supporting them", Sánchez Suárez delves into traditional perceptions of the heroine as 'an ideal prototype' in the English literary production of the century. Her piece serves to bring to light the forgotten strength and resourcefulness of women in literary works at the time like *Moll Flanders, Roxana, Pamela, The Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure (Fanny Hill), Amelia, The History of Betsy Thoughtless* and *Sidney Bidulph*. As Sánchez Suárez puts it, "novels revealed the oppressive

weight that the 'ideal prototype' of women implied, which aspects of their personality and behaviour they had to suppress or repress in order to integrate into society and 'dwindle' into wives".

In a contribution about cultural history in Victorian England, María Isabel Romero Ruiz scrutinizes the information contained in the Annual Reports of the London Lock Hospital and Asylum between 1833 and 1837. Aiming at "treating venereal disease in the destitute poor as well as the need of reforming working-class fallen women, moulding their identities according to their own moral values", the Annual Reports of both institutions meant to obtain funds contributed by middle-class citizens for their management. Having presented this context, the paper uses a poststructuralist perspective to focus on the articulation of nineteenth-century middle-class religious and medical discourses, thereby approaching the construction and regulation of gender framed by the Victorian "need to control and contain deviant elements in mind". The analysis of the Reports comes out as a significant contribution illuminating "the work of middle-class reformers in shaping deviant working-class women's identities" in Victorian England.

Continuing with the analysis of the historical representations of women, Beatriz González investigates the changing feminine identities in Mary Shelley's literary production in the literary annuals between 1823 and 1839—much of which came to be published in the form of gift-books, chiefly in *The Keepsake* tales. Considered by many as a form of popular culture at the time, the tales included not only Shelly's narrative itself but also accompanying illustrations. Shelley was often forced to add artificial paragraphs for the plates. So, the masculine point of view dominating women's representation in those illustrations is rather different from women's identities in Mary Shelley's own narrative. González Moreno unveils the inconsistencies between text and illustration, and its implications for the construction of womanhood in Shelly's tales. As she underlines, "her narratives are destined to provide women with experiences of transgression whereas the illustrations provide women with ideal, static images of femininity".

In the last chapter of this section, María del Mar Ramón-Torrijos writes about postmodern feminism in a major example of contemporary popular culture in the UK, namely *Bridget Jones's Diary*. In her contribution, Ramón-Torrijos challenges those who question the scarce literary value of *Bridget Jones's Diary* and place stronger emphasis on the success of the novel in inducing "reflection about contemporary women's dilemmas". In actual fact, Helen Fielding's novel is taken to be a quintessential example of so-called 'chick lit' as a new popular-culture literary genre in the form

of first-person novels where the humorous perspective surrounds the issues that modern women are confronted with. As the chapter makes it clear, "*Bridget Jones's Diary*, and postfeminist fiction in general, undoubtedly demands serious consideration since the genre has proven to be a consistent new area of popular women's writing. Grounded in the realities of the lives and experiences of present-day women, chick lit undoubtedly raises issues of great concern for both contemporary women and contemporary culture alike". All in all, this article accordingly serves to round off this section of the volume on the construction of womanhood in different cultural products in the UK since the eighteenth century to date.

Section III in the volume takes a look at the emergence of hybrid identities in the wide context of post-colonialism. By and large, the concept of 'hybridity' made its way into cultural studies in the 1990s "in the context of discussion about globalization, diaspora cultures and postcolonialism" (Barker 2004, 89), and today the study of hybridity has come to consider "the mixing together of previously discrete cultural elements to create new meanings and identities" (Barker, ibid). This section is opened in this respect with a chapter where Łukasz Hudomięt discusses the construction of sexual identities by the British Empire during the New Imperialism period in the nineteenth century as a powerful means of asserting colonial dominance. In an attempt to study this aspect of British cultural history at the time, Hudomięt echoes Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's contemporary premise that "hybridity and the power it releases may well be seen as the characteristic feature and contribution of the post-colonial, allowing a means of evading the replication of the binary categories of the past and developing new anti-monolithic models of cultural exchange and growth" (1995, 1839). Yet, taking the logic of sexual policy under the British colonial rule in the nineteenth century as one where sexual contacts between the white and non-white people were not allowed in order to preserve both the inferior rank of 'the other' and rigid master-servant relationships under colonial domination, the paper reflects upon "some of the racial stereotypes and pseudo-scientific theories used to formulate the fake 'native sexuality' while demonstrating simultaneously its ideological precariousness".

Carmen L. Robertson's piece sets out to study the representation of indigenous women in Canada's printed press— particularly in terms of the traditional depiction of Canadian indigenous women within the stereotypical binary of the 'Indian princess/Indian squaw'. As Robertson indicates, "like Disney's Pocahontas, the beautiful and virtuous Indian princess who aids men in a wilderness paradise illustrates a passive and

sometimes eroticized framing of Aboriginal women. The squalid and immoral 'squaw' lurking at the margins of civilization and whose presence threatened moral order also dominated narratives". Such representations are examined as recurrently reappearing in various forms of popular culture in Canada, the printed press having had a fundamental role in reproducing such constructions of female Aboriginals in the country. The paper reveals that, sexualised by the dominating heterosexist white gaze, "bifurcated images of anonymous, whorish 'squaws' or sexy, exotic princesses who desire and serve white males" have been promoted by Canadian print media. Robertson analyses the subtleties of this process in a corpus of regional dailies published in English in Canada from 1969 through 1973 covering issues to do with Aboriginal females.

In the last chapter of this section, Salvador Faura Sabé reads Najat El-Hachmi's novel *L'últim patriarca* (2008) (*The Last Patriarch*) as a search for identity in what the contribution's author sees as 'the postcolonial coming of age of Catalan literature'. Faura Sabé applies postcolonial theory to analyse this novel written in Catalan by Moroccan-born author Najat El-Hachmi. After tracing the influences of Eastern and Western literary traditions on Najat El-Hachmi, Faura Sabé's chapter dwells on the significant extent to which "El-Hachmi has been able to introduce a postcolonial rhetoric to a country which never possessed an empire, or a literature in her language to match it". With this novel written in Catalan—representative of the increasing hybridisation of the Catalonian community today—Najat El-Hachmi is argued to have contributed "to modernisation of the literature of a country which, because of the avatars of history, is now to be seen as post-industrial and post-imperial".

The forth section of the volume comprises four chapters on the subject of the construction of collectives identities, nationhood and the discourses thereof. Baldwin et al. underscore that this is "a matter of the ways in which people identify with places or are identified with them by others [...] How and why do people identify themselves as members of distinct national collectivities and what are the implications of this?" (2004, 157). In this context, the first contribution in this part of the volume is an article by Roberto del Valle Alcalá, where he examines *Border Country* and *Loyalties*—the first and last finished works of fiction respectively written by British cultural theorist and New Left activist Raymond Williams—and his reflection on the concept on 'community' articulated in and through both. As underlined by del Valle Alcalá, both novels represent "two characteristic instances of communitarian vindication and analysis of the formative conditions under which an 'ordinary' cultural experience can effectively lead to the articulation of a public programme for radical social

transformation". The chapter provides an insight into William's discussion of the processes whereby the articulation of shared meanings and values in working-class social experience—chiefly those of collective resistance—come to shape class awareness and indeed the so-called 'practice of possibility' (Williams 1989, 314) as an essential element for developing a shared sense of identity and community. Thus, in the respective contexts of the General Strike of 1926 and the Great Miners' Strike of 1984-5, *Border Country* and *Loyalties* explore the complex conjunctures of social and political change in Britain and the emergence of working-class communities articulated through the possibility of an "assertion of collectivity as the ontological basis of a shared social identity".

    The crossroads of working-class and nationhood are similarly taken into consideration in the approach to identity construction in the second paper of this section. Based on the premise that media representations are crucial elements which account for the emergence and underpinning of discursive constructions, Igor Prieto-Arranz's chapter focuses on the representation of national identities in television dramas. Conceiving of humour as intertwined with power structures and national discourses, Prieto-Arranz's analysis of ITV sitcom *Benidorm* (2007—) explores the relationship "between representation in the text under analysis (particularly concerning the images of Spain and the Spanish) and the British audience". The paper demonstrates that, regardless of the views that the sitcom British working-class characters have got about Spain and Spaniards, "the image remains of a largely inefficient, quaintly retarded country inhabited by a superstitious, easy-to-fool population".

    Television is similarly approached as a fundamental channel for the representation and construction of identities these days in his chapter about British espionage melodrama *Spooks* (*MI-5* in Europe and USA), where Hugh Ortega Breton draws upon a psycho-cultural framework for his analysis of pervasive paranoid styles of representation on television. As Ortega Breton highlights, "since the 1990s the fear of danger, persecution and destruction has a greater political and entertainment currency as a result of living in a more socially atomised world where the consciousness of potential risks has increased exponentially". His psycho-cultural approach examines culture psychoanalytically and grounds such analyses in the particular social, political and historic conjunctures where specific cultural products are embedded. His paper evidences that the recurring fear of death or persecution in *Spooks* TV melodrama is to be anchored to the Anglo-American politico-cultural context determining contemporary representations of various perceived dangers like 'war on terror'. As shown by his study, subjectivities in popular-culture products like this

television crime fiction may be taken to have been shaped by the representation of the world as dangerous, which "is the precondition for the emergence of the victim subject position as an identity defining feature in late twentieth and early twenty first century western societies"; hence, the actual representation of horrendous emotions deeply rooted in widespread fear of danger or persecution in Western cultures at the beginning of the new millennium.

In the last contribution of this section, Guillermo Iglesias Díaz sheds light on the importance of cinematographic narration nowadays for providing "those elements that shape the national identity". Drawing upon a postcolonial framework for the analysis of films as cinematographic artifacts, his paper focuses on the construction of Galizian national identity in Antón Reixa's film adaptation of Manuel Rivas's novel *O lapis do carpinteiro* (*The Carpenter's Pencil*). Iglesias Díaz's essay stresses the role of fiction narratives in re-constructing new realities. In point of fact, the film deals with "'the re-existence' of Galicia as a national community and with the memory of those who were killed because of their political ideas, a vision of Galicia which contrasts with what is commonly accepted as the Galician submissive character". In this way, this 're-creation' of the beginning of the Spanish civil war in Galicia comes out as an instance of history re-writing from the viewpoint of those who had to bear the prohibition of most public expressions of Galician national identity and language for four decades under Francisco Franco's regime.

The last section of the volume is based on papers dealing with identity-construction and identification processes in the print media. Admittedly, the media is a privileged arena for the representation and construction of identities. Similarly to other social institutions, mass media are argued to "'interpellate' or hail the subject, again positioning him or her within society" (Edgar 2002, 186). Print media have indeed a key role in the formation of cultures "because mass printing enabled the broad distribution of common language, values, ideas, norms, practices and ideologies" (Lewis 2002, 12). The media in general, and printed media in particular, are thus essential in doing identity work through the construction of communities of ideal readers, with which actual readers engage in identity-negotiation processes in the course of which they take up or resist the subject positions and the ideological repertoires projected from newspapers and magazines. This process has major ideological and cultural implications, for (print) media have "the power to represent, over and over, some images, some assumptions, and to exclude others" (Branston and Stafford 1996, 78). With a special focus on the construction of femininity in the press, Caroline Bainbridge takes a psycho-cultural

perspective on women as news-readers, news-producers and news-objects in an age of celebrity and so-called therapy culture. As Bainbridge argues, "the media increasingly utilise psychological discourses and images of both emotional suffering and development, manifesting a deeper cultural desire for therapeutic understanding". In the context of ongoing debates about the relation between feminism and post-feminism, Bainbridge examines both women writing in the press and the (female) objects of their commentary and analysis maintaining that a substantial part of such commentary "can be characterised as biting, envious and vituperative and there are clear links here to a broader cultural phenomenon of competitive disparagement between women, known in the vernacular as 'bitchiness'". This new trend of women columnists indulging in disparaging comments towards other women is examined from the cultural context of post-feminist where "the loss of feminism as an external object entails its loss in the inner worlds of women". This, together with "a post-feminist sensibility coloured by a certain tone of nostalgia for modes of femininity more readily associated with the pre-second-wave-feminist" results in forms of envy and repressed aggression among women columnists in magazines of great circulation like *Heat* or *Closer*. As Bainbridge puts it, "when female journalists attack women in the public eye, they do so because they are rehearsing the attack that they themselves routinely feel within their own workplaces".

The 'tabloidisation' of popular culture echoed by Bainbridge in her chapter is precisely the main concern of Coperías-Aguilar and Gómez-Mompart's contribution, which focuses on the changing identity of British broadsheets. Taking the increasing homogenization process in the British press and the blurring of traditional broadsheets and tabloids as representative of quality and popular press respectively, the authors enquire into the changes in the form and contents of broadsheets which have resulted in a hybridization process. In the authors' view, "the newspaper seems to be a broadsheet no more, but it is, since there is still information, sense, reflection, accuracy and interpretation; and at the same time it has become more and more a tabloid: popular, revealing, lively and trivial". The rationale behind this process, it is argued, may be found in broadsheets having had to find "their own new place regarding the economic, technological, cultural and media situation in order to be competitive in a changing structure". The progressive evolution of broadsheets into what some call 'broadloids' is thus to be understood considering factors like the increased competition for readers and advertisers, the tendency to imitate the digital versions of the papers, the impact of television discourse, and effects of a new global culture with new readers trained in the new

traditions of mass media products; hence, "the dumbing-down of broadsheet standards, regarding their information quality or the contamination of some features characteristic of tabloid or sensationalist journalism".

Conceiving of news as significantly "responsible for projecting images of the Self for the Other as part of the new entertainment trend", Valdeón considers the effect of news texts in the perception of other nations. Taking the intersemiotic-translation of news text for the so-called promotion of a global image of modernity, the last chapter of the volume delves into the representation Spain as a case in point. With a focus on the culture section of the English edition of the most widely sold daily in Spain, namely *El País*, Valdeón succeeds in embedding an academic approach to journalistic translation in a broader cultural studies perspective in an attempt to investigate "the extent to which translators in *El País English Edition* manage to establish a bridge between cultures or perpetuate the traditional images of Spain abroad". Valdeón explores how 'frames' may influence translators' own perception of the world when they conduct their own translation work. The piece offers significant results evidencing a certain tension between, on the one hand, the lack of complex arguments in the promotion of national images of Spain abroad and, on the other, the consistent projection of modernity of the country, elements of high culture being privileged in most of the articles examined.

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PART I:

THINKING BEYOND MODERN IDENTITIES

Heading towards a Liquid Identity

Rafael Luis Pompeia Gioielli

1. Introduction

With globalization and the consequential acceleration of the symbolic exchanges generated by the migratory flows and by the international communications and consumption networks, stable cultural backgrounds, unwavering until a short time ago, have been displaced. On the one hand, one direction leads towards globalization, operating by means of the convergence in what Ortiz (2003) calls the "international popular culture." On the other hand, the opposite direction is marked by the rediscovery of what is local and the redeeming of traditions and of particularities, and it has given life to a movement that makes cultural differences explicit (Hall 2003a, 2003b and 2003c). Globalization (see Ianni 2001 and 2003) has placed the capacity of the Nation-State in check in terms of circumscribing and limiting the cultural processes to its borders and has broadened the spectrum of symbolic exchanges and of the networks for the construction of cultural meanings. It is within this context that it is necessary and that there is the intention of reviewing and rethinking the processes that mark cultural identity from modernity to contemporaneity.

The issue of identity becomes even more intriguing when it is analyzed in terms of the unfolding of what has been conventionalized as postmodernity. The several criticisms of metaphysical thought have provided renewed indications for the understanding of identity in the contemporary world. It would not be an overstatement to say that postmodern studies have significantly contributed to a new concept of the theme. If the idea of identity was born with modernity, then it seems logical that the theme be reviewed based on the theoretic contributions that indicate the exhaustion of the modern-Enlightenment adventure. As Bauman says (1998, 111):

> That past experience, as we tend to reconstruct it now, retrospectively, has come to be known to us mainly through its disappearance. What we think the past had—is what we know we do not have.

Thus, it is the objective of this study to analyze the crisis of the concept of identity, in pursuit of a new understanding of the issue in face of postmodern thought and the contemporary socio-cultural dynamics.

2. Modernity and Identity

It was with the advent of modernity and the consequential emancipation of the subject promoted by it (Habermas 1990) that identity emerged as an "issue" for the first time. This is due to the fact that in pre-modern societies, the individuals were linked to a mythical reality ruled by divine power. They did not see themselves as equal except through the sharing of the same religion. Linked to faith and to myth, what we might call a traditional identity was above all the condition of mutual recognition. Within the universe of tradition, the sharing of religion is what enables us to recognize others and within it there is no room for differences.

> Viewed this way, identity is an essence unable to evolve and over which the individual or the group has no influence. (Cuche 2002, 178)

The others, those who were different, were considered as barbarians and savages. Under these conditions, if there is no possibility of accepting differences, it is also impossible to talk about the construction of identity.

With humanism, and later on with the Renaissance, a gradual rupturing process with the central place of faith in social organization takes place. The advent of modernity occurs precisely due to the rupture with tradition. Through the process of "disenchantment of the world", man seeks to become emancipated from the arbitrariness observed in religious knowledge. Hegel called this movement the "principle of subjectivity", where the human being becomes the subject of his own existence. And the emergence or the invention of subjectivity makes identity a central issue in social life. The principle of "equality among humans" is what creates the need to think about identity, in fact, a demarcation of differences. Religious belief, for instance, becomes the first trait of distinction in order to have identities cataloged in the modern world.

2.1 The Intangibility of the National Identity

The modernizing process broke up the central place that religion occupied in everyday practices, and by doing so, discredited the sphere that offered the perspective of community and individual security (Bauman 2004). With the gradual removal of tradition, the modern world

needed to find a new social sphere to play a regulatory role that first belonged to religions and tradition. The soothing power of a moral norm, which in other eras belonged to religion, was pursued in modernity by rationality. As stated Lipovetsky (1994, 17):

> Moral duties are imposed by themselves, should be object of rational explanation, demonstrated through support in the simple fact of man living in society.

Santos observes that the invention of the liberal State meets this demand for regulation: "Being an emanation of civil society, through social contract, the liberal State has the power to rule over it" (1994, 138). The State becomes therefore the legitimate institution to organize the secular knowledge and to regulate the way of life that goes with it. Moreover, it will depend on it to put in motion, through its strategic role and its legitimacy for the use of force, the advance of modernity and the progressive distancing from tradition.

> The religious bond was progressively sidelined by various routes, by violent repression (in prohibitions on worship and confiscation of church property), by substituting functions (in many ways of secularism carried out by the State, from funeral rites to education) and by accommodation in subordinated position (in laws that separated Church from the State). (Santos 1994, 141)

It is in this context that we share the idea that the nation is an invention of the liberal State around which it seeks to reproduce the experience of community observed in traditional environments. Though its institutional pillars were rooted in every sphere of social life and in the spread of an invented tradition (Hall 2003a), the liberal State tries to legitimize the construction of nation as the space of social belonging of self in modern times. While the bureaucratic apparatus imposes its legitimacy using coercive force, the nation imposes itself discursively evoking feelings of belonging and community. Bauman (2004, 83) observes in this regard that

shared nationality should play a crucial role in legitimizing political unification of the State, and the invocation of common roots of a common character should be an important instrument of ideological mobilization—a production of loyalty and patriotic obedience.

The nation is presented as a space of a "mental and cultural unit" that, using a term by Hall (2003c), works as a producer of meanings and identities. As an imagined and abstract *locus* of belonging, national culture produced a narrative and symbols in order to justify and sustain the main representation of identity in modernity: national identity. Hall (2003a, 51) affirms that "the national cultures, by producing meanings about 'the nation', meanings we can identify with, construct identities". Through national culture and identity, the nation becomes a system of cultural representation that all the time reaffirms collective commitment to the modern emancipation project. When it is created, the modern nation does not have a structured symbolic network of meanings that might characterize it or be reproduced, and thus, invents its own tradition by means of national culture (Anderson 1983). As an imagined community, it is an intangible community, which stabilizes itself by means of a bureaucratic identity that is always established *a priori*, as something given.

The filiations to this community, in other words, to the national identity, do not emanate from life practices built over the past within the social group dynamics. On the contrary, it is prescribed by a controllable range of rites, characters and symbols. Since it is always constituted *a priori* of social life, national identity cannot be treated as a mediation object between the differences. It is the element that tries to eliminate plurality and minimize conflicts, which may subsist within the national State. National identity works as a strategic device that enables the nation to be always cohesive. Being the fruit of a discursive construction, it intends to free itself of the fluctuation of social life practices and historic contingency, performing as an intangible element.

2.2 The Regulated Identity

Several authors have pointed out the disciplinary character of modern civilization in recent years. Despite claims to be guided by principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, the route developed was not led for the effective implementation of those prerogatives. On the contrary, what was consolidated was an even more controlled society, in which bureaucratic institutions that invade and determine all areas of social life and intimacy were created. Thus, according to Giddens (1992, 27), "those who talk about modernity are talking about the superego." In this context, the