

Gönül Pultar, ed. *Imagined Identities: Identity Formation in the Age of Globalization*, Foreword
by Nur Yalman

Eleftheria Arapoglou



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/11177>

ISSN: 1991-9336

Publisher

European Association for American Studies

Electronic reference

Eleftheria Arapoglou, « Gönül Pultar, ed. *Imagined Identities: Identity Formation in the Age of Globalization*, Foreword by Nur Yalman », *European journal of American studies* [Online], Reviews 2016-1, document 9, Online since 17 February 2016, connection on 20 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/11177>

This text was automatically generated on 20 April 2019.

Creative Commons License

Gönül Pultar, ed. Imagined Identities: Identity Formation in the Age of Globalization, Foreword by Nur Yalman

Eleftheria Arapoglou

- Imagined Identities: Identity Formation in the Age of Globalization* is a collection of essays written by scholars with diverse disciplinary backgrounds and wide-ranging approaches—from literary and linguistic analysis, to anthropology and ethnic studies, to media studies and cultural geography. The book is divided in six parts—Fiction and Transnational Identity; Nonfiction as Identity Forger; Performing Identity; Identity Formation in the Post-Soviet Space; The New Eastern Question: Nationhood between Faith and Modernity; Positions—with a Preface by Nur Yalman, and a critical introduction by the volume’s editor, Gönül Pultar.
- The eighteen chapters in the volume all engage with the question of identity formation in the age of globalization. By discussing both the construction and deconstruction of global identities in their engagement with culture(s), ethnicities and nationhood(s), the contributors to the volume explore the tension that is inherent in the formation of cultural identities that are at once national, regional, linguistic, and religious.
- Yalman’s concise foreword connects the volume’s thematic preoccupations with the long intellectual history of the question of cultural identity, harking back to such theorists

of identity as Franz Fanon, Eric Hobsbawm, Ernest Gellner, and Benedict Anderson. Subsequently, Pultar's six-part introduction follows the structure of the book, and outlines its conceptual and theoretical framework. Pultar grounds her argument on the premise that individuals and groups in the post-Cold War, post-9/11 period have been experiencing a complex and pluralistic sense of belonging that necessitates a novel approach to the discussion of identity—one that challenges the notion of an essentialist, ordinary, and homogeneous identity concept.

- 4 Part one includes Pramod Nayar's chapter on the transnational Indian novel in English, Tanja Stampfl's chapter on Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, and Andrea Efthymiou's chapter on the move from Empire to Nation in *Pascali's Island*. The three chapters in the section focus on dual cultural identities in works of fiction, from the waning days of the Ottoman Empire, to contemporary Afghanistan. More specifically, Nayar proposes a framework for reading transnational writings from formerly colonized nations, and argues for the salience of the transformative politics of the "postcolonial transnational parasite" (31). Postcolonial studies also constitute the interpretative frame for Stampfl, who looks at *The Kite Runner* as an example of a diasporic novel, possessing neocolonial aspects and functioning as national allegory (35). The section concludes with Efthymiou's biopolitical reading of *Pascali's Island*, in which the critic makes the case for individual identities as contingent upon the sovereign systems that control them (56).
- 5 Part two, which is devoted to nonfiction, begins with Pultar's chapter on the ethnic aspects of memories of food cultures. Pultar reads Takuhi Tovmasyan's "cookbook-memoir" as signifying the creation of ethnic memory for the Armenian community in Turkey—a form of "community imagining" that aims at "(re)negotiating the ethnic community's position" within Turkish society (65). In the second chapter, Anna Roosvall discusses the journalistic genre "foreign news" as an element of "nationalism," bringing in examples from Swedish media from the 1980s to 2001. Roosvall's chapter explores the will to nationhood in connection with foreign news, and the tension inherent between this will and globalization. Last, the chapter by Dawn Morais is a case study of Malaysian tourism advertisements—the "Malaysia: Truly Asia" campaign—, focusing on representations of the "self." As Morais argues, the omissions and deliberate facelifts and "enhancements" to the many "faces of Malaysia" not only misrepresent

“Malaysianness,” they also typify Malaysia’s palimpsestic history in the context of neo-imperialist Westernizing discourses.

- 6 The emphasis in Part three is on identity as performance. First, the chapter by Dorothea Fischer-Hornung discusses ethnic humor between Germans and Turks in Germany. More specifically, Fischer-Hornung examines Kaya Yanar’s Friday-night prime-time TV comedy show *Was guckst Du?* as a successful example of humor undercutting essentialism—the binary trap of being either/or. The question of essentialism and identification also underlies the second chapter by Cathy Waegner, which focuses on the ways minstrelsy links issues of ethnicity, class, and gender. As Waegner illustrates, polycultural interactions involve “challenging choices, opportunities to embrace affirmative hybridity, and often entertaining bargaining” (138). The third chapter in Part III, Yiorgos Kalogeras’s “Isaac Bezzerides: Translating Ethnicity from Fiction to Film,” makes a case for Bezzerides’s transition from an Ottoman Armenian Greek to an American writer who identified professionally as a Greek American. Kalogeras’s argument illuminates the effect Bezzerides’s connection with Hollywood had on his creative output: liberating and legitimizing, yet constraining and frustrating. In the third part’s final chapter, national identity enactment resurfaces as a topic, but this time Simona Sangiorgi considers the “leisure-face” of national identity as it relates to contemporary amusement theme parks in Europe and the United States.
- 7 The volume’s fourth part has a specific geographical focus: the post-Soviet space. Hence, Abel Polese examines Ukrainian/Russian relations in Odessa, while Timur Kozyrev takes on the complicated nature of Kazakhstani identity formation and the role of the Turkic component in it. Last, Emil Nasritdinov and Kevin O’Connor’s chapter relies on research they conducted on the new market economy in Kyrgyzstan, in post-Communist Central Asia. What all chapters in part four agree on is that perceptions of “ethnic selves” and “ethnic others” in the global world are constantly in flux and liable to change, allowing the individual the freedom of multiple identifications with diverse communities. Not surprisingly, such processes conflict with national history projects that tend to typify cultural, ethnic, and tribal affiliations. Yet, as the four contributors suggest, new perspectives on global-local ties

are emerging, whereby global factors reenergize “frozen” local resources.

- 8 Parts five and six move the volume’s scope to historically troubled locations; hence, Egypt, India, Lebanon, and their troubled histories fall under the scrutiny of Samaa Gamie, Fouad and Barbara Ibrahim, and Samer Abboud. More specifically, Gamie examines the Indian and Egyptian nationalist models, and illustrates an interconnection between the two. Fouad and Barbara Ibrahim identify and argue for the differences in intergenerational approaches to cultural identity formation within the Egyptian Coptic diaspora. In a similar vein, Abboud makes the case for identity in Lebanon’s various communities as responsive to “the interplay between sectarian identities, domestic politics, and the regional political environment” (267).
- 9 The volume’s closing part, entitled “Positions,” is made up of two chapters. In the first, Luís C.V. Santos discusses the reasons underlying the consolidation of the identifier “American” as the official name/adjective for the citizens of a particular country on the entire American continent. In the volume’s final chapter, Grigol Ubiria returns to the question of nation-states in an age of globalization. Ubiria looks both at issues of economic and political sovereignty, as well as at the diversity of national interests, ideologies, cultures, and religions in the global world.
- 10 Overall, *Imagined Identities* is an important contribution to the exploration of identity formation in the age of globalization. Responding to the dialogue initiated by the work of scholars such as Anthony Kwame Appiah, Homi Bhabha, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Stuart Hall, and Anthony Smith, the eighteen chapters in the volume offer keen insights into relatively untapped and challenging domains. Ultimately, by offering a rich “kaleidoscope of contexts,” as the book’s endorsement by Michael Herzfeld announces, *Imagined Identities* opens up new vistas on the continuous and challenging debate over the significance of identities in a world of indigenous and immigrant minorities.

AUTHOR

ELEFThERIA ARAPOGLOU

The University of California, Davis