



You have downloaded a document from  
**RE-BUŚ**  
repository of the University of Silesia in Katowice

**Title:** Introduction

**Author:** Wojciech Kalaga, Tadeusz Rachwał

**Citation style:** Kalaga Wojciech, Rachwał Tadeusz. (2002). Introduction. W: W. Kalaga, T. Rachwał (red.), "(Trans)-formations I : identity and property : essays in cultural practice" (S. 7-9). Katowice : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego



Uznanie autorstwa - Na tych samych warunkach - Licencja ta pozwala na kopiowanie, zmienianie, rozprowadzanie, przedstawianie i wykonywanie utworu tak długo, jak tylko na utwory zależne będzie udzielana taka sama licencja.



UNIWERSYTET ŚLĄSKI  
W KATOWICACH



Biblioteka  
Uniwersytetu Śląskiego



Ministerstwo Nauki  
i Szkolnictwa Wyższego

## Introduction

Identity and property are closely related terms. Identity as the quality of being the same, of being absolutely one, hides the ambiguity of property, of having unchangeable properties as one's absolute property, and of thus being proper. The economy of property, its management, is ethically marked as "proper," as appropriate. It positions any disturbance of identity as improper, as a lack of proper properties which translates itself into a deficiency, a disturbance of normality, a "neither-this-nor-that." The present volume is about the "neither-this-nor-that," it problematises both identity and property as positive categories by way of slightly de-domesticating them, de-economising them as absolute terms, by way of showing how they feed upon their negatives in order to secure their seemingly unquestionable positions.

Identity seems to be a category of life rather than that of death. Yet, as Katarzyna Ancuta observes in the paper opening this volume to the living-dead ("The Incredible Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies or How to be the Living Dead in Technicolor"), our culture is strangely infatuated with zombies, with creatures which haunt identity through the return of its end in death. Zombies are recognizable as zombies only from the outside, from the position of life, and never from their own positions by themselves. Recognizing zombies as not us, we secure our properties simultaneously desiring, perhaps masochistically, to see ourselves as zombies whom we all are, but to which we fail to testify due to the fear of zombies.

If zombies bring to the fore the ambiguity of the subject via the ambiguity of living, Levinas questions identity's unity from the perspective of loving. Seeing love as "the equivocal *par excellence*," Ewa Rychter notices ("Am I My Lover's Keeper? Identity and Possession in Emmanuel Levinas's 'Phenomenology of Eros'"), he simultaneously essentialises Eros and unsays it, leaves it undefined and undefinable. Ego cannot master love exactly due to the lack

of space for property in it. Such an unsaying, as a kind of linguistic dis-possession, is also taken up in Katarzyna Borkowska's paper ("Property and Identity: Heaney as an Example") in the context of shaping/unshaping of the poetic and national identities in Seamus Heaney's poetry. From the rational perspective, from the position of ratio, linguistic dispossession is a negativity. Aneta Zacharz reads in her paper ("On the Way to Nowhere – Reflection Upon the Impossible of Identity") elements of the philosophies of Shestov, Levinas, Blanchot, and Brach-Czaina trying to show ways out from this negativity to the spheres of liminality and absence seen as the spaces where identity is constituted.

That one can be dispossessed of one's identity via disruption of communication, a postal disturbance, is the theme undertaken by Piotr Dziedzic in his reading of Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* ("The Word, the Self, and the Underground Estate of Pierce Inverarity in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*"). The inability to communicate posits one always already "underground", in the state of undesirable isolation from the world which notoriously refuses any direct possession, a simple and unequivocal understanding. The idiom of possession also infiltrates our thinking about the erotic and, as Jacek Mydla argues ("'Lust in Action.' Possession, Transformation, and the Exorcising of Eros"), is responsible for the vagueness of the distinction between "love" and "lust." Eros seen as the extatic coming out of one's shell is destined to remain incomplete – it is as it were motored by lust, an unreasonable project and the promise of possessing which hides defeat at the point of its beginning.

Transformations beyond control, as Rafał Dubaniowski argues ("Transforming Europe: Landscape and Domesticity in English Literature of the 1930s") constitute a significant aspect of the formation of the modern European identity in the 1930s, an identity which, disillusioned with itself, loses the hope of salvaging the world by art. At the time when the "imagined has become the unimaginable" inventiveness begins to be seen as culture's failure, an apocalypse which signifies time cut off from a place. As a result of this displacement, Modernism finds significance in such objects which come to stand for the ideas or emotions, which as it were replace them. Postmodernism, according to Charles Vander Zwaag ("Postmodern Auto Conversions"), annuls such objects by way of making it impossible to say who is the "experiencer" of ideas and emotions, by way making the subject a semi-visible mixture of interpreted interpreters of the world. What comes with what he calls late postmodernism is the invisibility of objects deprived of any marks of identity. Late postmodern texts aim at a certain invisibility, an invisibility in which the interpreter becomes invisible to him / herself. This paradox challenges the privacy of identity and, with the coming of the Web, transforms us into "netizens" dwelling in a politically undetermined space of seemingly free communication where

New Wired Identities of the Communication Revolution Era”) sees in this possibility a cryptographic protocol which enables a totally new anonymous identity, and which announces the dawn of might be called “crypto anarchy.” What Tomasz Kalaga (“Plagiarism in the Contemporary Academia: Identity and Ethics”) finds to be threatening in the postmodern convulsions of the subject is the conflation of “production” and “creation” which, in the context of the contemporary academia, complicate the notions of plagiarism and of academic honesty.

Certain fluctuations of identity can also be found in the sphere of the divine, to which Małgorzata Medyńska (“Dana, Éire, Cesair: The Fluctuating Identity of the Irish Chthonic Goddesses”) testifies in her reading of the mythic Irish chthonic goddesses. Certain seemingly universal entities escape our historical grasp when viewed from the perspective where the very idea of space and movement are de-universalized. Sometimes, as Marek Kulisz argues in his analysis of the identity of the commander (“The Identity of the Commander – Nomad Organization Against the State”), things can be historicized only if we take into consideration the possibility of there being a parallel history, a history which questions the identity of history itself. A singular becoming of an identity might always be illusive and it cannot be reduced to some ordinary singular source or pillar which grants them some secure presence on what Marta Zając (“Subject in Difference, or on (Feminine) Becomings: Deleuze and Guattari’s and Cixous’ Concept of Subjectivity”) calls the “plane of immanence.” That plane, as the plane of singular becoming, is undermined in a number of contemporary critical theories by a number of “becomings” which also “de-masc-ulinize” the culturally privileged plane(s) of perception. Plane perception may always hide a riddle, a mark of a riddle which, though traditionally belonging to the playful side of human existence, may always turn out to be the constitutive part of human expression, an aporetic de-clarification of what is plainly stated which Rafał Borysławski (“Say What I Am: Aldhelmian Riddle as the Language of Transformation”) finds in his reading of Aldhelm’s riddles. Property and properties are riddled by the improper, by “improperty” which Sławomir Masłoń (“Improperty”) sees as the place-moment of exposition, of the unmasking of the proper whose identity hides the depthlessness of the surface which, though improper, needn’t be negatively superficial.

WOJCIECH KALAGA and TADEUSZ RACHWAŁ