



Torn Identities: Life-Stories at the Border of Italian Literature (Troubador Italian Studies)

Gregoria Manzin

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Torn Identities explores the relation between borders and identity. Geopolitical maps show borders as lines of separation marking the point of divide between different nations. Yet borders are man-made and often artificially constructed lines. They divide territories but not necessarily cultures. History offers multiple world-wide examples of borders cutting through the social and cultural tissue of nations to sort out political disputes. One of these examples is the redrawing of the North-eastern border of Italy after WWII, with the cession of Istria and Dalmatia to former Yugoslavia in 1947. In Torn Identities the author examines the life-stories of five women writers to explore the impact that shifting borderlines exercise on the sense of identity of individuals and communities affected by these changes. Framed by Jean-Luc Nancy's paradigm of the 'un-exposed as the nonexistent', Torn Identities traces the process of identity formation by following the writers' narrations of their own journeys. In doing so, it shows how these are narratives moulded by the desire to unveil one's distinctive voice. Utilising Adriana Cavarero's concept of identity as the figural unity of the picture left behind by our life-stories, Torn Identities explores narrative as the locus to express who one is, as opposed to what we might be. Building on the ideas of Homi Bhabha, the geopolitical space is interpreted as the expression of a transnational reality. In this context, places of memory provide the grid by which one can examine the traumatic memories underpinning the writers' life-stories. From this perspective, borders are read as liminal spaces: as the locale of the intermingling of cultures and languages, and as the time-space mechanism to bridge over into the Other.

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