

# Constructions of Identity in British Music Videos

## Article history:

Received: 29.04.2026

Revised: 25.05.2026

Accepted: 17.06.2026

Available online: 01.07.2026

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<https://doi.org/10.56177/eon.7.2.2026.art.12>

**Abstract:** This study brings forth the construction of multiple and fragmented identities in British cultural products, namely three music videos that had shaped the worldwide contemporary cultural perception ever since they got released. By incorporating the theoretical concepts and relevant scholarly perspectives included in the bibliography, the analysis aims at highlighting the following themes: the work of ideology and hegemonic forces, as well as possible forms of resistance through creative consumption, the construction of identity and subject positions in post-modern culture, stereotyped or/and unconventional representations of race/ethnicity, the contemporary city as the realm of competing discourses, representations, simulacra, globalisation and disjunctive cultural flows.

**Keywords:** identity, globalisation, ideology, Beatles, New Order, M.I.A.

**TITLU:** „Construcții ale identității în videoclipurile muzicale britanice”

**REZUMAT:** Acest studiu evidențiază construcția unor identități multiple și fragmentate în produsele culturale britanice, mai precis în trei videoclipuri muzicale care au modelat percepția culturală contemporană la nivel mondial încă de la lansarea lor. Prin încorporarea conceptelor teoretice și a perspectivelor academice relevante incluse în bibliografie, analiza își propune să evidențieze următoarele teme: acțiunea ideologiei și a forțelor hegemonice, precum și forme posibile de rezistență prin consum creativ, construcția identității și pozițiile subiective în cultura postmodernă, reprezentări stereotipe și/sau neconvenționale ale rasei/etniei, orașul contemporan ca domeniu al discursurilor în competiție, reprezentările, simulacrele, globalizarea și fluxurile culturale concurente.

**CUVINTE-CHEIE:** identitate, globalizare, ideologie, Beatles, New Order, M.I.A.

## Theoretical background

The present study explores the complex implications of identity from the standpoint of cultural studies, focusing on the key processes involved in its formation at both subjective and social levels. Since the Enlightenment, identity has generally been approached from two contrasting perspectives. On the one hand, essentialism assumes that individuals and groups possess inherent, fixed, and immutable characteristics or “essences.” On the other hand, anti-essentialism challenges this view by arguing that identities, cultures, and social categories are not biologically predetermined but are shaped by historical and social forces, continuously reconfigured through discourse and practice: “identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation” (Hall 2011, 4). In line with this perspective, cultural studies largely rejects essentialism, emphasizing instead the dynamic and constructed nature of identity. Accordingly, self-identity should not be understood as a stable set of traits, but rather as a reflexive process shaped by contextual and temporal conditions: “Self-identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of, traits, possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his autobiography” (Giddens 1991, 53).

Within this frame, “there is no essence of identity to be discovered; rather, cultural identity is continually being produced within the vectors of similarity and difference” (Barker and Jane 2016, 273), which are subject to a connotative and evocative connection that is forged and temporary (Laclau 1977). At the same time, a mix of discursive elements is bound together socially and contingently, such as class, gender, sexuality, age, race, ethnicity, nationality, political position, morality, religion etc., only to be regulated through ascending meaning ascriptions under the umbrella of ideological and hegemonic forces: “Identity then becomes a cut or a snapshot of unfolding meanings; it is a strategic positioning which makes meaning possible” (Barker and Jane 2016, 273). In this respect, ideology works as a map of meaning and as a cluster of specific understandings that obscure and

maintain power (for example, via television news or representations of gender in advertising). Ideological frames emphasize the interplay between power and consent, as historical bloc of powerful groups exercises social authority and leadership (including on cultural grounds) over subordinate groups through the winning of consent. Furthermore, hegemony deals with making, maintaining and reproducing ascendant meanings and practices (Hall 1982, 85 and Turner 2003, 175). On the other hand, representation defines how world is socially constructed and described to and by us in meaningful ways, as well as the textual generation of meaning and the mode in which meaning is produced in a variety of contexts. Cultural representations are embedded in images, sounds, objects, books, magazines, TV, clothes, activities, etc. and are “polysemic” (Turner 2003, 31-32), containing the possibility of a set of different meanings that have to be realized by actual readers.

Several cultural products emphasize, for instance, a critique on the concept of “modernity as loss” in the context of globalised capitalist economy, by incorporating various intertextual elements characteristic of popular culture and, in particular, popular music (*A Red Letter Day* by Pet Shop Boys), or reflect and challenge stereotypical images of women by creating a semantic gap between the lyrics and the visual narrative (*Hug My Soul* by Saint Etienne). In the following sections, we explore some key aspects that deal with how identity is fundamentally linked with concepts such as representation, ideology and power, in the spirit of an anti-essentialist perspective.

### **Identity as representation and performance: *A Day in the Life* by The Beatles**

Marxist scholars explore the idea that the production of subjectivity depends on social, temporal and spatial context, defining ideology as a discursive structure which encapsulates world views constitutive for social relations. Therefore, the subject formed in ideology performs a fragmented and differential identity. Specifically, Guy Debord grasps reality as invaded by the spectacle contemplated, while the latter becomes a mix of counterfeit realities generating a mutual social alienation: “The spectacle is not simply an overabundance of the media in everyday lived experience. It is an ideology that has become materialized. This ideology-materialized has replaced the lived experience of reality with a lived experience of a representational pseudo-reality, one accepted as objective truth.” (2021, 17)

In reflecting on Debord’s idea that the spectacle turns lived experience into a mediated pseudo-reality, the music video for “*A Day in the Life*” by The Beatles stands out as a revealing illustration of identity becoming representation and performance. The video, which mixes staged studio footage with a kind of playful, chaotic carnival atmosphere, presents the band not simply as musicians documenting their work, but as cultural figures performing versions of themselves for the camera. What appears at first to be a casual behind-the-scenes recording session is actually a carefully constructed spectacle, shaping how the audience understands both the artists and the meaning of the song.

One of the most striking elements is how the band members exaggerate their personas within the studio setting. Rather than portraying the recording session as a technical, disciplined process, the video shows them wearing whimsical costumes, laughing, and interacting in almost theatrical ways. This transforms the studio from a workspace into a stage and the musicians from workers into performers. Although the viewer might assume they are witnessing “authentic” creative moments, the *mise-en-scène* signals that authenticity is itself part of the performance. The Beatles appear aware of the camera and lean into their public identities: John as the ironic observer, Paul as the energetic collaborator, George as the introspective presence, and Ringo as the affable participant. In Debord’s terms, these images replace direct experience with stylized representations that the audience accepts as the band’s “true” selves. The orchestral buildup scenes especially embody Debord’s idea of reality turned into spectacle. The camera lingers on extravagant costumes, exaggerated gestures, and a celebratory absurdity that seems almost detached from the song’s sober lyrical content. The performers are not merely playing instruments; they are enacting roles within a chaotic but highly aestheticized environment. Identity becomes fluid, playful, and deliberately constructed as something displayed rather than something lived.

In this respect, the video grants a peculiar sense of reality in which identity is publicly constructed and expanded by shifting dominant modes of reflection. Real-life events prove to be nothing more than various reference points in a maze which is constantly revealing routine working practices of the artistic staff (gestures, postures, outfits, etc.). Political and erotic stimuli drive individuals into a sort of collective absurdity, unfolding a carnivalesque landscape. In a kind of pranky behind-the-scenes cut, the video shows the interplay between the alluring masks (public facts and figures) and the artistic propensity for higher states of consciousness.

The lyrics further reinforce this performative fragmentation of identity. Lines such as “I read the news today, oh boy” and the references to newspapers, accidents, and political events highlight how mediated

information structures consciousness. The world described in the song is not encountered directly but through headlines and stories – spectacles that shape what counts as reality. This mirrors the video's own layering of mediation: the viewer watches a filmed performance of a song about experiences already filtered through media. The everyday self becomes inseparable from representational frameworks. Furthermore, media intermediates the cultural game of these perceptive and, at the same time, deceptive representations by pulling artists and audience altogether into a spiral of performance overcharged by emotions. Seemingly a stream of consciousness, the video overlaps images, sounds, extravagant clothing items, beams of light, actions (running, dancing, smoking, and playing instruments) and expresses cultural strands of human condition. Hence, instead of mirroring reality, the performance puts together a selected and constructed representation constitutive of what we may call an objective identity. Subsequently, it creates a narrative which splits public and private events into fractal frameworks with rules of reference. Popular pleasures, provided as glimpses of authentic everyday artistic life, are exposed for the sake of audience's perception and imagery. The lived realities of artists are subject matter for constant (re)construction in an environment of "semiotic excess" (Hartley 1983, Fiske 1986, Turner 2003, 97-98).

By merging playful artifice with documentary-style filmmaking, the video blurs the boundary between authenticity and performance. The audience is encouraged to interpret the images as both spontaneous and staged, real and not real. In doing so, "A Day in the Life" becomes an example of how modern identity operates through spectacle: individuals – artists and viewers alike – navigate themselves as representations, performing versions of who they are in a world increasingly mediated by images. Some stylistic markers enable multiple layers of identity construction, in a ritual overtly celebrating dominant cultural values, behaviours and modes of thought: aesthetic self-consciousness and self-reflexiveness (the artists, aware of the camera, act either playful or serious), paradoxical situations overlapped in bricolages, polysemic sign values ("I'd love to turn you on" – interpretable either erotically or technically) and language games ("He blew his mind out in a car") from which ambiguous, uncertain states of mind emerge and transgress the lucidity of the present moment towards some irresistible fascination of a timeless psychedelic dream, intertextual symbols (the pigeon or the falcon on a greenish sky; the reference to an elite army that has won the war; the caricatural hypertrophic nose which enables a grotesque, gloomy perspective on the orchestra), non-linear narrative based on the blurring of mode (comic vs. tragic) and genre boundaries (documentary, television and newspaper report, family archive footage, experimental film, gossip tale), and irony (the lyrics in contrast to certain video frames).

In conclusion, the artists' identity as representation and performance is a mix of allusive/elusive intentionality and transgressive/integrative validation ("Never could be any other way"), both depicted in a roller coaster of visual sensations and in the song's "mysterious and poetic approach to serious topics that come together in a larger, direct message to its listeners, an embodiment of the central ideal for which the Beatles stood: that a truly meaningful life can be had only when one is aware of one's self and one's surroundings and overcomes the status quo" (Everett 1999, 116).

### **The postmodern city lived through representations: Singularity by New Order**

Each urban area can be defined as a multi-layered environment, in which the interplay between spatiality and the social level brings forth the poststructuralist idea of the city as text. Therefore, its complexity is grasped, on one hand, in depictions such as maps, statistics, censuses, photographs, films, or technical documentation on demography, infrastructure, public transportation, housing, and institutions, urban planning (scales and parameters according to which urban settlements are designed), etc. All these are technical (topographic, architectural, statistic, administrative and legal) representations that capture the physical level of the city into signs. On the other hand, the city is also constructed through cultural, subcultural and countercultural exchanges, interferences and representations, namely political, ideological, hegemonic, historical, anthropological, ethical, ethnic, religious, and so forth, which are brought together under the umbrella of a social consensus that provides the urban environment with everlasting symbolic capital and gravity of simulacra: "We classify an environment as a city, and then reify that city as a thing. The notion of the city, the city itself, is a representation. It is a gloss on an environment which designates by fiat, resting only on the assertion of the self-evidence that a given environment is a city" (Shields 1996, 227). Moreover, the city appears as a construct depending on a diversity of viewpoints expressed by the locals or outsiders; in other words, it appears as a fluid diversity of texts that are placed in dialogical interaction. In fact, the urban is produced through conceptual projections, a mix of perspectives being engaged at the intersection of either complementary or opposed overt and hidden meanings. The locals inhabit the city, but, at the same time, are inhabited by their cultural experience of the city. Thus, the city becomes an extension of a collective

consciousness, being constantly shaped by cultural modes of thinking and behaviour, on the extent of its openness to historical relativity, pluralism of identities and opinions, hybrid forms of spatial classification, and heterogeneous discursive frames (scientific, philosophical or poetic). In each city lives a multiverse of central and marginal ever changing historical forms and circumstances keeping record of people's place in their environment and their capacity to recreate nature into a meaningful cosmos of conceptual values.

Given the poststructuralist theoretical frame, the video reveals West Berlin as a space in motion, with glimpses of artistic objects and manifestations that are taking the path of intentionality, meaningfulness, and opposed plurality of voices in an unceasing fight for freedom, leading to a "progressive hegemony" (Clayton 2006, 9) that is capable of both oppressing and liberating the low classes. The emerging representations of a countercultural and subcultural melting pot depict a chaotic, yet consistent collage of moving images, suitable for catching a cycle of creation, preservation and destruction through living for the moment, the "here and now". In order to grasp the city and its dynamics, the video provides footage taken from the feature film *Lust and Sound* [in West Berlin 1979-1989] B Movie (2015): A British musician comes to (West) Berlin, which was at that time the "federal" part of the city, while East Berlin, the "democrat" part, was the "victim" of communism and USSR. By comparison to the lack of freedom in East Berlin, West Berlin seems wild, rebel, free. The video (the musician) explores both the cultural aspects of the city, especially music bands, concerts/events, and communities (classified spaces), especially subcultures/countercultures such as the rock/punk guys. The main feature of the West side narrative emphasizes the freedom of expressing through gestures and clothing (casually showing the middle finger, the extravagant or bizarre outfits, or also the lack of clothing; at some point there is someone looking like a drag queen) in addition to social, political and historical aspects (soldiers, fire, bombing in the context of the Cold War). The title of the movie can be interpreted also as *Lost and Found* (due to the graphic choice of colour for the letters u and S), which gives a broader sense of the narrative, but also the vibe and irreducible tension between past and present, memories and the current mindset, the end of an era and the beginning of a new one.

West Berlin was at that time constructed through representations of the pressing "realities": nakedness expresses freedom of the body and, by extrapolation, represents the need for freedom in the given context (the freedom of the body had to make up for the lack of freedom in the social context/the entrapment behind the wall); the guy "playing around" with (biting) the hammer and sickle is a mocking representation of the symbol of the USSR, which functioned as the "main constituent" of East Berlin at that time); the fire and the bombing are representations of the war and provide snatches of memories recalling the heavy influence upon which the city was cast to bear, both physically (the wall) and mentally (the impact on people). The fact that Berlin is lived through representation implies, technically, two perspectives: the musician, as an outsider, living the city mainly as it was represented by the locals (rebellion, dynamism, freedom of expression, an "urban jungle" with vibrant tension that makes the nightlife a perfect space for the artistic avant-garde, underground and pop creativity) and the locals, living the city as a representation of the time and context (the wall as a representation of the East Germans' entrapment/isolation in addition to written representations of their "reality": "Mord" = murder, "Berlin ist Jerusalem", "suicide", "exil" instead of "exit", "DTJ" – Deutsche Trinkerjugend – a Funkpunk band active during 1982-1984, and their desires: "Parteifreiesberlin" = Berlin without parties, "freedom for the Baltic states"). The wall, an outer limit of the Iron Curtain, becomes a canvas for people to express themselves: they write on it (graffiti), and they paint it white to get a blank space/a fresh start (the white colour also symbolising peace, purity, freedom, in contrast with the social/political context); at some point, the "Happy 25th birthday" means "celebrating" the wall that became part of their daily lives.

Berlin is explored like a vicious circle, where the social and the spatial keep influencing each other: the space (limited/restrained) determined different social attitudes and behaviours (the acts of rebellion, obscene gestures, expressing the need for social and political freedom through corporal freedom, expressing themselves through music [punk/rock] and by writing on the wall, hoping to make themselves heard and seen, in fact as a counterculture) and the social (the actions of the people) influences the dynamic of the space (this dynamism is exactly what fascinates the English musician, especially if it is put in contrast with the social context in East Berlin, a gloomy space and a rather dark atmosphere). Moreover, both the social and the spatial influenced contemporary culture, whereas the city is currently still determined by its social and spatial past. The mainly libertine, somewhat rebellious attitude has been passed on to the upcoming generations: Berlin is a very active city, where especially younger generations can easily be themselves and express their personalities in multiple cultural contexts. On the other hand, the space of the past/the spatial history is still reflected in the city nowadays: the remains of the wall, East-Side Gallery, Checkpoint Charlie.

The lyrics expand the idea of a planetary city constructed as a metaphysical maze that does not guide but entraps "lost souls" like a monad. Ideals such as freedom, peace, social engagement, empathy, and fulfilment in love are opposed to a commodified human condition, in which individuals are predestined to play a passive role within the social system ("We're players on a stage/With roles already scripted"). Happiness proves to be deceptive ("Winter came so soon/Like summer never happened"), whereas postmodern irony induces a perfect representation in modernity of a dystopian environment, as globalisation shapes a synthetic human type, reduced to prefab settings and bound to filter the present through everything that surrounds it ("We're working for a wage/I'm living for today/On a giant piece of dirt/Spinning in the universe"). The prison-like aspect of the planetary city is embraced not only by society, through the exercise of political, economic, and military power, but also by the individual's mind. The city thus proves to be a space of unceasing searches and almost impossible liberation, in such a way that the social consciousness of the individual is subjected to a paradoxical collapse.

### **Stereotyped and unconventional representations of ethnicity: Paper Planes by M.I.A.**

Mathangi Arulpragasam also known as M.I.A., a British artist of Tamil origin, has navigated contrasting cultural environments, from the "mud huts" of Sri Lanka to the council estates of Mitcham in Surrey, before studying at St Martin's School of Art and emerging as a leading figure within New York's hipster cultural scene. On an interview, she stated the following: "I guess this is what life has trained me up for, to move around a lot and try to be comfortable wherever I end up" (apud Thompson 2011), thus revealing a multiple and shattered identity that is shaped especially by routes, whereas the roots are roughly exposed as glimpses of ethnic and cultural heritage. By extrapolating this thought, we come to understand global culture through metaphors of movement and travel (Clifford 1992) or in terms of unequal, irregular disjunctive flows of people, technologies, capital, media and ideas (Appadurai 1993). Moreover, dynamic movement of ethnic groups and ideological conflicts, among other factors, led to overlapping, overdetermined and unpredictable conditions "not to the creation of an ordered global village, but to the multiplication of points of conflict, antagonism and contradiction" (Ang 1996, 165).

In this context, Paper Planes is meant as a satire of the Western dominant culture's (especially America's) perception of immigrants and of people coming from Third World countries. The song and video express the construction of multiple and hybrid identities, stereotyped and unconventional representation of ethnicity, the urban space as a realm of competing discourses, representations, simulacra and classified spaces, globalisation and disjunctive cultural flows, as well as a radical creative form of protest against mainstream ideology and hegemonic forces: "the provenance of such discourse in M.I.A.'s crossover transition presents an example of how social and cultural hierarchies under threat are negotiated by making contestations in an implicit way. In this case, the negotiations settled seem to be in favor of a capitalist, post-feminist, post-race ideology" (Haddad 2011, 298).

Paper Planes is a slower-tempo alternative hip-hop track that blends in elements of African folk music, a "post-colonial folk/hip-hop rapprochement" (Thompson 2011). It also contains a sample of the Clash's 1982 song "Straight to Hell". In this respect, intertextuality paves the ground for cultural hybridization (Dwyer 1998, Parker 1998, Turner 2003, 218) through assimilating a variety of artistic genres and techniques. The background of the song consists of M.I.A.'s personal experience, as her request for an American visa was rejected based on political and racial reasons: her skin colour and her full name, both of them reflecting her Eastern roots. Despite her British origins, her parents were born in Sri Lanka, they were political activists and they have been through a Civil War. In other words, violence was a part of M.I.A.'s childhood, as she grew among gunshots. However, she does not promote violence; she does not militate for wars but, on the contrary, mocks and tries to debunk the generalised idea that immigrants are dangerous or even criminals. The powerful satirical mode of the lyrics builds up a form of counterculture and street culture protest against the US immigration policy and the American citizens' stereotyped representations of foreigners, in which "types are instances which indicate those who live by the rules of society (social types) and those whom the rules are designed to exclude (stereotypes)" (Dyer 1997: 29).

The title of the song alludes to the counterfeit visas produced by the immigrants: "I fly like paper, get high like planes / If you catch me at the border I got visas in my name / If you come around here I make 'em all day". Overall, the political implications extend far beyond the surface, as the video portrays the practices and lifestyles of urban hip-hop communities rooted in historically marginalized and ghettoised backgrounds. Within just three minutes and twenty-four seconds, it condenses and reveals a long history of discrimination and oppression.

At this point, with hijacked paper planes flying over Brooklyn Bridge (which epitomize the American city and its skyscrapers), shot in black-and-white, the video is unfolding an allegorical mixed landscape, which intertwines a rich tapestry of visual (skull and bones, lots of cash, trades such as chains, watches, and food) and

sound symbols (gunshots, gun-cock, and cash register chings and kers – providing not only a bold aesthetic of mechanical routine and celluloid roughness, but also echoing the African culture, in which “musical instruments are made from things that are closest at hand” – Jon Hassell apud Thompson 2011), as well as the chorus chanting – which is considered by The Stranger as “rock’n’roll swindle, anti-colonial cash register liberation” (Grandy 2007), while exploring the city as a mix of classified spaces (moreover, the neighbourhood as a place for drug dealers, smugglers and petty traders, among who the singer appears as a rebellious imp – as a visual means of representing femininity that the video seeks to produce in the viewer). The competing discourses are embedded by the polysemic pronoun “we”/“us”, which includes “all the hard-pressed quarters of hip-hop’s musical raw materials, and omen, and people who aren’t American – at a stroke” (Thompson 2011).

Especially the first four lyrics of the song illustrate the desire to act and move around freely, whereas not even border control can stop the immigrants from doing that. This idea contradicts M.I.A.’s experience, thus highlighting the concept of positionality and identity as a matter of time and space. Despite being denied the American visa, she kept travelling and creating cultural products (music) inspired by the other places she visited, hence also shaping her identity as an artist. As critics put it, the song “turns globalisation inside out” (Thompson 2011), by taking a cultural baggage from a young, back then, artist who was constantly in motion at the time.

The protest is multilayered and multifaceted, as it takes anti-colonial and anti-globalist forms. For instance, the following lyrics: “No one on the corner had swagger like us / Hit me on the burner prepaid wireless” expose the cost for living that the immigrants are forced to deal with, hence the content points out towards a class conflict, with a revolutionary street-like attitude. Furthermore, the bridge of the song shows, in a mocking style, a reference point to the alleged ties between the singer and the Tamil fighters: “Some I murder, some I let go”. Also, the ostentatious, almost aggressive imagery and soundscapes of cash and cash registers are meant to expose the central American natives’ obsession for commodities and money-oriented values in contrast to the immigrants’ poor conditions and life struggling priorities.

Both the lyrics and the video illustrate the concepts of classified spaces, the city as text, and race inequality. First, the classified spaces are highlighted in the video through the ghettoised neighbourhood, as well as in the lyrics “No one on the corner has swagger like us.” Both elements are backed up by further illustrations, which can be read from the perspective of race inequality. The loaves of bread of different lengths and also cut into pieces, which are shown towards the beginning of the video, can be understood as a metaphor for inequality, as well as for the concept of fractured, fragmented identities. Furthermore, all these visual representations complete the idea of city as text, whereas the urban scenes that are depicted in the video do not reflect reality, but an illustration of the locals’ sense of reality after the “immigrants’ invasion.” Another relevant scene in the video, which underlines this idea, shows the cover of a DVD-movie, where, despite the full name being “Evil Agenda”, the shot only shows the word “Evil” attached to a picture of black people.

Further racial stereotypes are highlighted in the chorus, where immigrants’ voices, even young ones, are associated with gun violence and theft. However, despite these misconceptions, the irony is amplified in lyrics as such: “Everyone’s a winner, we’re making our fame / Bona fide hustler making my name”, in order to reveal the gap between the American dream of access to opportunity and material success, which cannot be measured exclusively by some figures of middle-class achievement and social mobility. As Christopher E. Bell argues, the “anyone can make it” ethos of celebrity culture is an ideological fallacy, as the lives of wealthy politicians, singers, artists or television stars cannot be seen as being representative of the wider immigrants’ experience and the restrictions they have to face (2010, 49). The issue of discrimination and oppression is maintained nowadays by linking urban violence to the immigrants, thus by stereotyping the latter as trouble makers and a constant menace to the Western society (especially the above mentioned sound effects of gunshots symbolise stereotypes as such). In this way, globalisation becomes a translocal juxtapositioning of identities and ideologies in either open or diffuse conflict. The lyrics “Pirate skulls and bones / Sticks and stones and weed and bongs (...) Lethal poison for the system” best illustrate this idea, as the pirate skulls are also represented on some of the trucks in the video. Immigrants are stereotypically perceived as “Lethal poison for the system” both in the sense that they are often associated with danger, drugs production and consumption, and also in the sense that they represent a threat, an actual “poison” for the “pure” dominant culture that fears that immigrants are going to steal both their money and their jobs, and leave a stain on the country’s name.

To sum up, I could not think of a better artistic product to embed the polarities of the post-modern mix of cultures at the intersection of different political paths, by recombining various cultural artifacts and fueling fragmented identities from within a rapid change social activism against stereotypes and other forms of social

oppression over cultural minorities. The marginal cultures challenge the central system of institutional power, as well as the hegemonic meanings ascribed by influential and dominant social groups, in order to provide a sense of liberation towards which the entire mankind should long for, in the effort of rising an authentic planetary collective consciousness.

## Conclusions

This study has demonstrated that identity in contemporary British music videos is neither fixed nor singular, but rather fluid, constructed, and continuously negotiated through representation, ideology, and cultural practice. By drawing on key concepts from cultural studies, the analysis has shown how identity emerges as a product of intersecting discourses shaped by power relations, historical contexts, and global cultural flows.

The three case studies – The Beatles, New Order, and M.I.A. – illustrate distinct yet interconnected modes of identity construction. In *A Day in the Life*, identity is revealed as performance within a mediated spectacle, blurring the boundaries between authenticity and artifice. In *Singularity*, the postmodern city becomes a dynamic text through which identities are lived, contested, and reshaped, highlighting the interplay between spatial and social realities. In *Paper Planes*, identity is articulated through resistance, exposing and subverting dominant stereotypes surrounding ethnicity, migration, and global inequality.

Across all three examples, representation functions as both a site of ideological reproduction and a potential space of resistance. The videos do not merely reflect reality; they actively participate in shaping meanings, reinforcing or challenging hegemonic narratives. In this sense, identity is not something individuals simply possess, but something they perform, negotiate, and reconstruct within a network of cultural signs and practices.

Moreover, the study underscores the impact of globalisation in producing fragmented and hybrid identities. Cultural products circulate across borders, generating new forms of belonging while simultaneously intensifying tensions, contradictions, and power asymmetries. The resulting identities are marked by mobility, instability, and multiplicity, reflecting broader transformations in late modern and post-modern societies.

Ultimately, this analysis confirms that music videos operate as powerful cultural texts through which identities are constructed, mediated, and contested. By engaging with issues of representation, ideology, and power, they offer valuable insight into the complexities of contemporary identity formation. The study thus contributes to a deeper understanding of how popular culture not only mirrors social realities but also actively shapes the ways in which individuals and communities perceive themselves and others in an increasingly interconnected world.

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