FLOCEL SABATÉ (ed.)

PERVERSE IDENTITIES

IDENTITIES IN CONFLICT

Identities. An interdisciplinary approach to the roots of the present
Identités. Une approche interdisciplinaire aux racines du présent
Identidades. Una aproximación interdisciplinar a las raíces del presente

Perverse Identities. Identities in conflict

Flocel SABATÉ
Universitat de Lleida

We cannot live without identity. In the 12th century, Chrétien de Troyes explained that when the Knight of the Lion stopped remembering his past acts, he did not know who he was and stopped living like a human being: he went into the forest and fed on raw meat[1]. To be human and to live like, and among, humans, one has to maintain an identity, based on memory. This acts, structured as a historical account, as the thread that bonds a human being to a group, which then invokes its own cohesion or unity through social and cultural traits, shared over a time longer than the life of the individual[2]. The jumble of explicative ideas that act as the mortar to link the account of the memory that the identity is built on inextricably conditions the whole and how this is experienced. That is reason for the trilogy: identity, memory and ideology[3].

Identity is concentric, the sum of circles of solidarity among its members. The working of European medieval society is a good example. The consolidation of the notion of lineage generated a specific cohesion, followed by another made up of the solidarity group, either feudal or a dependence on the band, to which another was added with the jurisdictional domain or being part of a municipal community. Above these, the consolidation of national feudal monarchies aimed to establish another higher circle, which was crowned by yet a higher one, of belonging to Christianity. In each circle, individuals exteriorise mechanisms of internal solidarity and rejection of those who do not form part of it, with the corollaries of tension and violence. However, although they may fight

---

1   Chrétien de Troyes, *El Caballero del León* (Madrid: Siruela, 1986), p. 50.
2   Flocel Sabaté, "Identidad y memoria en el oficio del historiador", *¿Qué implica ser medievalista? Prácticas y reflexiones en torno al oficio del historiador* (Mar del Plata - Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata - Sociedad Argentina de Estudios Medievales, 2012), vol. 1, pp. 66-67.
3   Flocel Sabaté, "Identitats", *Identitats*, Flocel Sabaté, dir. (Lleida: Pagès editors, 2012), pp. 9-16.

with each other, they collaborate when they share the upper circle against external otherness.

It is especially important to discern what the definitively inassimilable otherness is that which remains outside all the circles of relations. Thus, the cohesive ideology has a vital weight in shaping traits of cohesion that condition the relation with otherness. Depending on how the cohesive ideology evolves, identity will be considered as a certain degree of tension towards the otherness. We can see this in the evolution of the Christianity that configured the identity of medieval Europe. In a first stage, in the 6th century, Pope Gregory I explained that, as the Jews were unable to perceive the fate God reserved for them, they had been reduced to a position of servants — *quasi servos eos denotaverit quibus libertatem pollicebatur* — in a society dominated by those who had followed God's guidance, the Christians[4]. At a second moment, in the 11th century, Pope Alexander II accentuated this image while emphasising that the veritable enemy was the Muslim — *Iudeos non debemus persequi sed Sarracenos* — while the Jews were destined to serve — *parati sunt servire* — and thus: *Iudei servari debeant, non occidi*[5]. In a third stage, in the 13th century, accepting that the aim was to standardise society in accordance with the evangelical mandate — *fiet unum ovile et unus pastor* —[6], Roger Bacon forecast the return of the Greek Church, the conversion of the Tartars and the destruction of the Muslims, in other words, the annihilation of the inassimilable otherness[7]. The cohesion of late medieval society, under the fear of a wrathful, anthropomorphised God, who punished the humans if they tolerated or favoured his enemies[8], highlighted the negative view of other identities, presenting them as perverse and generating intolerance towards them. The preachers who travelled the late-medieval towns and cities demanded that the authorities take legal measures and that the people adopt attitudes against

---

4   Gregorius I, Homilia, CV, Patristica Database, vol. 95, col. 1223.
5   Alexander II, Epistolae et diplomatas, Patristica Database, vol. 146, col. 1386-1387.
6   Evangelium Ioannem 10, 16.
7   Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Late Middle Ages. A Study in Joachism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 399.
8   Flocel Sabaté, "Die Juden in der Krone Aragón: Der Juden in der Krone Aragón: Der Zusammenbruch der Koexistenz", *Integration, Segregation, vertreibung. Religiöse Minderheiten und Randgruppen auf der Iberischen Halbinsel (7.-17. Jahrhundenrt)*, Klaus Herbers, Nikolas Jaspert, eds. (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2011), pp. 313-328.

Jews and Muslims[9] because, as Vicenç Ferrer reiterated in his sermons, *no havem majors enemichs* ("we have no greater enemy")[10].

Thus, the traits that united an identity forced an intolerant attitude towards other identities, which were discredited through descriptions emphasising their negative character in all aspects[11]. The 16th-century clash with a wide range of enemies of the Catholic faith saw a social cohesion openly proposed that excluded and fought to the death against the inassimilable enemies of the true faith[12], be these protestants, Turks or even American pagans[13].

In contrast, seeking cohesion through the cultural and social traits that form the backbone of national unity leads to an introspection that excludes otherness, even physically, which is thus displaced beyond the frontiers, at the same time distancing confrontation. This could be a trait of coexistence in the compound monarchies, as Denmark, for example, was defined at the start of the 19th century, where one Crown brought together territories under Norwegian, Danish and German identity[14]. It was precisely Rousseau who understood that the best cohesion would be achieved through one's own collective identity. That is why he argued that "the task of the legislator is to create social institutions that make the citizens distinct from other men by making them more national and parochial and more involved in their own political order"[15]. It is thus no surprise that title I of the first constitution arising from the French revolution, in September 1791, was about the creation of *des fêtes nationales* ("National holidays") with the

---

9   Pedro Cátedra, "Fray Vicente Ferrer y la predicación antijudaica en la campaña castellana (1411-1412)", *'Qu'un sang impur…' Les Conversos et le pouvoir en Espagne à la fin du moyen âge. Actes du 2ème colloque d'Aix-en-Provence 18-19-20 novembre 1994* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1997), pp. 19-35.

10   Vicent Ferrer, *Sermons*, Gret Schib, ed. (Barcelona: Editorial Barcino, 1975), vol. 3, p. 14.

11   Pierre Sorlin, *El antisemitismo alemán* (Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 1976), pp. 13-49.

12   Aleksey Klemeshov, "The Conversion and Destruction of the infidels in the Works of Roger Bacon", *Religions and Power in Europe. Conflcits and Convergence* (Pisa: Edizioni Plus - Pisa University Press, 2007) p. 23.

13   Flocel Sabaté, *Fin del mundo y nuevo mundo. El encaje ideológico entre la Europa medieval y la América moderna en Nueva España (siglo XVI)* (Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2011), pp. 67-72.

14   Anne Marie Lindgreen, Lykke L. Pedersen, eds., *Danish Modern History. Stories of Denmark 1600-2000* (Copenhaguen: The National Museum, 2005), pp. 142-147.

15   Anne M. Cohler, *Rousseau and Nationalism* (New York: Basic books, 1970), p. 33.

purpose of *entretenir la fraternité entre les citoyens, et les attacher à la Constitution, à la patrie et aux lois* ("maintain brotherhood among citizens, and link them to the Constitution, the homeland and the laws")[16].

This led towards the fusion of people and state into the nations that characterised the 19th century[17]. Identity was deposited in nations with full state powers, which sought cohesion based on a supposed ethnic[18] and linguistic unity[19], backed up by a secular historical account[20]. This was the case of successful fast re-creations like Finland[21], discourses of identity to unite the country as achieved in France[22] or hasty searches for unificatory references, like in Spain[23]. Thus, the collapse of multinational empires, especially the Austro-Hungarian after the First World War, was explained by the artificiality represented by a state that "imprisoned" national identities that not only desired to be recognised (the Austro-Hungarian empire recognised eleven nations within its interior)[24], but sought recognition as states, more coherent with national identity[25]. However, these proposals did not lead to nation states but rather to the establishment of large minorities that felt very

16   Ferdinand Mélin-Soucramanien, *Les constitutions de la France de la Révolution à la IVe république* (Paris: Éditions Dalloz, 2009), p. 7.

17   Roland Calinger, "Nationalsm in Europe: A historical Overview to 1900", *National identity as an issue of knowledge and Morality*, N. V. Chavchavadze, Ghia Nodia, Paul Peachey, eds. (Washington: Paidea Press - The Council for research in values and philosophy, 1994), p. 12.

18   Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood. Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 167-184.

19   Benedict Anderson, *L'imaginaire national. Réflexions sur l'origine et l'essor du nationalisme* (Paris: La découverte, 2002), pp. 77-118.

20   Stefan Berger, "The Power of National Pasts: Writing National History in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe", *Writing the Nation. A global perspective*, Stefan Berger, ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 33-38.

21   Hannes Saarinen, "The Building of the Finnish Nation in the 19th Century", *Empires and States in European Perspective*, Steven Ellis, ed. (Pisa: Edizioni Plus - Università di Pisa, 2002), pp. 137-146.

22   Régis Meyran, *Le mythe de l'identité nationale* (Paris: Berg International, 2009), pp. 8-52.

23   José Álvarez, *Mater Dolorosa. La idea de España en el siglo XIX* (Madrid: Taurus, 2001), pp. 197-627.

24   Soma Morgenstern, *En otro tiempo. Años de juventud en Galitzia oriental* (Barcelona: Editorial Minúscula, 2005), pp. 388-389.

25   Martin Moll, "A vulnerable Empire: the Habsburg monarchy in the European Power System, 1815-1918", *Empires and States in European*..., pp. 191-193.

uncomfortable inside states identified with a single national identity[26]. In fact, national unity implied a degree of enmity towards otherness, with a force that went beyond reasoning. Thus, Michael Jeismann stated that, in the 19th century, "nationalism was not merely orchestrated by states and elites: rather, the emotional and irrational mechanisms of national identification and alienation were related to long-established cultural and religious sources, but could also be activated by short-term enmities and conflicts which themselves were a product — at least in part — of particular political interests"[27].

Curiously, although the social and economic dynamism at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th forced a growing mixing of identities, especially in the so-called new receptor countries of large-scale immigration[28], the mixing of identities was often experienced as a nuisance. A Catalan immigrant who, from solid economic roots and accompanied by his family, emigrated to Argentina in 1909, returned seven years later, arguing that one of the drawbacks of the host country was the large mixture of national identities:

> *este es un país loco y estrambótico porque está formado por una mescla de todas las razas del mundo y para ganar mil pesos no saben lo que cuestan y para gastarlos hay una gentuza que te sacan la piel como a los conejos, y el que no joroba es porque no puede, en esta si alquilas una pieza al lado para vecino tienes un russo, al otro un italiano o un japonés y cada vecino representa una nación, así que ya puedes comprender con que satisfacción se vive*[29].

> this is a crazy, outlandish country because it is made up of a mix of all the races of the world and they don't know how hard it is to earn a thousand pesos and to spend it there's a rabble who skin you like a rabbit, and anyone who doesn't pester you it is because they can't in this land if you hire a pad on one side your side your neighbour is a Russian, on the other an Italian or a Japanese and each neighbour represents a nation, so you can understand how great living here is.

26   Csaba Lévai, "Hungary as a Multi-Ethnic State in the 19th-Century Austro-Hungarian Empire", *Empires and States in European…*, pp. 137-146.
27   Michael Jeismann, "Nation, Identity and Enmity", *What is a nation? Europe 1789-1914*, Timothy Baycroft, Mark Hewitson, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 27.
28   Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz, "La explosion demogràfica y sus consecuencias", *Historia Universal*, José Maria Salrach, ed. (Barcelona: Salvat Editores, 1980), vol. 10, pp. 277-278.
29   Francesc Farràs, *Del Pirineu a la Pampa (Salàs transatlàntic)* (Tremp-Salàs de Pallars: Garsineu Edicions-Ajuntament de Salàs de Pallars, 2011), p. 29.

In reality, there is nothing that can compare to the 20th century to show the deadly consequences of the conformation of national identities[30]. Moreover, the mobility and adaptation of the main axis of identity can convert old coexistences into new intolerances that do not hesitate to take these to the extreme of annihilating the otherness. Amin Maalouf imagined the man who felt proud to be Yugoslav in 1980, maybe adding that he lived in the Federal Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and that his family was a traditionally Muslim one, who would the present himself some years later as a Muslim, adding that he was Bosnian and reneging on the old Yugoslav identity, and then even placing his condition as a Bosnian before that of being a Muslim some years later[31]. It is an identity that mutates with the circumstances, but especially adopting new vectors of cohesion. That is why the old neighbour becomes the enemy, and can even be exterminated, not for what he had done but because the latest reference adopted does not include him among "us" but as part of the otherness instead[32]. Thus, identity has led to the triumph of an irrationality with very severe consequences. It is in this setting that, as Elie Wiesel writes, there have been various, *scènes de folie collective sans lesquelles nulle armée qui se respecte ne saurait fonctionner* ("scenes of collective madness without which no self-respecting army can function")[33].

It should come as no surprise then that Amin Maalouf talked about fatal identities[34]. Nor that Francesco Remotti spoke out *contro l'identità* ("against identity"), especially when this seeks, *la purezza* ("purity"), with its inherent *germe della pulizia* ("seed of the dirtiness")[35]. Thus, we must pay close heed to how the elements that make up an identity have been selected: why have elements of exclusion been chosen instead of inclusion, although there are enough elements inside each culture and each individual to incline them towards adopting intolerant identities or, in contrast, integrating or compound identities, to use Maalouf's

---

30   David El Kenz, ed., *La massacre, objet d'histoire* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005), pp. 303-383.

31   Amin Maalouf, *Identidades asesinas* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1999), pp. 22-23.

32   Veliboc Čolic, *Los bosnios* (Cáceres: Editorial Periférica, 2013).

33   Elie Wiesel, *Le testament d'un poète juif assassiné* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980), p. 252.

34   Amin Maalouf, *Identidades asesinas*…

35   Francesco Remotti, *Contro l'identità* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 2012), pp. 21-29.

terminology[36]. A veritable deconstruction of identity is required to find its composition. This is what Gabor Gulyas proposed in the exhibition "What is Hungarian? Contemporary Answers", in Budapest in 2012, where he detailed five key aspects of national identity: legends and collective memory, common destiny, prejudices of character, social roles and conflicts[37].

These efforts to approach the phenomena of social identification through rational analyses are contemporary with the drift towards a world where frontiers have become permeable[38], secularism has broken segmentations for religious reasons[39], migrations have forced alternatives to the interpretation of cultures as closed realities[40] and information has not only become generalised[41] but has also contributed to new intergenerational and intercultural convergences that condition social conceptions[42]. All this has taken place in a world where the political, economic and strategic references of power[43] have been altered and one

36   Amin Maalouf, *Identidades asesinas…*, pp. 49-50.
37   Gábar Gulyás, curator, *What is Hungarian? Contemporary answers*, exhibition, Mücsarnok Kunsthalle, Budapest, 2 August — 14 October 2012.
38   Ronnie D. Lipschutz, "Reconstructing World Politics: The Emergence of Global Civil Society", *Millenium*, 21 (1992), pp. 389-420; Paul Hirts, Graname Thompson, "Globalization and the Future of the Nation-State", *Economy and Society*, 24/3 (1995), pp. 408-442.
39   Partha Chatterjee, *La nación en tiempo heterogéneo y otros estudios subalternos* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 2008), pp. 255-272.
40   Joan Josep Pujadas, "Migracions i societats multiculturals", *Diàlegs al voltant de la interculturalitat*, Dolors Mayoral, Fidel Molina, Francesca Sanvicén, eds. (Lleida: Pagès editors, 2006), pp. 47-67.
41   Bouchra Boulouiz, *Histoire des utopies et des théories de la communication*, *À l'ère de la communication totale* (Casablanca: Afrique Orient, 2011), pp. 164-166.
42   That is why a new cultural political has been predicted *una nueva política cultural que parta de la premisa de que el ámbito predominante de la política informacional es el espacio de los medios de comunicación y se dirime con símbolos, aunque conecte con valores y temas que tienen su origen en la experiencia vital de la gente en la era de la información* ("that starts from the premise that the predominant environment of the informational policy is the space in the media and that is settled through symbols, although it connects with values and themes whose origins lie in the experiences of the people in the era information"). Manuel Castells, *La era de la información* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1999), vol. 3, p. 405.
43   Hassan Aourid, *Occident, Est-ce le Crépuscule?* (Rabat: Éditions et Impressions Bouregreg, 2011), pp.13-150.

that has become so globalised that what happens anywhere in the world provokes reactions of adhesion or rejection everywhere[44]. It is truly a new scenario, one that requires genuinely multicultural ways of thinking and multi-related behaviour[45], in which to debate the contrast between universality and particularity[46]. This has been theorized around civic identities that sustain democratic, liberal, multi-cultural and multinational states[47], and warnings have been sounded about the new strategies of the powerful aimed at redirecting globalisation for their own benefit and not for the common good[48].

However, the combination of conflicting interests and the secular ballast under the collective behaviour means that the course of history is rarely what is expected[49]. In the course of the change from the 20th to the 21st centuries, the fear of some of being swallowed up by globalisation[50], the strategies of the ruling elites to maintain the structures of social[51] and economic power[52], resorting to populism if necessary[53] and various degrees of confusion caused by the latest ideological changes and the international

44   Philippe Moreau Defarges, *Un mundo de injerencias* (Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra, 1999), pp. 73-115.

45   Gerd Bauman, *El enigma multicultural. Un replanteamiento de las identidades nacionales, étnicas y religiosas* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2001), p. 187.

46   Andrew Vincent, *Nacionalism and Particularity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 240-241.

47   Will Kymlicka, *Ciudadanía multicultural* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1995), pp. 242-263.

48   Susan Georges, *Nous, peuples d'Europe* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2005), pp. 248-249.

49   *Del mismo modo que la Primavera de la Libertad de 1848 finalizó con el golpe de Napoleón de 1851, la Oda a la Libertad de Berlín (de 1989), fue el preludio de los conflictos étnicos de los noventa y de la comunicación de Sarajevo* ("In the same way that the Spring of Freedom of 1848 ended with Napoleon's 1851 coup, the Ode to Freedom in Berlin (in 1989), was the prelude to the ethnic conflicts of the nineties and the butchery of Sarajevo"). Sidney Tarrow, *El poder en movimiento. Los movimientos sociales, la acción colectiva y la política* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1997), p. 322.

50   Tamara Palacio, "Conflictividad política en la era de la globalización: la paradoja de la diferencia", *Revista Tales*, 4 (2011), pp. 304-309.

51   Gérard Noiriel, *À quoi sert l'identité 'nationale'* (Marseille: Agone, 2007), pp. 82-114.

52   Kevin Phillips, *American theocracy. The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century* (New York: Peguin Books, 2007).

53   Sergiu Miscoiu, *Au Pouvoir par le 'peuple'. Le populisme saisi par la théorie du discurs* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012), pp. 117-119.

scenario[54], have led to a return to the ethnic identity references bounded by the ethnic group, nation[55], language[56] or religion[57]. In times of confusion, the population find a clear security in these in the global context, while also emphasising the virulent rejection of otherness. It is a kind of reinforcing of identities that lets some invoke the clash of civilisations[58] and others, in contrast, ask to *jeter des ponts avec l'Autre et favoriser en conséquence le rapprochement […] sur de nouvelles bases* ("build bridges with each other and therefore foster reconciliation on a new basis")[59].

In fact, after a first decade of the 21st century marked by armed conflict that, driven by various interests, have sought to justify the struggle against the otherness that attacks us[60], the need to *relever le défi de civilization* ("addressing the challenge of civilisation") has been imposed[61], to be able to state, like Robert Kagan, that "the world has become normal again", in other words, far from the teleologies and placed in the hands of its inhabitants for them to articulate the conviviality[62]. And this requires

54 Maarten Brands, *The Obsolescence of almost all Theories concerning International Relations* (Wassenaar: Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences, 1996), pp. 3-18.

55 Karin Von Hippel, "The Resurgence of Nationalism and Its International Implications", *Order and Disorder after the Cold War*, Brad Roberts, ed. (Cambridge (Mass.); London: The MIT Pres, 1995), pp. 101-116.

56 Juan Carlos Moreno, *El nacionalismo lingüístico. Una ideología destructiva* (Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 2008), pp. 173-204.

57 'Europa versus Islam' is the statement analyzed by Christiane Stallaert (Christiane Stallaert, *Perpetuum mobile. Entre la balcanización y la aldea global* (Barcelona: Anthropos Editorial, 2004), pp. 108-114.

58 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1996), pp. 301-321.

59 Mohammed Chiguer, *Pensée piégée, Islam et modernité* (Rabat: Édition KMC Experts, 2008), pp. 259-260.

60 António Louçâ, Pedro Caldeira, Rui Zink, Carlos Orais, Francisco M. Rodrigues, Tariq Al-Khudayri, *De Cabul a Bagdad. A guerra infinita* (Lisbon: Dinossauro, 2003), pp. 9-70; Philippe Sands, *Lawless World. The Whistle-Blowing Account of How Bush and Blair are Taking the Law into Their Own Hands* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), pp. 1-288; Andrew Greeley, *A stupid, unjust and criminal war (Iraq 2001-2007)* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2007), pp. 1-215.

61 Gilles Kepel, *Terreur et martyre. Relever le défi de civilisation* (Paris: Éditions Flammarion, 2008), pp. 304-389.

62 Robert Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), pp. 3-105.

us to ponder the vigour of the old segmentations in all aspects of human relations, to attempt to find the reasons that lead to Identities in conflict. These tensions arise from the definition of identity itself, which enables us to talk more expressively about perverse identities.

If the perspective of identity permutes all of society, the same vision will be applied to all the elements that configure social relations, be these language, gender, social class or any other indicator, both today and throughout earlier historical periods. Thus, asking ourselves about identities in conflict becomes a way to investigate the elements of cohesion adopted in different aspects of human groups and their various forms of relationship. We thus reach a specific perspective, a kind of transversal axis to contribute to renewing research into society, penetrating into all its interstices through the path of conflict. This justifies rejecting cultural formulae of contempt and practices that are not respectful with that which is labelled otherness, whatever the social environment it is found in.

The interdisciplinary nature of the Institute for Research into Identities and Society at the Universitat de Lleida, bringing together different aspects of the social sciences and humanities, is ideal for tackling the challenge of analysing the subject transversally. Under the title of "Perverse Identities. Identities in conflict", outstanding specialists in the different fields of the study of society were invited to participate and everyone involved in research into these aspects was called on to contribute. The committee of experts narrowed the numerous proposals received down to 82 papers, which were presented and discussed in a Lleida over three autumn days in November 2012. This was followed by long scientific discussions and proposals for publication, which were duly submitted to peer-review. All this has led to this final selection of 30 texts that take us through history, literature, linguistics, sociology, anthropology and even psychiatry, through different scenarios to analyze the identities in conflict. Thus, the result is an interdisciplinary work with a diachronic perspective, that brings us closer to the reasons, causes, consequences and mechanisms that feed these perverse identities.