

Veronica Orazi

Nation, Language and Literature: The Perspective of the Pluricultural Castilian-Catalan-Galician-Basque Context

Veronica Orazi
Università degli Studi di Torino

The concept and conceptualization of Nation is related to the identity profile of a community of people and it is based on common origins, language, traditions, territory, ethnicity and/or psychological characteristics expressed in and by a shared culture.

Recent researches on the subject tend to concern especially socio-historical perspective about the building of national identity feelings, trying to identify the individual and collective mechanisms, either conscious or unconscious, intended or unintended. Thus, Nation could be described as a cultural-political community that has become conscious of its autonomy, unity and peculiar interests. From this point of view, it involves in its definition and evolution some key features, such as: the historical and socio-political roots (history, past and events which represent collective references for the community); the constant (re)definition of the identity, which acquires different connotations in each time and area; a sociocultural and political context, which facilitates the process of identity (re)construction, as well as the favorable conditions that support cultural renaissance and play a decisive role in this process, through the assumption, re-elaboration and re-expression of fundamental elements and events in the history and culture of a community; finally, the overcoming of the idealistic vision of the 19th century romantic concept of Nation when rebuilding identity, replaced by a new perspective, based on realism, pragmatism and a critical interpretation of history.

Therefore, it is needed to be stressed the dialectic between ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’, two concepts that deal not only with geographical position but also with ideological, sociopolitical and economic dynamics, defining specific cultural codes through the tension between the immobility wished or imposed by dominant groups (e.g. the ‘majority’) and the dynamism promoted by subordinate groups (e.g. the ‘minority’). According to this, the concept of ‘peripheral’ (e.g. a minority group) is based on three main aspects: the existence and manifestation of collective consciousness, the elaboration of sociopolitical questions and concerns, the dialectic between its own system (e.g. peripheral or minority) and the other system (e.g. central or majority), which can be or can turn collaborative, extraneous, tense or conflictive. As a consequence, these relationships are ‘fluid’, because both concepts of ‘peripheral’ and ‘minority’ express a role that can be temporary, according to the transitory conditions of such groups, both majority and minority.

That is why both language and literature play a key role in this process, due to the use of many different forms of linguistic definitions as well as communicative and discursive strategies in the (re)construction of the Nation. These reflect five factors: the shared culture (language, religion and popular traditions), the recognition of a territorial body (extension and delimitation, natural space and landscape), the vision of the Other and the elaboration of the *homo nationalis* distinct from the *homo externus*, the common political past (myths and their origins) and the construction of a collective policy. As well, the discourse on Nation concerns three complementary dimensions, according to the peculiar use of language and rhetoric: the public, the semi-public and private ones.

Moreover, the (re)construction of a Nation will also be defined through cultural production –primarily, though not exclusively, literature–, and to understand its functioning, it will be necessary to analyze the context that generates it and the intertext that holds it. In addition, and especially in the dialectic between national identities and

global trends, it is clear that the involved elements, such as cultural peculiarity and universal openness, are complementary and not antithetical factors, as they recreate intercultural dialogue and consolidate the specific national features implicated in the process of universalization. Clearly, this mechanism supports both component, which are interdependent and not contrasting.

It will then be a question of studying the peculiar factors which characterize the concept of Nation and its discursive and literary expressions in the contemporary societies. According to this assumption, the investigation will be carried out from some fundamental interrelated perspectives, such as the definition and evolution of the concept of Nation itself, the relationship between languages and linguistic varieties, the projection and expression in society, culture and literature of the legacy and characteristics of each subarea.

It is for these reasons that the study of the nature and phenomenology of the national profile and its manifestations will be articulated on complementary plans, in order to sketch its peculiar characterization, deeply rooted in the community of reference. In the plural Hispanic area this means taking into consideration the different historical, linguistic and cultural components that integrate it, namely the Castilian, Catalan, Galician and Basque. So, some strategic aspects have been chosen for the framing of the representation of the concept of Nation according to the abovementioned perspective, which are developed in the contributions collected in this miscellany.

First of all, the idea of Nation and its development, focusing on the paradox between the existence of objective elements of Galician identity and the lack of correspondence with a widely felt nationalist political identification as well as a social acceptance of the nationalist politics. The different political languages spoken within the Basque Country and their expressions as a part of the daily language; their function of showing the political position of the speaker, the hegemonic nature of the nationalist languages, both moderate and radical; their conceptual formation and the narratives to which they correspond. The existence in Catalonia of a national language, culture, governance institutions and political structures from the beginning of the 11th century until today; the consequences of the *Decretos de Nueva Planta* from the beginning of the 18th century and the subsequent evolution of nationalism from federalism and autonomism to an independence movement.

The central role of bilingualism, translation and self-translation, as shown by the version of Galician literature into Spanish in recent years; the reasons why some Galician authors and texts have arrived to the cultural space of the Spanish peninsular territory, the specific model of such cultural dialogue, and the value of literary exportation for a minoritized culture like Galician. The study of heterolingualism within Translation Studies, based on the work of the Basque author Bernardo Atxaga, observing the implications of supratranslation, of self-translation –both individual and collaborative– or of indirect translation, and the extent they affect the visibility of heterolingualism in target texts. The sociolinguistic situation of Catalan language, which is not spoken by all those who live in this area, and its coexistence with other languages, as well as the internally fragmented body within a set of subcommunities with autonomous political and administrative references; the future of Catalan as a whole, that must be constructed on the basis of an analysis of the different territorial dynamics, through demoscopic information on the dimension, structure and relationship between the linguistic groups in those areas where Catalan is spoken.

The fictionalization of individual, collective and historical memory and of specific social realities through literarization and dramatization. One of the most interesting features from this point of view is the emergence of female authorship in 21st century

Galician theatre from a non-textcentric perspective, analyzed according to the participation of women in the renovation of stage modalities, in the revision of the attributes of theatricality and in revisiting the Galician theatre main rule, i.e. the use of the native language. The representation, in Basque-language literature, of the armed conflicts like the war of 1936 and the terrorism of ETA and, through an analysis of some obsessions that have dominated the genre, how the narrative about Basque conflicts have been constructed in terms of their content and aesthetic form, as well as their reception. Finally, how the experience of exile and of be forced to live in a new context can influence the creativity of an author; this peculiar research has been carried out analyzing two cases of study: the presence of Mexico in the works of Pere Calders and Max Aub, that allows us to carry out a revealing comparison between their personal profile –similar in some way–, in order to understand in which specific way all this affected their literary production.