

1. Nationalism and Literary Image Studies

In the borderlands of Western civilization, an unlikely relationship is recorded in the language of public narratives. The literary language and some of the stories it conveys are a testimonial to the association that develops between the notions of ‘postcolonialism’ and the making of nations. The ‘culture-bound’ character of such meanings has everything to do with the attempt to assert the separate and continuous existence of peculiar properties defining, for instance, the Australian identity. Now and again, the narrative negotiation between the demands for a national self, tailored to local desires, and the heritage of a global, essentially, colonial past surfaces in the national self-identification of post-colonial modern literary cultures.

Nationalism itself is associated with the values of a peculiar worldview, manifest in a characteristic behaviour. Ironically, this is quite appropriate from the perspective of various strands of nationalism studies that suspect the rhetoric of nationalism of being self-serving rather than self-sacrificing. It is safe to say that, functionally, the conduct prescribed by devotion to one’s country is strangely similar to other learnt behaviours. Nonetheless, the worldview of a culture or another is restricted to some meaningful values and beliefs that shape easily recognisable public discourses and even social agency. Everything makes sense when employed to help with a pervasive question, always around since the advent of the “modern Europe of nations” (Dainotto, 2007: 139). This viral question goes right to the heart of the national issue and no matter what it actually means, has something to do with ‘what is my nation?’ This simultaneously particular and universal condition invites further investigation, particularly in the Australian context I have in mind. My reading of Australian nation and state-building is informed of experiencing the national narrative through the lens of comparative literature and cultural studies. I am aware that my discourse possibly reifies national(ist) buzzwords to such an extent that it may lead to mistaking practice for analysis.

As such, my work exemplifies at least two different ways in which a blurred distinction between the two has engaged cultural politics in Australian culture. Irrespective of the attempt

to experiment with the language of national identification, my cultural conditioning leads me to buy into the colonial-postcolonial paradigm of history at the Antipodes. What is more, the mutually exclusive identities of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ (that are obviously constitutive of the rhetoric meant to convey national feelings) help the above-mentioned inquiry into Australian culture and civilization. In other words, reading the national question as recorded in the young Australian literary tradition, I am tempted to take “a conception inherent in the practice of nationalism [...] – namely the realist, reifying conception of nations as real communities – and” to make it “central to the theory of nationalism” (Brubaker, 1997: 15).

However, I find it somewhat appropriate considering that the literary language of public intercourse displays, in the first place, the same condition. Besides, the historical development of academic writing on nation-building and nationalism managed to reach similar conclusions, as to the nature of an intrinsically tribal system of beliefs and values that used to be at the core of nationalism studies, only in the last decades. Throughout the 20th century, the narrative performance of ethnic character, that I deem proof of the overlap between the English-speaking prestige cultures and Australian self-identification, exhibited the same gradual unfolding. At least to some extent, the degree to which my writing fails to distinguish between ‘categories of practice’ and ‘categories of analysis’ mirrors the conflation of information and experience in the narrative production of knowledge (non) fictional reporting on social reality is famous for.

The traditional link between nation(alism), state-building and territory keeps together much of the discourse about identity and (self)identification in my primary sources. The popular 20th-century representation of state and nation adds territory to the plot of nationhood and instinctively points to the model of the Western prestige nation states. The awareness of social and political inferiority is enforced by the very idea of alignment to the West. The Australian self-identification delineates an exchange with a privileged and hierarchical other (i.e., with metropolitan countries).

Postcolonialism is the frame of reference I will insistently come back to while reading the various instances of the master narrative I find in the 20th-century Australian literary culture. The presuppositions of one’s culture – i.e., the Australian, the British or the American (that I dub Anglo-American) one – are plain to see in public storytelling about national self-identification. I hope that they will help me track down the picture of the indigenous quest for identity, as recorded by literary discourses that pigeonhole each and every one of the concerned parties. In the unfolding of the (fictional) plot, authors and narrative voices alike strive to assign culturally specific meanings to ethnic and national identities. There is one other, somewhat accidental, reason why British (better-said English) identity may assist in the delineation of

Australian self-identification, rampant in the country's public storytelling about the past and about the other. That is to say, for some scholars "England presents the prototype of both a nation and a nation state in the fullest sense," (Hastings, 2001: 4) which can only be of help to the Australian nation/state-building rhetoric. Furthermore, the "New World origins of nationalism" (Anderson, 2006: xiii) and, particularly, the United States example have been repeatedly pointed out among the world's first "imagined communities" (Anderson, 2006: 1) when it comes to 'prototyping' national politics.

Even if the brazen Eurocentrism of the discourse about nationalism seems to have prevented so far Europeans (and not only them) from acknowledging the authority of the said example, my choice of an Anglo-American viewpoint on the language of nationalism is in the least spurious. On the contrary, the British and the American paradigms of national identity (as a whole or individually) may very well be relevant. My reading of the Anglo-American discourse about Australian civilization and literature serves as a paradigmatic case. It paves the way for examining the literary image of the other in the mainstream of the later Australian public storytelling about the cross-cultural exchange between nations. in the country's past. The nature of this 'paradigm' – a buzzword in the academic writing on nation-building – helps me investigate the Australian literary sense of identity that seems to have taken up the language of nation and state-building originated with the prestige cultures of the West. Whatever is exemplary "becomes such by suspending and, at the same time, exposing its belonging to the group, so that it is never possible to separate its exemplarity from its singularity" (Agamben, 2009: 31).

Alongside the celebrated British mould of the modern Australian literary culture, the reading of national self-identification in Australia definitely benefits from what is, essentially, the colonial language Anglo-American writers used to map down the country in the early decades of the 20th century. In the process, the reader is bound to consider the historical representation of national identity, as delivered by various instances of narrative reporting on social reality. Reducing the "world to the representations that agents make of it" (Bourdieu, 1990: 124) is a case in point of the means used to convey a shared sense of national identity. Obviously, my discussion of the "not-so- new idea that [...] historical writings cannot reflect history as it really was" (Petrescu, C.; Petrescu, D., 2007: 323) is not interested in reviewing Australian historiography. Rather, it has everything to do with reading a number of Australian –related academic texts that, one way or another, made it to mainstream English. They are interdisciplinary studies on nation states and identities, if not specifically on modern Australia. Their handling of individual, documented instances of large-scale, cross-cultural exchange

between ethnic/national communities in the Australian narrative of the past is of concern to my writing. For the most part, I focus on the above-mentioned events that have been largely re-used in public communication and, specifically, in literary discourse. In order to understand their language of identity, I explicitly plan to address early 20th-century books that package Australia for the Anglo-American public. They do so at the expense of the country's large body of history books that target exclusively Australia.

Furthermore, the attempt to argue on behalf of the cultural overlap between the Anglo-American world and Australia is instrumental to the making of Australian literature and culture. The making of the Australian tradition, contextualized by the British and the American documentary writing, is able to foster a comprehensive relationship with these major Western cultures. The literary image of the other, as relayed to the reading public through the ethnocentric language of (fictional) storytelling about Australia, turns out to be seminal for the way later Australian narratives relate to otherness. In other words, my belief is that an adversarial worldview is at the core of the country's mainstream public communication. Last but not least, this indictment rhetoric I see at work in identity narratives (whether they are fictional or not), though somewhat commonsensical, has not been consistently addressed in interdisciplinary studies yet. The language of complaint, accusation, and self-defence structures much of everyday social intercourse, a further reason not to investigate what is self-evident.

However, various notions of moral and material reparation seem to have full sway in philosophy, justice, religion, or therapy, not to mention popular culture. Explicitly, the Anglo-Saxon justice tradition and influential instances of the 20th-century Western (science of) psychoanalysis rely on this cultural logic of indictment and retribution. It is safe to say that, for the most part, the various meanings of recrimination overlap. Ultimately, they stand for a legitimating narrative whose aim is to showcase the evidence of assertive identification with national identity throughout all walks of life, something that nation states always had on offer. Most of the times, in the mainstream of modern social communication there is a "recriminatory politics of resentment that has plagued and continues to plague identity politics" (Nealon, 1998: 7). It is the case of the Australian master story, which is also told in a way obviously meant to persuade. The recurrence of the meanings that have something to do with payback, atonement, calling names, giving satisfaction, etc., is common to such an extent that their average end-consumer (i.e., the citizen of the modern nation state) has come to take them for granted. Actually, their recurrent nature makes out of the many meanings of recrimination full-fledged narrative devices. They rank high among the resources used by the strong language of classic national(ist) propaganda and are shared by most state-run cultural policies. Essentially, they

work as telltale signs of the attempt to record, as distinctively as possible, a narrative statement thought to represent the very idea of nation. If openly used to delineate ethnic or national identity in newly established nation states, they are more than ever conspicuous. For example, they provide valuable insight into narratives of identity.

Although the 21st century continental philosophy argues against the idea that Western identity is still indebted to a rather familiar “argument culture, buttressed by an adversarial worldview” (Makau; Marty: 2013, 18). Much of the 20th-century Australian literary discourse was built on the same lines. Allegedly, even the art of politics in the West has (long) overcome a divisive spirit, inherited from the ancient polis, always at play in reporting on social reality and, for example, on the Antipodean other. The pervasiveness of indictment suggests that the denial of the ‘friend-enemy’ distinction is somewhat unconvincing: “The fundamental categorial pair of Western politics is not that of friend/enemy but that of bare life/political existence, *zoe/bios*, exclusion/ inclusion” (Agamben, 1998: 8).

On the contrary, both popular culture and mainstream academic discourse seem to credit the commonplace of (counter) accusation with even more weight than it might possibly carry. My own work bears witness to the way indictment builds momentum, both as a means to assess the storytelling patterns of public communication and to produce actual discourse. In other words, the language of indictment is particularly important to my primary sources. I also have to admit that the very same rhetoric seems to seep out in my own writing. Nation and state-building, as described in various instances of literary language, is the example that provides the readers with an inside look at the issue. Documentary writing about the early 20th-century Australia and later public narratives alike feature one and the same master narrative. The indigenous identity is staged in narrative plots, which are part and parcel of a time-honoured campaign to westernize the indigenous society.

For all intents and purposes, the contention of both natives and foreigners is that making Australian institutions and ideas (more) Western in character stands for making the country itself modern. My own take on the issue depends on this celebrated conjecture of modernist studies in nationalism. Allegedly, the 19th-century nation-building in Eastern Europe (and, later on, the 20th-century state and nation-building throughout the world) denotes that some exotic and marginal ethnicities have successfully been modernized (i.e., brought into the global society). Although I am aware that this comes across as a questionable instance of Eurocentrism, my own discourse makes the most out of it. I find it quite useful that mainstream nationalism studies focused on what is best described as a Europhile tendency, which helps my attempt to show that, inherently, an adversarial rhetoric is at the heart of Australian reporting

on social reality. Professing your love or hate of someone is the very premise for the said adversarial rhetoric that shows in the language of public communication. The indictment may very well be universal, yet the Australian modern literary culture welcomes this particular frame of reference to such an extent that the combative behaviour is ever present. In the process, the various instances of narrative (self)identification shed light on the debate about the need to move beyond the notion of 'identity'. Stuart Hall argues that:

Rather than speaking of identity as a finished thing, we should speak of identification, and see it as an ongoing process. Identity arises, [...] by the ways we imagine ourselves to be seen by others. (Hall, 1996: 608)

A number of words, better said buzzwords, seem to have lost some of their traditional power to inform. However, being in widespread use, they retain much of their traditional influence, both in academic and in popular writing. Alongside "nation" or "race", identity is used "analytically a good deal of the time" (Brubaker, 2004: 32). The issue is that such words are employed "more or less, as they are used in practice" (Ibidem). As such they are "categories of practice" (Ibidem), which inadvertently reify the very categories they seek to analyse. The academe seeks to replace the term in professional discourses, while the recording of everyday experience reduces them to sweeping generalizations. For example, identity has come to mean everything and nothing. Rogers Brubaker argues that the way out would be the assessment of identity. This is to say, the process of determining what identification and self-identification can do for analysis instead of identity as documented in various forms. As a result, the practitioners of the field tend to replace the notion of 'identity' altogether. Used 'inappropriately', it fails to secure a better understanding of the ordinary agents who are targeted by the academic investigation. The end-consumers of similar notions (in the words of Brubaker, 'class', 'tradition', 'community') take for granted the fundamentally fuzzy meanings these have gained in non-professional communication.

Consequently, the sense of identity comes across as a series of actions or events rather than static existence. Better said, the term of 'identification' helps better convey the current comprehension of (national) master stories. Explicitly, it transmits both the convention and the usage made of ethnic or national (self-) conceptualization in the environment of literary cultures. Whatever national 'identity' used to name may be understood as the narrative recording of the circumstances that have led to the building of nation states, a "collective

phenomenon, [...] [that] denotes a fundamental and consequential sameness among members of a group or category” (Ibidem: 34).

Irrespective of ‘identity’ or ‘identification’, the process of building empathy with the nation remains roughly the same. The course of becoming Australian throughout the time of nation state-making, up to the present, is successfully recorded in the literary language of reporting on patriotic feeling.

2. Australian Narratives of Self-Identification

I read the subject matter of the cultural quest for the Australian identity (as seen by Anglo-American writers against the backdrop of World War I) through the lens of various strands of current nationalism studies. As a matter of principle, the vindictive disposition I read in the address delivered by both English and Australian narrative voices is embedded in the discourse of nationalism. It is a means to convey meaning and tell apart national character. Factually, each and every community goes to great lengths to state the “belief that one’s own ethnic or national tradition is especially valuable and needs to be defended at almost any cost” (Hastings, 2001: 4). Consequently, it seems that settling old scores and pointing fingers amount to an instantly recognizable language of abuse, widely used to signal notions of belonging and exclusion. Guilt/praise assignment comes with the territory of the 19th-century European nation state-building. The public language of the Australian quest for identity is no exception. Nonetheless, I suspect that the instant availability of a recriminatory rhetoric in European prestige cultures is of great consequence to the making of national traditions. Specifically, the way the Anglo-Americans told the story of the indigenous culture actually introduced to Australians not only some ready-made phrases but also the cultural rhetoric of indictment.

Both the language and the worldview have been used to report on the other as well as on the self in literary terms, rather than in the form of the vernacular language. I identify the exact link between the two literary cultures with documentary literature Australia. The books, originally intended for the Anglo-American market, were authored by naturalised Britons, by UK and US citizens living in Australia, or by the Australian political elite. Chiefly, I rely on two overlapping and influential readings of the nationalism studies tradition. That is to say, I owe a debt to both the continental approach to national and cross-cultural stereotypes in literature, best advertised by Joep Leerssen, and to the British ethno-symbolism of Anthony D. Smith. They are meant to explain the national narrative of identity, as advertised by Australian reporting on social reality (various public narratives that range from

canonical literature, mostly historical novels, to news coverage of events). Except for the postcolonial question I plan to discuss in depth, my writing is indebted to the work already carried out on the “relationship between literacy and identity” (Drace-Francis, 2006: 1). The area of socio-historical stereotyping of ethnicity/nationality, as recorded by literary means, contributes to and benefits from sociology, anthropology, etc. To some extent, the author attests to the effectiveness of the cultural politics implemented by Australian elites.

I presume that the Anglo-American documentary writing on Australia displayed some of the most influential (if not among the first) instances of the indictment rhetoric. State-run education was a means to articulate and, eventually, to promote local ethnicity to a fully-fledged nation, patterned on the prestige European examples of national identity. This emphasis on public instruction essentially makes the case of narrative knowledge production. The recording of the experience by literary means summarizes the way the attachment to one imagined community or another is instilled into the indigenous population. The development of literacy and, eventually, of polite culture, in Australia, as well as in other countries, has been thoroughly examined and found to be fundamental for nation-building and nationalism proper. Anyway, my own work on the topic of state and nation-building is informed exclusively of the Anglo-American outlook on the Australian quest for self-identity. I hope that my choice of narrative discourse, delivered against the backdrop of World War I, helps bring about a wider appreciation of the cultural overlap between what may come across as two cultures: a quintessentially Western tradition versus yet another attempt at building the modern nation state.

The rhetoric of nation-building, literary image studies also known as imagology, the study of nationalism and patriotism conceptualization are means to an end – mapping down part of the late 20th century and even current public language of ethnicity in culture. Essentially, I argue that, for various reasons, Anglo-American books (alongside various instances of public storytelling, written in other European prestige languages, French, German, etc.) have shaped the distinctive culture-bound discourse of public narratives. Paradoxically, the universal language of indictment produced some of the presuppositions of the modern literary cultures, particularly when it comes to reporting on notions of ethnic and national belonging. At first circulated in the United Kingdom and the United States, these books have nonetheless reached the public sooner rather than later. Their self-aware and cautious language even suggests that the authors themselves entertain the possibility of having an Australian readership too. My claim is that, on the one hand, these books mirror the sense of identity displayed by the indigenous population. On the other, the discourse of the West provided a

benchmark (which the Australian people seem to have always contemplated, if not actually trusted) for their own approach to stereotyping others and themselves in literary communication. A number of facts were bound to catch the eye of the Western writers and readers who, at the end of the century, considered the Australian subject matter. To a large extent, the Anglo-American – and generally Western – phrasing of local identity turned out to be foundational to the literary conveyance of national identity in later Australian public storytelling. Once more, the national language, literary or not, is solid proof of the regional status of Australia. The means and the competence to appeal to a broad audience, already conditioned to look upon its own ethnicity as exciting, essentially advances a national agenda. The leap from ethnic consciousness to national(ist) ideology is, to some extent, a matter of carrying on the polite tradition of Western Europe I will come back to. Eventually, the discourse of polite learning advertised a secular philosophy and brought notions of tradition and authority under scrutiny. What was to become the self-aware colonial population benefited from the paradigm shift in the continental public culture.

From a colonial group scattered across the Antipodes to the national community of a modern nation state, the native population of present-day Australia made the most out of the political self-determination ideal brought about by the advent of the “revolutionary-democratic” (Hobsbawm, 2000: 20) manifesto of nationalism. The examples of the United States of America and the French Republic prove that the early stages of the national endeavour feature an agenda mostly concerned with the common good of the society. Sharing or not a common language and belonging to one and the same ethnic group was deemed of no intrinsic value. The 18th-century French Enlightenment fostered the principle of equal rights and duties under the law, which, essentially, boiled down to the modern construal of the nation state: “distinctions between the nation and the state, [...] definitions of citizenship and nationality, [...] questions of nationhood [...] were central to the French Revolutionary project” (Keitner, 2007: 14). Similar statements are part and parcel of the classic modernist studies in nationalism that uphold the seminal role of the French revolution in the making of nation.

The purpose was to stage, in narrative terms, culture-bound readings of otherwise universal values and beliefs. They are supposed to set apart national identities. The language of self-identity renders distinct notions of indigenoussness from neighbouring communities, which need to be confidently labelled as historical friends and (mostly) as foes. Unambiguously, the public policy of governmentally-subsidised political bodies is obvious in various public narratives meant to help the Australian people feel that they stand out from the

crowd. Such reporting on social reality is biased to the extent to which it seeks to distinctively phrase the illusive notion of objectively distinctive national character.

It may very well be that calling names and bringing charges against someone (else but yourself) has universal currency and even popular appeal worldwide. My point is that, nonetheless, the actual rhetoric of indictment the readers come across in literary language is distinctive of the institutionalized culture of exclusion and belonging enforced by modern European nation states. This statement goes along with the assumption that “during the last two centuries the nation state has, indeed, been the principal driving force behind the creation of the modern world” (Löhr; Wenzlhuemer, 2013: 5), our sense of collective identity included. In the Australian context, the culture-bound character of nationally-oriented storytelling is both determined by and limited to such presuppositions. So as to make my statement complete, I have to admit that there is no definite ‘Australian’ feature, readily available for analysis, when it comes to nation and state-building.

3. Postcolonialism and Modern Literary Cultures

Both a historic understanding of postcolonialism and the latest developments in the field of nationalism studies help delineate the Australian quest for self-identification, as recorded in various public narratives I resort to and actually quote various strands of postcolonialism in order to legitimate mine, which targets the ideological underpinnings of nationalism in the country’s modern literary culture. The gist of it is that, on the slippery ground of postcolonialism, various instances of narrative reporting on the national past make it (nonetheless!) safe to point out the colonial set-up of the Australian past. The very ideology of popular nationalism points to the inbuilt tension between the self and the other, as recorded in the master story of each and every “ethnie” (Smith, 2008: 20) dreaming of an “independent polity” (Bauer, 2002: 78) that, sooner or later, should help in achieving both state and nationhood. The indictment of the (alleged) policy of exploitation carried out by the representatives of metropolitan countries throughout the world comes with the territory of nationalism. This makeup of the narrative address covers up for a mixed sense of wonder and loathing displayed by the (fictional) indigenous population in front of the alien (colonizing) elite. In other words, an instantly recognisable classic colonial set-up is employed when it comes to representing the past (and, for that matter, present in the two-speed): the natives are obviously authentic, exotic and, more often than not, inferior, while the foreigners (usually Westerners)

are civilized, enviable and, more often than not, corrupt. Roughly the same posturing of the characters structures the language of indictment I will track down, first in the early 20th-century Anglo-American reception of Australia/Australians, and then in the 20th-century historical novels. Usually, a number of cultural props feature high on the political agenda of the public policy, as exemplified by allegiance to the prescribed values of the nation state.

Namely, public storytelling actually mimics the prestige colonial cultures' ability to narrate otherness. Definitely, there is an indigenous competence to capitalize on the Western (Anglo-American, respectively) recriminatory rhetoric, which is particularly vivid in documentary literature about Australia. To a large extent, everything seems to boil down to phrasing over again the same, originally English, public indictment of the other in literary languages. To be explicit, the British and the American venture capitalists in the early 20th century seemed to consider the Antipodes inviting. It was an opportunity because of some unlikely reasons. Ultimately, they are exposed to the ease of use calling names and pointing fingers has in English: the natives are charged with various offences that range from poor sanitation standards to their questionable public and private morals. As a matter of principle, they all invite foreign military, economic, or political intervention. The Asutralians themselves relish turning the tables on the originators of the literary (language) images that pigeonhole them into set national and colonial roles.

However, the dramatic paradigm shift in daily life and worldview is a case in point of “a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power” (Bhabha, 1994: 86). It follows that literary language, communication patterns (i.e., the lines of reasoning, the choice of words, etc.), narrative fiction, etc. are sites of both resistance and transformation that record national self-identification. The various instances of public narratives under scrutiny in the following chapters exemplify a vicarious experience of the self and of the other, quite common in public storytelling alongside the already mentioned rhetoric of indictment. I presume that both of them are consequences of the postcolonial condition resilient in the mainstream cultures and plain to see whenever it comes to reporting on the national past. Contextually, the recording of the interaction between national identities, though obviously contentious at first, resulted in bringing the indigenous population into the dominant global (i.e., Western) society. The rather new Anglo-American reference frame I consider only comes to prove the claim that the lack of access to indigenous means of literary expression occasioned the need for the invention of a rhetoric (of indictment) steeped in the Western tradition. The so-called process of worlding undergone by Asutralian identity is “an act of material and ideological conquest, a form of narrating and inscribing colonial power”

(Muthyala, 2006: 1). Postcolonial criticism has always been highly interested “in locating cultural performance and political agency in terms that emphasise their contingency, ambivalence and displacement” (Hallward, 2001: 22). Literary storytelling about the newcomers, who helped or ruined the country, fit in well with the broader postcolonial discourse of an ethnic sense of identity. The foreign(-educated) elite enforced on ethnic characters the values of modern nationalism in ambivalent terms, which, although commenced as political and economic oppression, eventually led to their political self-determination.