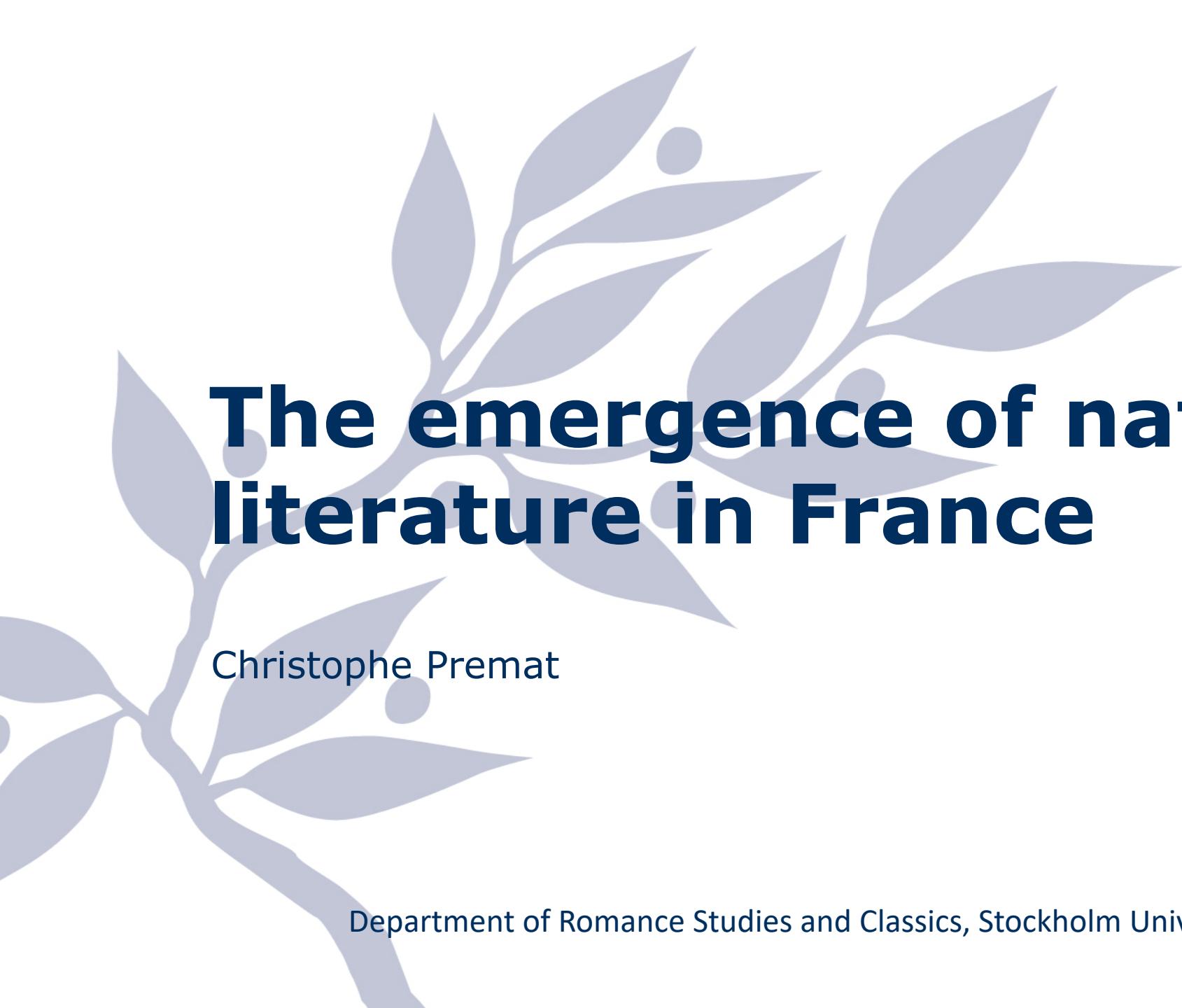




The emergence of national literature in France

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National literature / anthologies / standard literature

- The notion of **national literature** is ambiguous, do we refer to the literature of a nation ? a literary patrimony ? a literature in one dominant language ? a constitution of a national anthology to reflect what is viewed as standard literature ?
- Emergence: does literature consolidate the constitution of a nation? (literature and imagined nations). In other words, is literature an imaginary justification of the nation as a reality?
- Nation (from latin roots, *nascor*, to give birth)

Background for the analysis

- A theory of imaginary significations. Literary history is a way of understanding how the collective imaginary works.
- Castoriadis, C. (1975). *L'institution imaginaire de la société*. Paris: Seuil.
- A nation is an imaginary signification for Castoriadis, the idea that a community shares some common values that cannot be defined because you were born with them (the act of socialization). Society and History refer to each other. The human beings cannot live outside the society, they live because they are socialized from the beginning.

Background for the analysis

- “imagined communities” (Anderson, 2016) : the constitution of nation as a core community (result of a socio-historical process)
- Conditions of transnational circulation (for Anderson, printed capitalism is an important factor for the cultural circulation of languages).
- “print-as-commodity” (print-languages / vernacular forms of capitalism). Early interaction between capitalism, technology and linguistic diversity.

Background for the analysis

- The context : the idea that a particular script-language offered privileged access to truth (Anderson, 2016: 36) (*Imagined communities*)
- 1500-1550: period of exceptional European prosperity (internationalization of publishing houses)
- The question of a *lingua franca* or a form of transnational language

Background for the analysis (Literature / Culture)

- Valdés, M. et Hutcheon, L., (1994) *Rethinking Literary History-Comparatively*, American Council of learned societies, ACLS occasional paper n°27; *"literature does not exist in isolation from the culture in which it is « experienced », that is, the culture in which it is both produced and received. While acknowledging the undeniable specificity of language or nation, we feel it may now be time to consider as well other more comparative configurations for the historical knowledge of literature"*

Plan

- 1) Historical consciousness and Literature: the case of French literature
- 2) The constitution of a literary field
- 3) National literatures / transnational literatures: dialectics of literary spaces?

1) Historical consciousness and literature: the case of French literature

- Literary history and history (how do we periodize). Correspondance between historical facts, discoveries and Literature (traces of a collective consciousness). Medieval Literature until the end of the 17th century.
- History of French language. The first text in old French, 842 "Serment de Strasbourg". Juridical text on the partition of the Empire of Carolus Magnus between his grandchildren. There is also a version of the text in old German ("tudesque").
- Organization of the Empire (use of written texts).
- Literature : a propaganda for the feudal system. Feudalism as a structure of power. Territory, power and values (codes)

1) Historical consciousness and literature: the case of French literature

- The case of *épopée*. *La chanson de geste* (Roland). 11th century
- Les romans de la table ronde (the Knights of the Round).
- Heroic values are linked to the Holy Crusades, the military and religious conquests. (Chansons de geste: a new literary genre). The feeling of national exaltation is prevailing
- (*Gesta* in latin: exceptional actions)
- The imaginary significations of feudalism are represented through the *amour courtois*. Ideas of loyalty, respect, honour. Exempel: *La Chanson de Roland*

CARLES li reis, nostre emperere magnes,
Set anz tuz pleins ad estet en Espagne :
Tresqu'en la mer cunquist la tere altaigne.
N'i ad castel ki devant lui remaigne ;
Mur ne citet n'i est remés a fraindre,
Fors Sarraguce, ki est en une muntaigne.
Li reis Marsilie la tient, ki Deu nen aimet.
Mahumet sert e Apollin recleimet :
Nes poet garder que mals ne l'i ateignet.

Le roi Charles, notre empereur, le Grand,
Sept ans tous pleins est resté dans l'Espagne:
Jusqu'à la mer il a conquis la terre hautaine.
Plus un château qui devant lui résiste,
Plus une muraille à forcer, plus une cité,
Hormis Saragosse, qui est sur une montagne.
Le roi Marsile la tient, qui n'aime pas Dieu;
C'est Mahomet qu'il sert, Apollin qu'il prie
Il ne peut pas s'en garder: le malheur l'atteindra

La chanson de geste / le roman de chevalerie

- Short verses of poetry (efficiency of propaganda: transfiguration of a military conquest)
- National myth (glorification of a person). Carolus Magnus.
- Pedagogical aspect: how to behave (Code of conduct). Traitor, overlord, vassal.
- Chrétien de Troyes (symbolic characters). The heroes embody an attitude (national feeling).
The characters fight for the protection of a world.
- Chrétien de Troyes (born around 1135). Critics of misbehaviours.
- (Aristocracy). The risk of *hybris* is clearly denounced in *Yvain ou le chevalier lion*.

**Source: retrieved from idealmedieval.blogspot.com
(27 October 2019)**

- The Knight and his wife (the symbolic function of the bird)



Thesis from the sociologist Michel Clouscard

- Michel Clouscard (1972) *L'être et le code*, Paris: Mouton.
- A systematic analysis of the evolutions of production processes, social structure and sentimentality (literary theory)
- *Tristan and Yseult* (myth in the Western world). *L'Amour fou*
- The way the feudal precapitalistic production circulates. Separation with the King Marc and then restoration of the links.

The aristocratic values (le roman de chevalerie)

- *Erec et Enide* (1160). Enide became the page of Erec and compelled him to behave as a Knight.
- Initiatic ritual (a 7.000 octosyllabic poem with alternate rhymes)
- See the works of Georges Duby. Duby, G. (2012). *Le chevalier, la femme et le prêtre*. Paris: Fayard/Pluriel.
- The courteousness (inversion of social hierarchy with the woman as a protector of core values).
- The medieval French Literature echoes the fundamental values of the kingdom with an insistence on the myth of loyalty

The *Renaissance* and the European circulation of ideas

- Rediscovery of an ancient period in order to build a new humanism
- Rupture with the hierarchical world inherited from the Medieval Literature.
- A breach in the understanding of the world. A new image of the world (representation of the world according the German philosopher Heidegger). A new consciousness with a rediscovery of Latin and Greek works.

The *Renaissance* and the European circulation of ideas

- Heidegger, M. (1962). « L'époque des "conceptions du monde" », In *Chemins qui ne mènent nulle part*. Paris: Gallimard. (Translation for *Holzweg*). This rebirth challenges the idea of nation (openness, circulation of ideas, universities, artists...). Correspondence between scientific discoveries (Galilei) and artistic works. Period of intense creativity.

The *Renaissance* and the evolution of the French language

- Influences that enhance a new national culture (French syntax, new words).
- First dictionnary (French-Latin) of Robert Estienne in 1538
- Rabelais (1494-1553) and the emergence of a popular culture that transforms the relation to the French language.

The *Renaissance* and the evolution of the French language

- Bakhtine, M. (1970). *L'œuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen-Âge sous la Renaissance*. Paris: Gallimard.
- The revelation of a popular culture that was mainly ignored in the French medieval Literature. A new historical consciousness means another way of considering the past things.
- Rabelais proposed in *Gargantua* a programme of humanist education.

Rabelais and the popular culture

- Literature is not only reserved to an elite of specialists. Access to a common language.
- Example: Rabelais and litanie des couillons in *Tiers livre* (enumeration of titles preceded by *couillon*, chapters 26 to 28). Critics of formal discours that do not reach the people. Idea of a new speech that regives life to human and things (the style of Rabelais with specific prose texts illustrates that).
- Another way of perverting the frozen words: replacing the litany of complaints by reintroducing a popular language. (*couillon mignon, de renom, couillon plombé, couillon paté*). Extraordinary variety of adjectives (*laicté....*)
- Protection of the French Language. Édit de Villers-Cotterêts (1539)

Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592)

- Montaigne: a philosopher, a moralist, a writer...? A will of diffusing a popular access to knowledge and culture
- Diffusion of a popular heritage. Literature: the circulation of written texts to readers
- Essay of Montaigne, *Des cannibales* (critics of the ethnocentric perspective, relation between civilization and barbarity). Necessity of having a critical distance to these notions and prejudices

Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592). *Des cannibales*

- “Or je trouve, pour revenir à mon propos, qu'il n'y a rien de barbare et de sauvage en cette nation, à ce qu'on m'en a rapporté : sinon que chacun appelle barbarie, ce qui n'est pas de son usage. Comme de vray nous n'avons autre mire de la verité, et de la raison, que l'exemple et idée des opinions et usances du païs où nous sommes. Là est tousjours la parfaicte religion, la parfaicte police, parfaict et accomply usage de toutes choses. Ils sont sauvages de mesmes, que nous appellons sauvages les fruicts, que nature de soy et de son progrez ordinaire a produicts : là où à la verité ce sont ceux que nous avons alterez par nostre artifice, et destournez de l'ordre commun, que nous devrions appeller plustost sauvages” (*Des cannibales*)

The humanist tradition and the representation of the world

- Quest of truth. Idea of questioning the natural perceptions and the representations
- Affirmation of the human being (respect, centrality of the human being in the world).
- Notion of *dignitas* with Pic de la Mirandole (1463-1494). Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499).
- According to Heidegger, the emergence of a "representation of the world". It will reach an extreme form with the *cogito* of Descartes (1596-1650). (*Deuxième méditation métaphysique* with the suspension of the environment by the *ego*). Necessity of building a moral for the human beings and a method in order to think about the world. *Res cogitans* versus *Res extensa*

Classicism and baroque literature?

- 17th century. General culture and a sense of mobility (Heritage of the *Renaissance*). He controls the codes of the Court.
- The idea of a *mécénat* (literature has to have a political support). Molière (1622-1673).
- The theater as a way of showing and playing with the social codes. Embodiement of characters (*L'Avare*, *Le Malade imaginaire*). Aesthetics of a national scene with the research of perfection.
- Elias, N. (1969). *Die höfische Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Classicism and baroque literature?

- Classicism that evolves towards the expression of baroque literature. (the vanity of things, the double aspect of characters, the sense of *illusio*).
- Pierre Corneille, *l'illusion comique* (1635).
- Controversy in literary history on the way of perceiving the *baroque* style.
- Can we reinterpret a part of classicism as an expression of baroque? (The preference for the style, the emotions...) Is the baroque the illusion of a vertigo? In France, Louis XIV arrested the superintendent Fouquet in 1662.
The taste for excess

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Classicism and baroque literature?

- Jacob Burckhardt in the 19th century had a historical interpretation of the italian barocco as a manifestation of decadence (*Kulturkritik*). The sense of glorification is dangerous for the political power as the baroque movement shows the duality of things. The unitary image of the nation is perverted. Interesting to compare in anthologies the reference to the baroque literature (Burckhardt, 1999).
- Curtius (1947) refers to the conceptions of Burckhardt on *Renaissance*

Consolidation of the French language in the 17th century

- Académie française (1635)
- Codification of the language.
- Proximity between Literature and Monarchy
- At the same time, the baroque illustrates the duplicity of the political power. The association of Literature and Power leads to the possibility of autonomy (*Larvatus prodeo*).

Consolidation of the French language in the 17th century

- The quest for autonomy (openness to the spirit of the 18th century). Tension between what Burckhardt calls the spirit of the nations and their political representations. (See *Considerations on universal history*)
- Need to consider the national literature through the concept of literary field

2) The constitution of a literary field

- Method of analysis of literary works.
- Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002)
- Pierre Bourdieu (1993). *The field of cultural production*. Cambridge.
- A field is a system of social forces where the authors are immersed. (Tension between emergence and immersion).

2) The constitution of a literary field

- Consecration of an author (visibility – marketing and cultural system that supports this consecration).
- Literature (social capital – market – social trajectories of authors - national pride)
- Literature is an illustration of social distinctions with a complex of authors – cultural agents and a public (readers).

2) The constitution of a literary field

- Pierre Bayle, "République des lettres"(1720).
- "C'est la liberté qui règne dans la République des Lettres. Cette République est un État extrêmement libre. On n'y reconnaît que l'empire de la vérité et de la raison et sous leurs auspices on fait la guerre innocemment à qui que ce soit. Les amis s'y doivent tenir en garde contre leurs amis, les pères contre leurs enfants, les beaux-pères contre leurs gendres c'est comme un siècle de fer (...). Chacun y est tout ensemble souverain et justiciable de chacun" (Bayle, 1720, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*).
- Sociology of literature

2) The constitution of a literary field

- Humanist ideal of *République des lettres*. Virtual expression of social and political expressions.
- *Respublica literaria* (Erasme). Humanist tradition that questions the national field. Is it a new conception of the platonician Academy? (association of writers that promote a cosmopolitan ideal?)
- Hypothesis: reaction to the tendency to absolute power (concentration which is not possible)
- Casanova, P. (2008). *La République mondiale des lettres*. Paris: Seuil.

2) The constitution of a literary field

- Literature can help the constitution of a national patrimony but aesthetics and politics cannot be confounded.
- Critical distance (*République des lettres*)
- Respublica literaria (first apparition around 1417 with Francesco Barbaro). Francesco Barbaro (1390-1454).
- Remembrance of the ideal of the Venice Republic in the idea of *République des lettres*
- European ideal (circulation of ideas) that we find in Romance-speaking countries. The definition of a *publicum*

2) The constitution of a literary field

- Difficulty of qualifying a literary period. Pierre Halen (2001) notion of "construction identitaire".
- Constitution of anthologies: recollection of national pieces. Ideological point of view. Institutional perspective in order to understand the literary field as an institutional system.
- Provenzano, F. (2011). *Vies et mort de la francophonie. Une politique de la langue et de la littérature*. Bruxelles: Impressions nouvelles.

2) The constitution of a literary field

- The anthologies and the ideological risk (distinction between francodoxie and francophonie). Francodoxie: idea that the *littérature francophone* echoes the national values of France as an enlightened civilization (imaginary colonization). Example: Marc Blancpain (1967). *Les Lumières de la France. Le français dans le monde*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy.

2) The constitution of a literary field

- Necessity of analyzing those anthologies to understand the literary systems.
- Littérature francophone: transnational spaces? Confronting the manifesto of *République des lettres* with *littérature-monde*.
- Literature reflects dominating imaginaries.

3) National literature / transnational literature: dialectics of literary spaces?

- Difficulty of distinguishing French Literature with Francophone Literature. Example of the Francophone Literature of Caraïbes. Movement of *négritude*. Manifesto against all forms of social exploitation and slaveries. Gontran-Damas, Sédar-Senghor, Césaire.
- Négritude as a new humanism (international solidarity).

3) National literature / transnational literature: dialectics of literary spaces?

- Literature as a postcolonial resistance. Frantz Fanon (*Peau noire, masques blancs*, 1952. *Les damnés de la Terre*, 1961).
- Postcolonial perspective that questions the Centre-Periphery relations (Premat, 2018). Fragments, hybridity. Example of Maryse Condé (1989), *Traversée de la Mangrove*. Paris: Mercure de France.

3) National literature / transnational literature: dialectics of literary spaces?

- Multiplication of cultural identities (Balibar). Nation, culture, Literature and State cannot be confounded
- Resistance against the French literature in Canada during the 19th century (Lemire, 1987). Fear that liberal ideas would pervert the new nation. Canada was founded in 1867.
- Arnold (the imposition of a colonial literature). Cf Glissant, E. (1981). *Le discours antillais*. Paris: Seuil. Négritude, antillanité, créolité. Césaire, A. (1939). *Cahiers d'un retour au pays natal*.
- Refusal of a colonial stigmatization. Creation of other literary traditions (Cf Glissant and the theory of relations)

3) National literature / transnational literature: dialectics of literary spaces?

- The literary experience (Blanchot). Disappearance of the author and emergence of the text.
- Blanchot, M. (1955). *L'expérience littéraire*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Circulation of texts: creation of a literary work that exceeds the *posture* of the author.
- The author is a simple mediation (a narrative voice).
- Différence between *langue* and *langage*

3) National literature / transnational literature: dialectics of literary spaces?

- "L'oeuvre exige de l'écrivain qu'il perde toute "nature", tout caractère, et que, cessant de se rapporter aux autres et à lui-même par la décision qui le fait moi, il devienne le lieu vide où s'annonce l'affirmation impersonnelle" (Blanchot, 1955: 61).
- Literary space is not concerned by the question of national Literature.
- Necessity of an expression (the works of Stéphane Mallarmé). A literary work creates its own space. Difference with the idea of national literatures (time-process, development of a main language, common grammar)

3) National literature / transnational literature: dialectics of literary spaces?

- Mixture of national traditions in a postcolonial trend.
- Léopold Sédar-Senghor, "Le français, langue de culture" (*Esprit*, 1962).
- A mixture of Greek-Latin traditions with vernacular languages.
- The French language was found in "les décombres du régime colonial". Emergence of littérature francophone in a postcolonial space.

Conclusion

- Rethinking the literary history (Hutcheon, 2002): did we overestimate the relation between nations and literature?
- Variation of literary spaces. Literature can be an allie for the establishment of a national patrimony. This alliance appears when a new political and social form emerges.
- Example with Castoriadis (who analyzes the apparition of philosophy, democracy and tragedy at the same period in the 5th century B.C.)

Conclusion

- When a nation emerges, Literature can be used to consolidate this imaginary signification. The French literature: established from the 11th century until the 17th century. The Académie illustrates the constitution of a common linguistic patrimony that will be used afterwards.
- Emergence, disappearance of literary forms (a point of view on history which is not linear).
- Dominique Viart (history of contemporary literature). Styles that exceed the construction of a national patrimony.

Used paradigms

- Castoriadis- The imaginary institution of society
- Anderson – Imagined communities
- Bourdieu – Literary field
- Clouscard, literary genre, *psyché* (feelings, sentimentality), social structure
- Halen – Literary institutions
- Young R. C. – Postcolonialism

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