

Before Babel. Global Media, Ethnic Hybridity, and Enjoyment in Basque Culture¹

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Artikulu honetan aztertu egiten da euskal hizkuntzak eta kulturak historian zehar modernizazioaren aurrean (Babel) agertu dituzten erak, globalizazioa dela-eta haien egungo kokapenari heltzeko molde gisa. Hiru komunikabide desberdin (literatura, telebista, museok) aztertirik, globalizazioaren eraginez euskal kultura hibrido bilakatzen ari dela ondorioztatzen du artikuluak, halako eran non bi-biak euskal edo espainiar nazionalismotik haratago ezezik, haien estruktura subjektibo hegemonikoetatik haratago ere kokaturik gertatzen diren. Euskal kulturaren egoera globalizatu berriaren eraginak desberdinak direla ondorioztatzen da artikulan, baina nolana ere historia eta kulturarekiko haustura baino areago, halako jarraipen bat agertzen dute, euskal kulturaren oinarri premodernoak eta prenazionalistak direla kausa. Artikuluan baliabide berriak proposatzen dira politikoki produktiboagoak diren era batzuen jarraipen hori ulertzeko, eta aldi berean globalizazioa ulertzeko modu murrizgarriak desafiatzan ditu: gozamena, hibridoak eta aurriak.

Giltz-Hitzak: Egungo Euskal Literatura. Telebista. Bilboko Guggenheim Museoa. Post-kolonialismoa. Generoa. Sexua. Nazionalismoa. Globalizazioa. Hibridoak.

Este artículo analiza las formas en las que la lengua y cultura vascas históricamente se han situado a sí mismas por delante de la modernización (Babel) como forma de abordar su ubicación contemporánea frente a la globalización. Tras analizar tres medios distintos (literatura, televisión, museos), este artículo concluye que la cultura vasca se está convirtiendo en híbrida a consecuencia de la globalización de forma que tanto uno y otra quedan reubicados mucho más allá no sólo del nacionalismo vasco y del español sino también de sus estructuras subjetivas hegemónicas. El artículo se centra en las tres posiciones subjetivas emergentes (la del inmigrante post-colonial, la del homosexual varón, y la de la nueva mujer) así como en la nacionalista históricamente hegemónica nacionalista. El artículo concluye que los efectos de la nueva posición globalizada de la cultura vasca son dispares, pero representan no obstante cierta continuidad más que una ruptura con la historia y cultura debido a los fundamentos pre-modernos y pre-nacionalistas de la cultura vasca. El artículo propone nuevas herramientas para comprender esta continuidad de formas más políticamente productivas a la vez que desafía a las percepciones reduccionistas de la globalización: el disfrute, los híbridos, y las ruinas.

Palabras Claves: Literatura Vasca Contemporánea. Televisión. Museo Guggenheim de Bilbao. Post-colonialismo. Género. Sexo. Nacionalismo. Globalización. Híbridos.

Cet article analyse de quelles façons la langue et la culture basques se sont situées historiquement elles mêmes au devant de la modernisation (Babel) de manière à aborder sa situation contemporaine face à la globalisation. Après avoir analysé trois moyens différents (littérature, télévision, musées), cet article conclut que la culture basque devient hybride à cause de la globalisation de façon que l'un et l'autre se retrouvent beaucoup plus éloignés, non seulement du nationalisme basque et du nationalisme espagnol mais également de leurs structures subjectives hégémoniques. L'article s'oriente sur les trois positions subjectives principales (celle de l'immigré post-colonial, celle de l'homosexuel mâle, et celle de la nouvelle femme) ainsi que sur la position nationaliste historiquement hégémonique nationaliste. L'article conclut que les effets de la nouvelle position globalisée de la culture basque sont dissemblables, mais représentent pourtant une certaine continuité plus qu'une rupture avec l'histoire et la culture due aux fondements pré-modernes et pré-nationalistes de la culture basque. L'article propose de nouveaux outils pour comprendre cette continuité de formes plus politiquement productives, en même temps qu'il défie des perceptions "réductionnistes" de la globalisation: le plaisir, les hybrides et les ruines.

Mots Clés: Littérature Basque Contemporaine. Télévision. Musée Guggenheim de Bilbao. Post-colonialisme. Globalisation. Hybrides.

1. BASQUE HISTORICAL POSITIONALITY

Perhaps the Biblical story of Babel could be a suitable starting point for a discussion about Basque culture and globalization. On the threshold of modernity, as Latin fragmented in romance languages, many authors resuscitated the Biblical story of Babel to account for that linguistic breakup that led to the formation of nation-states. Today, in globalized postmodernity, linguistic fragmentation has not disappeared; on the contrary, it is increasing. It no longer is a phenomenon solely circumscribed to the European and Western world; postmodern Babel is affecting the entire globe. Furthermore, the new emergence of minority ethnicities and cultures is intensifying the Babelic effect to the point that one could speak of "micro fragmentation," at the sub-state level, as in the case of Basque language. Nowadays, the survival of a language or culture is not necessarily connected to the formation of a nation-state. Yet, this putative micro-fragmentation is not incompatible with the new macro-status of English. Even at the level of language, postmodernism poses again another interesting conundrum the likes of which Fredric Jameson has detailed thoroughly throughout most of his work. This is the Babelic paradox of globalization in which Basque is caught. But then, Babel is an old myth in Basque culture, one that has a very old discursive history of its own. Babel is a foundational narrative that, at least since the sixteenth century, has worked in Basque culture as a referent for global location.

The idea of Basque as Babelic language was already suggested by non-Basque authors such as Italian Lucio Marineo Siculo (1460-1533; Tovar 26) and Spanish Pedro de Medina (1493-; Tovar 24) in the late Middle Ages². In the aftermath of the earth-shattering events of 1492, Basque authors such as Poza, Echave, Garibay, Henao, etc. (Tovar 26-47) wrote "apologias" about the rights and political legitimacy of Basques and their language; eventually they became known as "apologistas." These authors mobilized the Biblical account of Babel in order to situate the unknown origins of the Basque language within the Christian global orb and history, precisely at a moment when modernity, after the demise of Latin, was becoming a new Babel. The popularity that the Babelic account experienced in the Renaissance was due precisely to its ability to narrate the new Babel of modernity. In the Basque case, the results of the new Babelic positioning were unprecedented: by placing Basque *before Babel*, Basques and their language entered modernity (Juaristi, *Vestigios*).

Here I mean "before" in the double sense of the word: preceding in time and in front of a location. Although each apologist varied in his account, most of them defended in one way or another that one of the descendants of the Babelic aftermath, Tubal, came to Spain and brought with him Basque language. During that time, other Spanish authors attempted to situate Castilian in the new modern Babel that followed the fragmentation of Latin and the new cultivation of "vulgar" languages for the official use of the many European states (Anderson 41-9). However, they were faced with the apologists' claim that Basque already was spoken in Spain and *preceded the new post-Latinist Babel of modernity* and its

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2. Antonio Tovar suggests that the origin of the idea is medieval, derives from the confluence of different and disconnected Biblical accounts such as Flavio Josephus', Saint Jeronimus of Seville's, and perhaps Rodrigo Ximénez de Rada's (circa 1175-; Tovar 17-19) who hailed from Basque speaking Navarre. However, there is not enough evidence to determine the actual currency of the Babelic theory of Basque in the Middle Ages.

Furthermore, Tovar cites Alonso de Madrigal (circa 1400-1455) as already defending the Babelic origin of Castilian, by means of connecting it with the arrival of Tubal to Spain. This Castilian use predates any positively recorded account of the origins of the theory of Basque as Babelic.

historicity. Basque language situated Basques before modern history as *preceding* it, because of its Biblical origins.

At the same time, Basque also repositioned the Basque Country *in front of* modernity, facing the Babelic fragmentation and multiplication of “vulgar” languages. The fact that Basque was defined as one of the languages that sprang from the fragmentation of the Biblical Babel gave Basque modern legitimacy and, consequently, a new position for Basques in the new revalorization of nations brought about by European modernity. Thus, Basque language became a tool of legitimation for Basques when locating themselves in front of modernity.

In the case of Basque language, this “before-ness” was further elaborated by certain apologists so that Basque did not only come before the new modern Babel, but also the original, Biblical one. As Jon Juaristi establishes for the case of Andrés de Poza (-1595), one of the most important apologists of the Spanish Renaissance, Poza defended that Basque language’s position was *before the Biblical Babel*:

From Poza’s book one can conclude that God chose to reveal its own nature to Tubal’s lineage [the Basques], and that such revelation was superior to the first one of Eden, contained in Hebrew. When infusing this language in Adam, God made him participant in some of its mysteries, but the degree of that revelation was inferior to that of the Babelic revelation contained and expressed in Basque. This latter language would turn out to be a sort of proto-Gospel in which a Trinitarian theodicy was deployed. Basque –affirms tacitly Poza– is more perfect than Hebrew as language and theological philosophy. The religion from Babel was more accomplished and truer than that from Sinai, and the Basques, the truly chosen people. (86, my translation)³.

Poza is the most radical apologist in the sense that he simultaneously establishes the double positioning of “beforeness” that other apologists reduce to modernity. In Poza’s case, Basque language becomes the possessor of Christianity’s full revelation before any other language arising from the demise of Babel or the original Edenic expulsion. At the same time, Basque stands in front of modernity and its Babelic multilingual reality, as yet another modern language: the most modern of all given its outmost Christian or “cristiano viejo” status. In Poza Basque language gives the Basque Country its strongest legitimacy: Basque precedes modernity as well as the Edenic creation. In short, Basque comes before the Christian West while constituting it. The Basques stand as preceding and founding the West as a result of its “beforeness.” This position is not simply historical or geographic but both, thanks to its unstable synecdochic logic that defies Western modern logocentrism.

Following Walter Mignolo’s differentiation between “subject, locus, and enunciation,” we could conclude that the Basques became modern subjects by placing themselves on a locus of enunciation that was exterior to modernity but, in terms of the enunciation itself, claimed a central position within modernity and Western history as result of the latter’s Biblical foundation⁴. However the Basques’ discourse and position of “beforeness” had a very

3. I have chosen the neutral possessive over either gendered one when referring to God.

4. “discussions about *loci of enunciation* and *imaginary constructions of/in the Americas* arose several years ago from this combined feeling of *being “American,”* properly speaking, that is, coming *from* Argentina and living *in* the United States, *feeling* (Latin) American at the intersection of *coming from* and *being at*. I do not know what being (Latin) American is, but I do know how it feels to be *here*... In Latin America and the Caribbean there is a long discursive tradition of searching for specifically American geocultural identities.... Nowadays, we might regard this pursuit as an attempt to legitimized *loci of enunciation*... The politics of geocultural identity created a double bind for the (Latin) American since an identification constructed by European intellectuals as a *description of an object* inevitably clashed with (Latin) American constructions of the same identification as a *description of the self and of the speaking subject*. Thus it is the *process of constructing identification* rather than the *description (or definition) of identity* that should be our concern” (175-76).

important consequence for Basque language. Unlike the rest of modern languages that eventually served as basis for the construction of nation-states, Basque was located in front of modernity precisely in order to signify a position *exterior to modernity*. The reason was political: ultimately, Basque language's Babelic antiquity was mobilized to allow the Basques to occupy a position of privilege and difference in the Spanish state, which already had its own national language: Castilian. Unlike the rest of languages mobilized in modernity, which pointed to a national and political interiority, Basque referred to a (modern) exteriority. The result was the lack of development of Basque. This language remained an object of enunciation but never became a tool of enunciation: the apologists' never wrote in Basque and the language never became the basis of a potential nation-state. To my knowledge no other language fulfilled this function in the burgeoning modern Europe of the Renaissance.

In order to understand the specific and historical way, out of the many possible, in which Basque entered modernity, it will suffice to remember the case of the Protestant queen of Navarre, Jeanne of Albret (1528-1572), mother of Henry IV future king of France. Had Navarre become Protestant under Albret's rule, the translation of the Bible into Basque, which it was ordered to Joannes Leizarraga by the Calvinist Synod of Pau, might have become the linguistic basis for a new state language. In this way, Navarre and the Basque Country might have followed a development similar to that of the Protestant states of the bygone Sacred Roman Empire in the aftermath of Luther's translation of the Bible into German. However, the actual, specific development of Basque language, after the apologists' defense, followed the new economic and social structure of the Catholic, Castilian, Basque Country⁵. As Aranzadi already notes (288-317), the reorganization of a new rural class emerging from the *banderizo* or clan wars of the Middle Ages did not require a national language, but needed nevertheless a cultural and political tool of differentiation in order to legitimize itself in the Spanish court. In this way, Basques emigrating from the rural Basque Country could join the new class of scribes in the imperial court; Basque proved the "old Christian" status of Basques and gave them automatically universal nobility and easy access to the imperial bureaucratic apparatus from which the Jews were being evicted. At the same time the new class of nobles and *mayorazgos* (inheriting family members, landowners) remaining in the Basque Country could uphold their own economic privileges in front of the Spanish court.

In other words, historically speaking, the apologists' particular legitimizing use of Basque language prevailed over a nationalist possible deployment for the consolidation of nation-states followed first by Protestant and later on by catholic empires such as the Spanish. Only with Manuel de Larramendi (1690-1766), already in the eighteenth century, did the systematization of Basque language begin with his publication of a Basque grammar and dictionary. But even then, Larramendi's work did not serve for the development of Basque as a national language. It simply was a more refined and systematic way to continue the apologists' work by proving the inner rationality and perfection of Basque. Larramendi never wrote or translated any important work into Basque.

During the Enlightenment, the Basque uniqueness crystallized in the institution of "Seminario de Vergara" and the "Real Sociedad Vascongada de los Amigos del País" fostered by a group of enlightened noblemen called "Caballeritos de Azcoitia." They were one of the enlightened avant-gardes of Spain, and their institutions served as model to other groups throughout Spain. The intimate friendship between Altuna, one of the Caballeritos,

5. In this respect, and as Tovar notes, the French Basque apologist Arnauld Oienhart (54-8) was more preoccupied with establishing the Navarran origins of the Basques than their Biblical and post-Babelic origins. In other words, the Babelic theories were only of interest to the Spanish Basques.

and Rousseau serves as the anecdotal and yet revelatory moment of the Basque Enlightenment, which further emphasized the marginal and yet necessary place occupied by Basque language, ultimate marker of Basque differentiation. The Caballeritos took advantage of their differentiated position vis-à-vis the rest of catholic Spain, while marginally cultivating a language that was not enlightened but was, nevertheless, natural, according to Rousseau's philosophy.

During romanticism and with the arrival of Wilhelm von Humboldt to the Basque Country, Basque language was placed within a legitimate scientific paradigm that reached Europe. However, this event strengthened the original legitimizing uses of Basque language, and further emphasized the antimodern movement of Carlism and "fuerismo." In turn both movements laid the groundwork for the formation, at the end of the nineteenth century, of Basque nationalism via the late apologist, Pablo Pedro de Astarloa (1752-1806), also an informant of Humboldt.

Once again and after Sabino Arana (1865-1903), the founder of Basque nationalism, Basque language served the double purpose of situating the Basque Country *before Babel*. Arana also wrote on Basque language but never wrote any important work in Basque. Jon Juaristi has documented the importance of the Basque position even in the early development of Unamuno, who later on became central in the redefinition of Spain as nation-state (*Bucle* 101-37). Although Arana fluctuated on the importance of language over race, after the Civil War and following Federico Krutwig's ideas, Basque language retook its central position in the modern development of Basque nationalism.

Interestingly enough, four centuries after the modern "Babel" of the Renaissance, Basque language still fulfills a similar position vis-à-vis the new postmodern Babel in which both the Spanish state and globalization have interfaced. Thus, the Basque Country still remains before Babel. The cultural differences, of which Basque language is at the center, are central to the legitimation of the Basque Country as *territorio histórico* (region with special historical rights) in the Spanish constitution. Among other rights, this status of *territorio histórico* entails in the Basque case, the entitlement to a separate tax-collecting agency and system, or *hacienda*. At the same time, the Basque Country is regaining a new position in globalization through different institutions such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao or the new organization of old "Euskal Etxeak" (Basque Houses) throughout the Americas and Europe. The international projection of culture, which includes its cuisine, film, and literature, among others, has amplified the effect of this position.

Retrospectively, it is important to emphasize that there is no historical reason why Basque language could not have disappeared. Basque culture and identity might have been diluted into the larger Spanish national map during modernity, as it is the case, for example, with the old kingdom of Leon and its language. Therefore the specific and historical fact that Basque language and culture still remain facing Babel constitutes the departure point for our reflection on Basque globalization.

The modern positioning, "before Babel," given to Basques by their language has been so far well documented. However, to this day the issue of how Basque language contributes to the new repositioning of the Basque Country in front of the postmodern global Babel of our times remains largely untheorized. The exceptions are few (Douglass and Zulaika). At the same time, authors such as Néstor García Canclini and Homi Bhabha are developing new theories on cultural hybridation in the cases of Latin America and the Anglo-American world for their postmodern and postnational phases respectively. Basque language and reality seem again a testing ground to rethink, from within a non-Anglo-American and (non-)modern

Europe and Spain, the issue of globalization. The case of the Basque Country and its culture are marked by the interesting historical characteristic that they are organized around a non-modern phenomenon—a non-Indo-European language which was not developed as a national language in modernity and is currently spoken by a minority of Basques. In a first approach, we can conclude that the Basque Country is also predominantly hybrid. Basque culture and reality entail several languages (Basque, Spanish, French, and English), are not connected to a single national tradition (either Spanish or French), and have no single geopolitical ground. Basque culture extends over two different political regions in Spain (The Autonomous Basque Community and Navarre), one department in France, which includes non-Basque regions (The Department of the Atlantic Pyrenees), and a diasporic region that spans mainly throughout the Americas. Basque language serves as the absent or present trace of the larger reality delineated above, but does not constitute it. Basque language is simply part of a larger hybrid map and community.

Unlike the best theorized cases of the Anglo-American (Bhabha) and Latin American (García Canclini) worlds, in the particular case of the Basque Country one of the elements of hybridation –Basque– does not have an imperialist origin, either British, French, or Spanish. As a result, this linguistic component is still threatened by other imperialist languages (English, Spanish, and French). Unlike in the Latin American or Anglo-American cases, Basque culture presents an economic and ecological component that is underscored from the onset. Both Bhabha and García Canclini make references to other native languages, but in neither case do those languages enter in a constitutive manner their definitions of hybridity and culture. When Bhabha defines hybridity, for example, he leaves out language and ethnicity, for unlike class, gender, or race, language and ethnic difference are “commensurable,” are a “thing of the past,” and can also violently disappear or be destroyed:

The non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a cultural space –a third space– where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences.... The problem is not of an ontological cast, where differences are effects of some more totalizing, transcendent identity to be found in the past or the future. Hybrid hyphenations emphasize the incommensurable elements... as the basis of cultural identifications. What is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, *contingently*, ‘opening out’, remarking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference—be it class, gender or race. (219)

In other words, the discourse of difference in Bhabha does not contain an economy or ecology. In contrast, in the Basque case the survival of hybridation itself is at stake. Thus one must emphasize the fact that one of the components that grounds the hybrid cultural economy of Basque reality, Basque language, is threatened by its own political history of exteriorization (the apologists), the development of nation-states during modernity, and the globalization occurring in postmodernity. Yet Basque has survived Spanish imperialism, the ensuing European nation-states (Spanish and French), and, so far, is being recuperated in global postmodernity. In short, Basque language shows a historical resilience and ability to mutate so that is appropriated and deployed for different political and economic purposes, while at the same time creating different identities: pre-modern, modern, and post-modern. Basque language, in its hybrid condition, still locates Basque culture before Babel.

Prior to proceeding with the new mapping of Basque culture “before global Babel,” I would like to reconsider Basque culture’s modern history from the point of view of hybridity. Starting with Juan Aranzadi and ending with Jon Juaristi, many authors have been engaged,

over the last twenty years, in an active process of demythologizing Basque culture. Most of the narratives and historical events that found Basque culture, as before Babel, have been denounced as myths by these authors.

In his *Milenarismo vasco*, Aranzadi condenses all the myths and narratives of Basque culture under the umbrella-term of "millennarism" and denounces them as fabrications. In the book, Aranzadi examines the sixteenth-century witch-hunts in Durango and uncovers the medieval influence of the Italian *fraticelli* and other spiritualist heresies (127-222), rather than the persistence of old Basque pagan rituals dating back to the Neolithic, as the anthropological school of José Miguel Barandiaran would have it. When Aranzadi examines traditional folklore and religious beliefs of the Basque Country (225-317), he uncovers Greek, Roman, and Celtic religions. He also demystifies the legend of *Jaun Zuria*, which propagated by Lope García de Salazar back in the fifteenth century, sets the precedent for most political discourses of Basque difference and rights. Behind the legend, Aranzadi uncovers the Basque reappropriation of the European medieval narratives derived from the Arthurian cycle, and more specifically from the narration of Mélusine (317-346). In the same fashion he examines the Basque apologists and uncovers the reappropriation of Jewish and Christian Biblical narratives of Genesis and other foundational stories (347-447).

However in his process of demystification, Aranzadi does not pay attention to the differences that, following Mignolo, I have denominated "subject, locus, and enunciation." Aranzadi does not analyze in his denunciative criticism the epistemology of origins that underlies his critique in which subject, locus, and enunciation are collapsed. As he himself states, most of the founding narratives and events of modern Basque culture –the ones that locate the Basque Country in front of modernity/Babel– are not "fully" Basque. Furthermore, they are partly derived from European medieval traditions –or even older ones. That is, Basque culture is hybrid from its modern inception– even the Babelic myth of Basque language was not originally developed by Basques but Spanish and Italian authors. However hybridity highlights the fact that the subject and locus of enunciation are irreducible to the enunciation itself and its origins. In other words, if the hybridation of European medieval and earlier discourses is effective in founding Basque culture and politics, it is precisely because the Basque subject of enunciation and its locus are exterior to modernity and furthermore predate it. The Basque subject stands before modernity, and yet through hybridation, becomes modern precisely because of its subjective non-modernity.

One could reverse the process of demystification triggered by Aranzadi and demonstrate that there is nothing European about the reality he deems the origin of Basque culture. Even this reality is partly Asian and African, partly Jewish and Muslim, and so forth. If one does not distinguish the subject of enunciation from the locus and the enunciation itself, one risks finding fallacy and corruption in any narrative of origins.

However, there is one reality that Aranzadi cannot reduce to his demythologizing criticism: Basque language itself. As the long philological and scientific tradition, both in the Basque Country and abroad, have irrefutably concluded, Basque language is pre-Indo-European (Trask). No doubt, in our days Basque language is highly hybridated with other pre-Indo-European languages as well as Greek, Latin, and Castilian, to the point that, following Aranzadi, one could "denounce" Basque as ultimately "(Indo-)European." In the same way, the fact that most events and narratives of the modern foundation of Basque culture are a hybrid of European pre-modern and modern elements does not automatically reduce them to European culture or a solely European identity. Furthermore, unlike in the case of language, the areas of religion, mythology, gender, sexuality, economics, and politics are not easily traceable to a single origin, which can then be authenticated or denounced as

false, i.e. as “millenarian.” This is the nature of hybridity: the origin always escapes any reductive attempt to trace it. The subject and its location are part of the formation of “truth” and “origin:” the enunciation by itself cannot found any “truths,” historical, anthropological, philosophical, or otherwise.

As Alarcón and Bhabha have denounced, any attempt to criticize hybridity in the name of a true or false origin usually reverts to a metaphysics of origin, which since Derrida is untenable on philosophical or theoretical grounds. Thus, when Aranzadi manages to reduce all the foundational discourses and events of modern Basque culture to a single formation or myth –millenarism– he himself is perpetuating the myth of origin: one that science can rationally trace and reduce to a single myth, that is the myth of its own rationality. When Joseba Zulaika turns the anthropological table on Aranzadi, the latter turns out to be a practitioner of “true anthropology” in the most institutional and historical sense of the word, that is “the construction of the other:”

From the onset, what is more striking about Aranzadi’s book is the buildup of a text of more than 500 pages upon the more than doubtful category, because of its notorious reification, of “millenarism”... The minimal definition of millenarism, from the hands of Norman Cohn, consists of “a particular type of salvation,” which conceives salvation as collective, terrestrial, imminent, total and miraculous. The most illustrious example in anthropology is the *cargo* cults which are based on the belief that in a near happy future the ancestors will come back on a ship full of riches to start a new golden age. Aranzadi’s contribution consists of demonstrating that Basque nationalism –from Sabino to ETA, from anthropology to politics– is also, certainly, a millenarism awaiting its golden ship.

If it were not because Lévi-Strauss already published in 1962 *Le totémisme aujourd’hui*, and because in the following decade authors such as Beidelman, Needham, Crick and others dedicated their attention prominently to deconstructing reified anthropological categories, one could perhaps conceive a text organized upon the mixed bag of “millenarism.” But in the real context of the cultural anthropology of the 80s, to explain Basque society through the Melanesian *cargo* cults amounts to pure anthropological obsolescence. Aranzadi is so devoted to demythologizing right and left Basque society and anthropology that he has no time to observe his own flagrant millenarian anthropology. (“El antropólogo” 97-8, my translation)

In the case of Jon Juaristi I have elsewhere discussed the “true nationalist” aim of his work (“Jon Juaristi”).

In the Basque context of the early and mid 80s, the position taken by Aranzadi and Juaristi represented a purely rationalist and enlightened criticism of Basque nationalism, which, in its purity, was as irrational and reductive as nationalism itself. Obviously, this enlightened irrationality was meant to counterbalance a difficult political situation and, in this respect, had a healthy effect on Basque nationalism. However, as globalization and hybridity come to the fore in any discussion of nationalism, other discursive strategies must be developed, so that they no longer end up trapped within the nationalist scene or its irrational negation.

Since there is no narrative or cognitive map (Jameson “Cognitive”) that will locate the new Basque position before the new globalized Babel, I will analyze in this article three different and complementary types of media as a first exploration and mapping of the global/local interface in the Basque Country. The media are print, audiovisual, and urban space; more specifically I will concentrate on recent Basque literature, Basque television, and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. Although film should be included in this mapping, I have dealt elsewhere with this issue (“Uncanny”). The reason for not including it is due to the fact that film is a media that depends on apparatuses of production located outside the

Basque Country. Basque film responds to a different logic in which the Spanish state, culture, and nationalism are directly involved and inscribed in both the films' production and reception. Although music should also be included in this section, the lack of ethnographies and primary critical sources on the area (with the happy exception of Jackie Urla's research on hip-hop) make the study of music difficult for the time being. Music's absence in this article does not imply its lack of importance but rather the precarious state of its studies.

By studying three different media, I will isolate four subject positions, recurring in all the media, that permit to situate and subject Basque culture to globalization: *the global subject collapsed as North American, the postcolonial citizen or immigrant, the male homosexual, and the new woman*. The analysis of the three media points to a new map of the Basque Country drawn around these four subjects. In turn by studying the specific ways in which those four subjects are located in the new map of a globalized Basque Country, I want to rethink the two key terms I posit as necessary to understand the relation between subject formation and globalization in the Basque Country: *postnationalism and hybridity*. Although neither term has been systematically applied and rethought from within the Basque Country, I believe that such an application will yield new results that will contribute to the general discussion of both terms and theories and thus "Basques' Babelic beforeness."

From the analysis and mapping of the different media and subject positions presented above, I will first elaborate and defend here the thesis that, culturally speaking, *postnationalism is the historical condition and political position of any national culture that is able to locate itself before and hybridate with global mass culture and imperialism*. Postnationalism is the power of surviving globalization while redefining the global through local hybridation. At the same time postnationalism represents the local capacity of historical memory, to have the power to uphold the recollection of the imperialist history and origins of modernity and the nation-state. Postnationalism is an anamnesis that permits to locally hybridate the past—as I have done with Aranzadi's discourse. Remembering is also a way of avoiding any form of nostalgia, which is proper of hegemonic postmodernism (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 279-96). Under different tropes of nostalgia, negativity, melancholia, ennui, etc. first-world postmodernism is repositioning and religitimizing hegemonic cultures. Postnationalism is also the ability to avoid the modernist tropes of openness and resistance which, otherwise lucid theories such as Bhabha's, cultivate for the detriment of active politics in globalization. The same way that "before" in the Basque case has simultaneously a temporal and spatial meaning, the term postnationalism is defined here in the same double sense and also as connected with hybridation.

By mapping the new location of Basque culture in front of the new global and postmodern Babel, the other term and structure that this article also wants to explore is *hybridity*. Here I want to address the unstable balance between the nationalist hegemonic culture, prevalent nowadays in the Basque Country, and the new imperialist hegemony of globalized mass culture, both of which require homogeneity. From the postnational tension between these two hegemonies, we will be able to redefine contemporary Basque culture, first of all, as one that, by exposing itself to globalization, is continuing and strengthening local nationalist hegemony as well as globalization. It is paramount to emphasize that there is not necessarily a conflict between the global and the local *tout court*. The new interfacing between the local and the global in certain instances leads to the reinforcement of the subject positions legitimized by nationalism and globalization (non-immigrant, heterosexual masculinity). At the same time, I want to analyze the discontinuities between both hegemonies. New postnational subject positions are being formed across the local/global interface, which are violently ruining and destroying the homogenizing effects of both

hegemonies; these subject positions are defined by their hybridity. I redefine postnationalism and hybridity, not only in terms of identity (Bhabha), but also of economics. In this way, postnationalism and hybridity are two terms that complement each other and give a Basque, local perspective on globalization, beyond hegemonic Anglo-American paradigms of the global and its politics.

From the intersection of postnationalism and hybridity, finally the article will focus on a final issue concerning the politics, economics, and ethics of the local. By rephrasing Spivak's seminal and ever-pertinent question of "can the subaltern speak?" this article explores not only whether the postnational, as subaltern, can hybridate and survive globalization but also whether postnational subjects, in their subalternity, can afford a libidinal economy. In other words, the final question I want to ask is the following: "*can the subaltern enjoy?*" Here enjoyment (or bliss) is understood in the specific sense given by Barthes, Irigaray, and Lacan to the term "jouissance."

In the *Pleasure of the Text*, Barthes differentiates pleasure from enjoyment or bliss, but at the same time affirms their complementary relation: "the distinction will not be the source of absolute classifications, the paradigm will falter, the meaning will be precarious, revocable, reversible, the discourse incomplete" (4). When discussing the literary text, Barthes defines enjoyment (bliss) as an overflowing of the discourse and its identity (adjectives): "The *brio* of the text (without which, after all, there is no text) is its will to bliss: just where it exceeds demand, transcends prattle, and whereby it attempts to overflow, to break through the constraint of adjectives—which are those doors of language through which the ideological and the imaginary come flowing in" (13-4). In other words, enjoyment (bliss) is the act of exceeding or overflowing identity and ideology. Later on, Barthes situates the politics of enjoyment (bliss) precisely at the intersection of mass culture (globalization) and localized forms of politics (mandarinism, utopianism), while complaining that no longer is possible:

No significance (no bliss) can occur, I am convinced, in a mass culture (to be distinguished, like fire from water, from the culture of the masses), for the model of this culture is *petit bourgeois*. It is characteristic of our (historical) contradiction that significance (bliss) has taken refuge in an excessive alternative: either in a mandarin praxis (result of an extenuation of bourgeois culture), or else in an utopian idea (the idea of a future culture, resulting from a radical, unheard-of, unpredictable revolution, about which anyone writing today knows only one thing: that, like Moses, he will not cross over into it). (38-9)

I believe that the intersection of postnationalism and hybridity in local situations such as the Basque allows its new postnational subjects to create forms of cultural enjoyment (bliss) that defy both globalization and nationalism. Ultimately by posing Basque culture before Babel, I want to map out the specific ways in which postnationalist subjects are creating hybrid forms of politics, ethics, and economics.

2. RECENT LITERATURE (1992-): NATIONALIST AUTHORS

The global location of Basque literature could be mapped out best through the production of its most global author: Bernardo Atxaga. Since the global recognition of *Obabakoak* (1988) at the end of the 80s and early 90s, Atxaga has followed an interesting path, which so far ended in 1999 when he announced to the newspapers that he was considering quitting literature (Efe). The main reason he gave was the recent commercial and commodified turn taken by literature in Spain—precisely a turn fostered by globalization's full-blown entrance in Spanish and Basque culture, which could be symbolically dated to 1992.

What could be in a first moment considered as a *déjà vu* of modernist literature and its poetics of silence –as ultimate resistance to commodification– on a second moment seems to be a very important historical turn in Basque literature.

Atxaga himself did announce from its early poetic production (*Etiopia* 1982) that once the poet achieves fame and commercial recognition, he or she must embrace silence or “be forced into silence (killed).” However his present near-silence seems to be of a quite different historical nature. Rather than an old crisis, this moment represents one of opening and growth for Basque literature. With Atxaga, and more precisely with another writer that I will shortly introduce, Joxean Sagastizabal, a whole historical era of Basque literature has finally reached its political and literary objective. I would like to emphasize the non-normative and -modernist sense of this “semi-metanarrative” about the development of Basque literature. In a minority literature, this type of claim can be understood within an economic and political framework that in a majority literature would make no sense. In a minority literature, because of its smaller output, the old era or tradition is not necessarily sublated, overcome, disregarded, left behind, or just forgotten, following capitalism’s modern logic of consumption.

Although I have discussed elsewhere the peculiar effects of *Obabakoak* and most generally the consequences of “simulating national allegories” within both postcolonial and postnational literatures (“Atxaga’s Simulation”), it is important to point out here that Atxaga’s declaration announces a productive moment. From a political perspective, Atxaga’s work represents the crowning moment of a whole period of literary production –the modern– in which Basque literature had been engaged in representing the Basque community as a universal “Basque nation” and “subject.” Perhaps the most concise way to define the history of modern Basque literature in the twentieth century is precisely this: *a series of attempts to represent the Basques as a universal nation and subject*. Since Orixé (*Euskaldunak*, 1934) and Lizardi (*Asaba zaharren baratza*, 1932), through Aresti (*Harri eta herri*, 1964) and Jon Mirande (as anti-nation of the pagan land of “Gazteen lurra,” the Land of Youth) all the way to Saizarbitoria (*100 Meters*, 1975) and Atxaga (*Obabakoak*, 1988), Basque literature has persistently been engaged in this representational endeavor. Although one could rewrite this history in many ways, a look at most literary histories (Villasante, Sarasola, Kortazar, Juaristi *Historia*, etc.) demonstrates that most of them have been written and chronicled following the writers’ involvement and success in representing the nation.

In this context, Atxaga’s *Obabakoak* represents the felicitous and powerful moment where a writer has finally found both the “form and content” to produce a successful national allegory, one that has been widely acknowledged as such by the Spanish state as well as by most first-world languages –including English– and countries. Thus Atxaga’s subsequent difficulty in writing, his consideration of abandoning literature, derives from his success in naming, representing, the “Basque nation.” As I have discussed in my study of the simulation of national allegory this is a one-time economy that precludes the writer and the readers from repeating it; ontologically speaking, “naming,” giving the true name to a being, can only take place once (“Atxaga’s Simulation”).

Perhaps the most important and telling work in this history of Atxaga’s success and subsequent near-silence is his *Un traductor en París* (1996; henceforth *A Translator*). The story relates the travel of a homosexual Basque translator⁶ to Paris as a way to psychologically heal

6. Although there is no direct reference to nationality, the fact that the distance to Paris in the story is 1000 kilometers (2. 8) indicates that the translator’s region of origin is the Basque Country.

from the crippled state in which an unspecified accident left him back home. He had been in Paris in his youth and had become Baudelaire's translator. The trip to Paris is a way to reignite his youth's hopes and interests; he has decided to repeat the original trip step by step, including translating Baudelaire again. He arrives to Paris precisely when President Jean François Mitterrand has died and is about to be buried in a ceremony broadcasted by national television. As the story develops, the reader learns about the translator's encounter with a young boy, either an immigrant or descendant of immigrants, most likely from the Maghreb. The name of the boy is Abdelah. What begins as a relation based on the translator's desire for the boy ends up becoming an unfortunate tale of violence and aggression: the boy and his gang rob the translator. As a way to cope with the incident, the translator takes the subway to a sexual rendezvous he has arranged by phone after answering an add on the newspaper. He gets lost in the subway and, still afraid from the aggression, attacks and kills an innocent transient, thinking that the latter is also about to attack him.

This narrative was originally published in installments in the newspaper *El País* in the summer of 1996. The following year, Atxaga published another narration, *Seis Soldados*, also following the same format. These two stories were the last published by Atxaga before he announced to the media in 1999 that he was considering quitting literature (Efe). Only some children stories, such as *Banbulisticas* (1998), and a collection of critical essays, *Groenlandiako lezioa* (1998, *The Lesson from Greenland*, henceforth *The Lesson*), appeared in 1998.

Thus the reason why I focus on *A Translator* responds to the fact that it was originally published right after the two first installments of what originally was presented as a trilogy. After *Obabakoak*, Atxaga published a novel entitled *The Lone Man* (1993) which was followed by *The Lone Woman* (1995) in what constituted the first two installments of the trilogy. However the third installment has not been published to this day and the author has not declared whether he will write it. In this context and for the reasons I will explain below, I would like to read *A Translator* as a first sketch of what could be considered the putative third installment of the trilogy. In turn, my reading of the trilogy will explain why Atxaga never officially published the third installment and, instead, he ended making the announcement discussed above⁷. In short, I believe that by reading *A Translator* as the third installment of Atxaga's trilogy, we will gain a new insight into his entire production from *Obabakoak* to his recently announced near-silence.

A Translator repeats one of the most universal narrative structures of Atxaga's work: the story of violence inflicted against an innocent child or marginal person. This structure already marks the first story of *Obabakoak* (*Jose Francisco: Obabako erretoretxean azaldutako bigarren aitortza*, not included in the translations⁸) and probably is best epitomized by another story of the same book: *An Exposition of Canon Lizardi's Letter* (henceforth *Canon Lizardi*). *A Translator* brings forth several variations over the original structure of violence inflicted over an innocent victim, besides the postcolonial setting of Paris. This time, the innocent is the protagonist; furthermore he has previously endured violence himself before he inflicts it upon another innocent victim. In this way, the original violence, which has already happened when the story begins, takes place somewhere in Spain (most likely in the Basque

7. Atxaga made his announcement precisely at the presentation of the only publication in book form of *A Translator*: its translation to Catalan.

8. Atxaga himself participates in most of the translations of his works. Usually he takes advantage of this phase to change and rewrite his work.

Country), travels to a postcolonial setting in Paris and, finally, returns to a non-postcolonial European body and scenario (the non-postcolonial victim of the subway). The differences are also economic: the postcolonial perpetrator of violence and his Basque victim belong to different economic classes – a difference which did not clearly appear before in Atxaga's narrative. The geocultural setting would constitute another difference. The story itself, in its violent unfolding, no longer takes place in the Basque Country (*Obabakoak*, *The Lone Woman*) or Catalonia (*The Lone Man*), but in France– although the original violence that prompts the translator to travel to Paris does originate in Spain. At a sexual level too, the story presents an important difference: desire and violence are placed within the same inter-subjective axis, a masculinist axis, so that they become complementary or mirroring drives. A final difference would be constituted by the fact that the original victim of violence is a literary person, a translator, not simply a narrator or transcriber of events (*Canon Lizardi*, *The Lone Man*, *The Lone Woman*).

In this respect the literary choice of homosexuality in *A Translator* is not connected as much with alternative sexualities as with new organizations of masculinity in Basque nationalism. If violence and desire are relocated within the same inter-subjective space, it is precisely because violence, along which masculinity and the subject of nationalism have been structured and legitimized so far, no longer can take place within the nation, as it was the case in Atxaga's earlier narratives (Gabilondo "Exilio"). However, since violence needs to be kept within a masculinist structure, only a double bind of violence and desire can bring an exterior other, in this case the postcolonial other, within the Basque nation, so that violence legitimizes again the masculinist subject of nationalism. The other two alternatives do not work: the sheer use of violence without desire would have further othered the postcolonial subject and pushed him outside the national territory of masculinity whereas gay desire without violence, and a possible happy resolution, would also have interrupted the cycle of violent othering that nationalist masculinity needs nevertheless. Thus only the combined and simultaneous placement of violence and desire within the same subject relation can both create an other and, at the same time, turn it into a Basque national other. In this way the new other legitimizes the Basque nationalist masculine subject.

At the same time, this incorporation of desire and violence into the same inter-subjective axis does not only occur at the geocultural level, but also at the chronocultural. The translator moves to the Parisian neighborhood he had stayed in his youth. However, when he returns, the place has become an area populated by postcolonial immigrants. In the narrative only two elements refer to the "traditional, modern, non-immigrant Paris" he had known in his youth: Baudelaire's texts and the burial ceremonies of President Jean François Mitterrand on TV. The articulation of these two "French, modern" presences is important to understand the chronocultural structure of the narrative. The translator had been in Paris in his youth (most likely in the 60s) when France was still the center of modernity and Baudelaire remained the modern *poet maudit par excellence*. If the protagonist is the translator of the modern poet, his travel to Paris is also an attempt to reposition himself as the translator of modernity (we do not know what language he translates into, whether Basque or Spanish, the two most likely options). It is not a coincidence if the Baudelarian poem he is attempting to translate is *The Stranger* (could also be translated as *The Foreigner*, *L'Étranger*)⁹. Although it would seem obvious, there are no existentialist overtones or references to Camus's work of the same title.

9. Incidentally, Baudelaire's poem contains a passage that could be interpreted as a reference to the title of the previous installment of Atxaga's trilogy: *Zeru horiek* or *Esos cielos* (*These Skies*), the original title of *The Lone Woman*. In the poem Baudelaire refers to "I love clouds... these marvelous clouds" (2. 9, my translation).

The combination of the two above elements organizes the structure of violence and desire across time. As the translator desires a past France embodied by its modern poet, Baudelaire, television sends him back the message that the “last great president of the modern, French nation” is dead (2. 9). The global media neutralizes the protagonist’s desire to recreate modernity by violently reminding him that modernity has died in France. The new immigrant presence in the neighborhood also becomes the reminder of the new postmodern and postcolonial France resulting from globalization.

The relation between the geocultural and chronocultural axis of desire and violence are in turn complementary. The fact that the absence of a bygone modern France does no longer provide the translator with a position vis-à-vis modernity is complemented by the fact that the translator himself becomes the new modern “Stranger/Foreigner” in Paris. By repositioning himself within an absent French modernity, he redirects his desire towards a non-modern body, an immigrant, whom in turn returns desire with violence. At that point, violence is incorporated, embodied, by the new inhabitant of the bygone French modernity: the translator himself. From this phantasmatic position, violence can be redeployed against another non-immigrant French subject (the man victimized by the translator on the subway; he is described as blonde 6.11), so that violence becomes once again effected within the old parameters of Atxaga’s narrative: one innocent member is killed by another from the same, modern, community. In this way, the postcolonial subject and the new postmodern and globalized France are left outside of the foundational narrative that Atxaga delivers at the end of the story. However, unlike in previous narratives, the attempt to contain violence and desire within a single foundational, modern community, outside globalization, creates a phantasmatic effect –the translator as the new subject of an absent modern France– that is necessary to analyze in detail.

In order to understand the phantasmatic position occupied by the protagonist, one defined by an absent modern France, we have to analyze two complementary processes of reorganization in Atxaga. The foundational violence that is at the core of most of Atxaga’s early narratives, from *Jose Francisco* to *Bi Anai* (1985, *Dos hermanos*, henceforth *Two Brothers*), contains a premodern element that structures the narrative. Nowadays we encapsulate this narrative component with the word “magic,” and then refer to the resulting narrative as “magic realism,” but it simply represents this moment of the Basque Country, which, as I argued in the introduction, is irreducible to and precedes modernity –and as such constitutes the modern Basque Country. In Atxaga’s early stories, this element was Basque, and was represented most of the times by an animal/child, which marked the exteriority or “beforeness” of Basque modernity. The violence that took place between the non-modern and modern elements of Atxaga’s narratives was foundational and functioned as an allegory of the Basque Country in its positionality vis-à-vis modernity. At the same time, the violence that took place among the modern and non-modern elements of the allegory also legitimated masculinity as the subject position that mirrored itself across the foundational divide between modernity and non-modernity: the subjects of violence were always male while nature was feminized (Gabilondo “Exilio”). Probably Atxaga’s two best accomplishments were the white boar/child of *Canon Lizardi* and the geese/brothers of *Two Brothers*.

However, Atxaga pushed this premodern and magic component to the periphery of his narrative. As the allegorical renditions of the foundational violence between the modern and non-modern elements of the Basque Country became successful and culminated in *Obabakoak*, Atxaga moved on to represent the interiority of the Basque Country that he had previously so successfully delimited through allegory. As he attempted to narrate the new interiority of the Basque Country, at the same time, he attempted to uphold the universal

subject of his narratives, that is the masculine, nationalist subject. He did so by renarrating violence in more realist fashion while repositioning it within the Basque Country: ETA's terrorism. This is precisely the beginning of the trilogy. *The Lone Man* is a story about the realist foundation of the modern Basque Country: ETA's terrorism (Gabilondo "Terrorism").

As he attempted to narrate the Basque Country from a more realist and internal point of view, the non-modern elements of his early narratives were pushed to the periphery. Although nature surrounds the action of *The Lone Man*, in what could only be named a "Barcelonan Obaba," this nature is only a landscape, although a very active one in the resolution of the story. In the same way, in *The Lone Woman*, only at the very end of the narrative and only metaphorically does the Basque Country become literally "a talking surrounding" that magically welcomes the protagonist back to the Basque Country.

As a result, the limit of the Basque Country and its subject marking the trilogy is no longer constituted by a magic and natural non-modern component, as in *Obabakoak*, but modernity's own internal limit. In each of the installments of the trilogy the geography and bodies of the narrative have to move outward towards the new modern limits of the Basque Country in order to keep signifying and representing the Basque Country's interior, nationalist, masculine subject. In this way, the trilogy moves from Barcelona to Paris, outside Spain. At the same time the narrative moves from a male body, to a female body, and then to a homosexual male body. In short, as nature and magic begin to recede from Atxaga's narrative, so that the interiority of the Basque Country is better described in realist, modern terms, his stories keep bringing back a new exterior limit signified by an increasingly foreign geography, gender, and sexuality. At the end, only a homosexual in Paris can still signify the foundational limit of the Basque Country. However, in *A Translator*, the outer limit of the Basque Country coincides with modernity, and thus collapses with its opposite; hence it becomes the position of a vacated or phantasmatic modernity. This phantasmatic modernity becomes the new limit of the Basque Country and its subject.

There is a second space and position to which the foundational violence and limit of Atxaga's narratives have moved: inside the mind of the protagonists. What was still the voice of nature in *Canon Lizardi* or *Two Brothers* where only animals and nature would speak and children hear their language, in *The Lone Man* became a community of voices from the past now located inside the mind of the protagonist. Literally the protagonist hears voices inside his head and converses with them: the voices of his brother, of an ETA instructor, and most specially, of the Rat—his bad consciousness. In *A Translator*, a single voice named Terry also comes from within. At the very end of the narrative, it is this unconscious element that kills the innocent man in the subway. The translator no longer is aware of what he is doing.

In sum, in Atxaga's recent work, the non-modern or magic limit of the Basque Country has been relegated to the modern, *exterior periphery* of Basque nationalist geography, gender, and sexuality. At the same time, this very same limit has also been pushed to the *inner periphery* of the protagonists' consciousness—to the unconscious. Ironically enough in *A translator*, this double periphery has come to coincide with modernity; although modernity is now phantasmatic.

In this way, Atxaga's narrative has in a sense collapsed: the non-modern limit of his early narratives has come to coincide with the most modern outer limit of his later narratives. This ultimate implosion in turn requires a new limit, one that is utterly exterior both to modernity and Europe: a postcolonial subject, Abdelah. That is why *A translator* is written as a story of desire towards a postcolonial subject. The postcolonial subject creates the same structure of magic and violence that was characteristic of Atxaga's earlier work. But this time, the

premodern or non-modern element is not Basque but postcolonial: it is outside Europe and marks its limit from within. In other words, the new boars, geese, and cows that captured so sublimely Obaba no longer live in Obaba but rather in a place that is utterly exterior to both Obaba and European modernity: the postcolonial field. Abdelah is the new boar/child of *Canon Lizardi*, but this time violence, rather than defining the foundational moment of the Basque Country, ends up representing the utter alienation of a Basque individual who no longer knows where his location is, since it has become phantasmatic. The new limit of the Basque Country coincides with that of modern Europe and thus collapses in the same imperialist contradictions that define the latter. The new limit marked by *A translator* coincides with that of a bygone, modern Europe and opposes globalization, postcoloniality, postmodernity, and hybridity.

At the same time, and ironically enough, Atxaga has been celebrated throughout the world as the new narrator of the global condition of a minority literature and culture such as the Basque. As he has become canonized as the poet of the Basque Country, its most canonical writer, he himself has become alienated from Basque reality and culture. In his attempt to represent the Basque Country in its foundation and limits, through a single, universal subject position, he has become the Basque author who is probably most unable to embrace the new hybridity that globalization brings to the Basque Country. His references are modern, not postmodern. So as Atxaga is further celebrated throughout the world, his extemporaneity becomes further evident¹⁰.

Atxaga's latest work, *The Lesson*, a mixture of criticism and literature, further evidences the structure of limits I have discussed above. The book is organized according to the alphabet. The sections of the book follow the arbitrary order of the alphabet by using the corresponding letter as the opening letter of the first word of each section/chapter, while also turning it into a narrative character in some sections. *The Lesson's* first section deals precisely with madness, as the allegory of violence's senselessness: one that comes from within the individual and no longer marks any political limit or foundation. *The Lesson* ends with an essay on artistic representations of nudity and skin. Ironically enough this final section reflects on the economic privilege of the nobility and the bourgeoisie in modern Europe. In this context, skin becomes an allegory of social class, privilege, and limits (good skin versus abject, dirty skin, and so forth). By transposing the discussion about the historical and allegorical representations of skin to the present, Atxaga concludes that skin has become again a new allegory of our own society. For Atxaga the skin of the sick homosexual with AIDS is a continuation of older allegories:

I saw a minced guy at the train station, exhibiting the marks of the twentieth-century plague on his skin. I thought that the issues raised by the visit to the [art] museum had a different meaning in our days, because of the sickness of that guy, because of the demise of all theories of liberation, because of the new silence that has spread throughout the world; I thought all options were valid to talk about tactless sensitivity; I thought one had to persevere in order not to turn beauty into the mask of savagery. (173)

In other words, in *A Translator* a postcolonial subject in his racially marked skin becomes the new exterior limit of a protagonist that marks from his own homosexual desire

10. His next work was a series of portraits of soldiers, probably inspired by the strong movement against the military service that took place in the Basque Country and throughout Spain: *Seis historias de soldados*. What strikes the reader in this work is the seriality of the narrative: this work no longer is centered on six characters, as in the three installments of the trilogy, but rather on a series of characters unified by a situation or context.

the interior limit of the Basque Country, while collapsing it with a bygone modernity. In *The Lesson*, the homosexual, in his own sexually marked skin, becomes the new other. It is not a coincidence if this section closes the book, one that begins with meaningless violence but ends by wrapping the twentieth century with "homosexual skin." In other words, "the skin of homosexuality" gives a location to *The Lesson* vis-à-vis the twentieth century and globalization.

However and throughout the narrative, the real skin adopted by the writer, is not that of homosexuality and AIDS, but literature: the alphabet. *The Lesson* begins by narrating the foundational yet individual meaningless and craziness created by the globalized twentieth century. However, in order to contain it, Atxaga has no choice but to embrace an arbitrary order, one that is inherent to the privilege of his literary status: the alphabet. The real skin of *The Lesson* is literature itself as the ultimate skin of privilege from which any form of otherness can be narrated while containing it as exterior limit. In Atxaga's latest production, any form of otherness, be it postcolonial or homosexual, becomes the "exterior" skin that gives an interior limit to his literature and the subject position universalized in it: the masculine subject of Basque nationalism¹¹.

Two conclusions can be derived from Atxaga's latest work, which has led him to near-silence. We need to narrate our Basque non-modernity, our position before Babel, precisely from its non-modern –and now non-global– position granted by Basque culture and language. This is Atxaga's legacy and thus it must be recuperated as key to any future narrative endeavor; it constitutes Atxaga's "Basque classicism." At the same time we can no longer do so from allegorical and topological narratives of the Basque Country, which end up becoming national representations that legitimize the nationalist, masculine subject and its foundational violence. These accounts are culturally homogenizing and thus preclude Basque culture from positioning itself in a hybrid way vis-à-vis globalization. As the interiorization and peripherization of violence analyzed in Atxaga point out, any new Basque narrative that allows us to position ourselves before Babel, must begin by acknowledging the multiplication of subject positions within Basque culture. It is important that subjects such as the postcolonial or the homosexual do not become exterior others to the Basque Country. Any attempt to reduce this hybridity to the subject of Basque nationalism, as in the case of Atxaga, ends up reproducing it as the desire towards the other. In turn the other becomes a violent dispossessed (*A Translator*) or a carrier of death (*The Lesson*) and obscures the political and social origin of violence.

These conclusions can be contrasted with the literary production of the other two most celebrated and canonized writers of Basque literature: Ramon Saizarbitoria and Andu Lertxundi. In the case of Saizarbitoria, his latest novel, *Bi bihotz* (1996, *Amor y guerra*,

11. Ironically enough, three years after Atxaga's *A Translator* appeared, the first Basque gay autobiography was published: Iñigo Lamarca's *Gay nauzu (I am gay)*. Interestingly enough, this short book does not attempt to construct a new narrative of a gay man as nationalist Basque subject. In short Lamarca does not introduce a new subject as occupying a central position within Basque culture and nationalism, as Goytisolo had previously done in Spanish literature and culture for example (or Atxaga has done in Basque literature by deploying different forms of otherness, including homosexuality).

In the case of Lamarca, he follows the older paradigm of storytelling, which as Benjamin discusses (86-88), differentiates itself from the modern novel. Lamarca presents a story, his own story; it is up to the reader to interpret and derive meaning from the story. In the modern novel, this ultimate meaning is incorporated in the text by the point of view of the narrator. Thus, after Atxaga has given us his nationalist point of view on homosexuality, a homosexual is presenting himself without giving us his point of view vis-à-vis the Basque nation. The historical irony is interesting and worth a separate study.

henceforth *Two Hearts*), also reflects a trajectory similar to Atxaga's. Although Saizarbitoria has followed a late modernist style à la *nouveau roman* or objective literature, he has also moved from representing national allegories (*100 Meters*) to more reduced allegories of the domestic space (*Two Hearts*). His *Hamaika Pauso* (1993, *Los pasos incontables*, henceforth *Numerous Steps*) can be considered a transitional narrative where national violence and personal conflict are mixed simultaneously in public and domestic spaces (Gabilondo "Terrorism"). In Saizarbitoria's last novel, *Two Hearts*, violence is once again internalized and turned into an impossible love story where the protagonist kills his wife by throwing her out of the window. The narrative is groundbreaking and impressive in so far as the detailed and objective account of domestic and married life is concerned. To this day, Saizarbitoria continues to be the most accomplished realist chronicler of every day life in the Basque Country. However, the impossibility of containing violence within a personal space, such as the domestic, forces the novel to narrate the protagonist's perverse enjoyment and suffering in killing his wife.

In *Two Hearts* Saizarbitoria repeats a structure of desire already present in *Numerous Steps*. The male protagonist has a double relationship with two women who are Basque and immigrant respectively. In this way, "woman" becomes the transitional body and space that allows the displacement of violence from a space and body outside Basque nationalism –the immigrant woman– to a domestic, internal, and national space–the Basque woman. The result is again the suppression of a location before globalization.

In order to preserve the homogeneous subject of nationalism as narrative subject, *Two Hearts* carries a violence that is redirected to the only other individual who is part of the nationalist discourse but is not its subject: woman. The action of preserving the nationalist discourse intact, through the destruction of the national woman, is announced from the beginning of the novel when the woman attempts to become a subject, rather than an object, of desire: "My wife's name was Flora. I took the definitive decision to kill her the day she lifted the bottom of her gown over her waist, sat over me with her legs alongside my body, and with a clear intention to get pleasure, twisted my nipples" (7, my translation). This passage echoes another one from *Numerous Steps* where the protagonist expresses his non-realized desire for violence towards the national woman: "It was then that he felt for the first time a feeling of inhibition, both uncomfortable and at the same time paradoxical, for he was usually confused instead by desire. This feeling made him want to hurt her" (22, my translation).

The interesting and final irony of this domestication and homogenization of violence, for the sake of the legitimation of the nationalist subject, turns out to be the new generic position of Saizarbitoria's narrative. What once was considered the most accomplished narrative prose of Basque literature, now begins to read like tabloid literature in all its obsessions with domestic abuse, perversion, and violence so much exploited by TV talk-shows and other global media. In other words, Saizarbitoria pays the price of a generic shift towards non-literary and mass-culture forms of literature in order to preserve the homogeneous subject of nationalism at the center of his narratives. In this way, and although there is a pronounced generational gap, Saizarbitoria's narrative is not far from Generation X's vindication of violence: from Bret Easton Ellis' *Less than Zero* to José Angel Mañas's *Historias del Kronen*. What in Atxaga is a double move in geography and consciousness, in Saizarbitoria is simply a move towards the domestic and private sphere, where national allegories of violence become reduced to domestic tales of abuse and mayhem. In that respect he is not far from Juaristi's latest intellectual work which also borders tabloid literature (Gabilondo "Jon Juaristi").

Andu Lertxundi is the other author who has also attempted to hold on to a Basque nationalist subject and narrative. However, in his most successful narrative, *Otto Pette* (1994,

Las últimas sombras, henceforth *Otto Pette*), he has placed his narrative in a time prior to the arrival of modernity: in the Middle Ages. In this way, unlike in the case of the two previous authors' work, *Otto Pette* avoids the Babelic hybridity of globalization altogether and thus, the story can take place in a homogeneous world where there is no friction with modernity (or postmodernity). The novel is based on a somewhat romantic *doppelgänger* narrative where the protagonist, Otto Pette, is haunted by the appearing traces of his nemesis. A graphic design of two symmetrically complementing parts works as a mis-en-abîme of the doubling narrative. At the end of the story the two enemies meet and the protagonist kills his *doppelgänger*. Women are almost absent from this narrative. The resulting masculinist mirroring narrative of violence, however, only serves as support or framework for the real adventure or story of the novel: language itself.

In *Otto Pette*, language unfolds with a medieval air and style that has no precedents in Basque literature. In other words, the literary language of the novel has been refined and polished to the extent that perhaps this is the best self-contained literary prose ever written in Basque. The pleasure derived from the reading is unparalleled. However, the ultimate effect of the novel's literary language does not rely on the particular treasures and stylistic innovations. The success of the novel is due to the fact that its language is self-contained and defies historicity. The literary language of *Otto Pette* describes a story placed in the Middle Ages so that not only the story but also literary language is situated in a linguistic juncture that avoids the interference of modernity.

If violence becomes in the story a mirroring game in which masculinity is legitimized as narrative subject, literary language also mirrors itself and closes onto itself. As a result, a homogeneous literary language, "fully Basque," fully outside modernity, emerges: a pure linguistic diamond, void of fractures, contamination, and hybridity. The subject of *Otto Pette* is the most refined and self-contained, homogeneous, nationalist Basque language ever written, which nevertheless no longer has a place before Babel and (post)modernity but outside.

The ultimate result is that violence is passed on to the reader. The reader is separated from and left outside the world of *Otto Pette*. The reader becomes a Basque subject who no longer belongs to the nationalist, imaginary paradise of a homogeneous, self-contained, nation represented by the novel's language. He or she is turned into a non-Basque modern subject who once again has no positionality as Basque before (post)modernity, and is located in a melancholic position where desire and violence towards the lost object –originally lost: pure Basque language– define the reader as Basque¹².

This dream of distilling a "pure Basque literary language" has a long history in the Basque Country. It predates modern Basque nationalism (Mogel's *Peru Abarka* is from 1802), and has haunted the representation of the Basque nation from the times of Orixe and Lizardi, when linguistic purism was in vogue, all the way to Atxaga. However, Atxaga has managed to turn it into another productive literary problem and challenge (Gabilondo "Obabera"),

12. One of his latest and most successful novels, *Azkenaz beste* (1994, *Un final para Nora*), rehearses the same literary maneuver, although this time the subject of the narrative is a woman, Nora, and the field no longer is circumscribed to the Basque Country; it expands over the nineteenth-century USA. This Atlantic expansion of the original medieval setup follows the same pattern of alienation present in the trilogy of Atxaga.

Ultimately Lertxundi's work seems to rely on oral literature in order to structure narratives that predate modernity. In the case of *Azkenaz beste*, the Basque ballad of the young woman kidnapped by a sailor (*Brodutzen ari nintzen*) as well as another about a father who kills his newborn daughters because he wants a male heir, seem to be at the root of this otherwise gothic novel.

whereas Lertxundi has succumbed to its imaginary lure. At the same time, Lertxundi has shown that the creation of literary worlds, complex, rich, and immensely pleasurable can be created in Basque, and once they no longer respond to the hegemonic subject of Basque nationalism, might be utterly poetic and politically engaging. In this respect Lertxundi's work continues a long tradition of authors who write historical novels in which the linguistic recreation of past worlds and events are as historically pertinent as the story itself. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and, more recently, Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* come to mind. The repercussions of creating a whole linguistic universe vary from work to work, but in Morrison's case, for example, the work helped to render a productive allegory of slavery and women, to which the readers could relate. In the case of Lertxundi, the recreation of a pre-modern universe shuts the reader out.

The three authors I have analyzed so far, Atxaga, Saizarbitoria, and Lertxundi, structure their narratives so that violence and desire are kept within nationalist boundaries. Thus their work avoids the hybridation of (post)modernity and preserves the imaginary and homogeneous hegemonic subject and discourse of nationalism. As I have discussed above, in each case the reality and subjects left out by the violence of the nationalist, masculine subject come back to haunt and hybridate –contaminate– the narratives in different ways. The positionality of “beforeness” vis-à-vis (post)modernity returns as the unconscious and haunting subject of the novels. This literature is defined by its basic phantasmatic or uncanny nature: *it cannot afford enjoyment* and ultimately does not position the reader before Babel.

3. RECENT LITERATURE (1992-): HYBRID AUTHORS

A newer generation of authors does confront globalization and hybridation with very different and even contradictory results. Over all, none of these authors attempts to address and legitimize the hegemonic subject of nationalism. This new generation of authors, which begins to publish somewhere around 1992 or after, announces a new location for Basque culture before globalization. Although there are many names, I will concentrate on three of them: Aingeru Epaltza, Joxean Sagastizabal, and Jasone Osoro. A complete list should also include at least: Paco Aristi, Mariasun Landa, Arkaitz Cano, Arantxa Iturbe, Laura Mintegi, Andolin Eguzkitza, and Koldo Izagirre. I will also analyze the latest work of another author from the generation of Atxaga, Saizarbitoria, and Lertxundi, who nevertheless has taken a different stand vis-à-vis globalization and postmodernity: Arantxa Urretabizkaia.

Aingeru Epaltza and Joxean Sagastizabal published two novels around the same time, *Ur uherrak* (1991¹³, *Agua turbia*, henceforth *Troubled Waters*) and *Kutsidazu bidea, Ixabel* (1994, *Show Me the Way, Isabel*, henceforth *Show Me*) respectively. Perhaps *Troubled Waters* is the most interesting and undervalued Basque novel of the 90s. A novel that resounds with the same dense style of Faulkner or Antonio Muñoz Molina, successfully achieves the dislodgment of the Basque nationalist universal subject and its effect of homogenization. Similarly to *Otto Pette*, *Troubled Waters* creates a literary language that, although avoiding homogenization, is able to represent the Basque spoken in Navarre, the region from where Epaltza hails with a strength that is unparalleled. However, the literary and topological location of the novel already displaces the homogenizing effect of nationalism. Furthermore this novel, rather than representing the hegemonic subject of Basque

13. The fact that this novel was published the year before 1992, rather than contradicting my chronology, further underscores the fact that this type of chronology is always arbitrary and ultimately only indicative.

nationalism, represents a regional, particular subject and position. The novel tells the story of several individuals in a town of Navarre named "The Town." There are no direct references to Navarre, as a way to turn the story universal, but at the same time, the literary language itself, full of Navarran dialectisms, manages to hybridate standard Basque language as Navarran. This hybridation has the effect of locating the story linguistically in a region of the Basque Country while representing it as universal: The Navarran Town could be any town.

There is no single protagonist in the novel; rather a set of four characters creates a double narrative structure. Juanito is a villager who left home and emigrated to the USA, fought in Vietnam, married an African American woman, and eventually returned to his hometown with his wife and daughter Billie. Jazinto is a dysfunctional, old man from the village who is saved by Billie in his attempt to commit suicide and gradually develops a complex and loving relation with her. Finally Medina is the fanatic police officer (*guardia civil*) who is obsessed with discipline and eventually loses his job in The Town, although he returns to try to hunt down Jazinto who is suspected of having killed a villager. The novel is structured along two axes: the violent confrontation between Juanito and Medina, and the loving and yet troubled relation between Billie and Jazinto.

Billie becomes the lead singer of a rock band who sings in Basque, achieves international recognition, and, at the end of the novel, returns to The Town for a concert held during the summer festivities. The concert ends up in a brawl involving the entire town¹⁴. At the very end Juanito kills Medina and gives himself in. As Billie is about to leave The Town in a bus, her embrace of Jazinto marks the end of the novel.

In the narrative, the nightmares and violence connected with both American and Spanish state violence (Vietnam, Francoism) cancel each other out and, consequently, are vacated from the novel. In turn, the embrace between a dysfunctional, old man from the village, Jazinto, and an "African-American-Spanish-Basque-Navarran" woman, Billie, who is becoming an international music star, represents the new hybrid reality of the Basque Country. The novel implies that old nationalist masculinities must be first vacated before new hybrid realities occupy their place. However, the embrace between the old man and the new woman is void of sexual desire, as if sexual desire is still impossible in a space from where the masculinist, national subject has recently been vacated. In this sense, this novel does not represent a "radically new Basque reality," but rather one where past and present are also hybridated.

If the title of all the chapters of the novel contain the word 'blues,' it is precisely because a masculine, nationalist subject (Juanito/Medina) marks and determines The Town's life with its violence. Even when this masculine violence is vacated, the resulting melancholia –the blues– hints at the fact that there is a sense of loss and desire –a perverse fascination– towards the power of the bygone masculine subject. The novel is also a "blues of the father" and in this respect points to the difficulties of writing beyond nationalist masculinity.

At the same time, the final embrace between Jazinto and Billie echoes that other failed encounter between Atxaga's translator and the French immigrant boy, Abdelah. In front of Atxaga's European and imperialist nostalgia for a bygone modernity, Epaltza celebrates and relocates the hybridity of globalization by way of recentering it at the core of a Basque

14. Even at the core of the narrative we can observe an interesting case of paramodern hybridation. The Town's summer festivities, which are premodern and related to agricultural rites, are hybridated with the new postmodern format of a rock concert. The resulting hybridation between festivity/concert organizes and situates The Town at the center of a hybridated and globalized world.

location, which nevertheless is peripheral to Basque nationalism. The resulting effect of *Troubled Waters* is of finally finding a Basque location and identity before Babel. The final embrace between Billie and Jazinto points to a reality that, in its absence of sexual desire, nevertheless transcends nationalist masculinity and thus hints at a new reality that cannot be represented: postnational enjoyment. In other words, the embrace delineates a whole, a lack, in the middle, precisely one that results from the vacation of the nationalist subject. In this lack and absence, there is something more than melancholia (blues) for the bygone father. This absence transcends the nationalist order and hints at a reality that cannot be represented yet. At the end of the novel, the reader enters this absence, in a way, or is possessed by this absence, and thus can experience postnational enjoyment, a reality impossible to represent within the contemporary nationalist, hegemonic discourse, and yet one that can be enjoyed in its impossibility.

Two years later in 1993, Joxean Sagastizabal published *Show Me*, a novella that became an automatic best seller and whose sales equaled those of *Obabakoak* (around 40.000)¹⁵. The novella's story is about a Spanish-speaking Basque man who decides to learn Basque by moving to a "boarding school" in the mist of the rural Basque Country. The book is a comedy and romance where the colonial discourse and tropes of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* are deployed in order to parody the "Heart of Basque Nationalist Darkness." The rural "natives" are portrayed as more (post)modern and daring than the protagonist and, at the same time, the latter finds his own condition of imperialist "naive" and "native." The novel manages to vacate all its protagonists from the "pure" or "pristine" location of the heart of Basque nationalist darkness. This empty location is then used as cultural norm to parody, tease, and subvert. But interestingly enough, the parody is made in Basque language so that both spaces –interior and exterior to the space of Basque nationalism– are rendered in Basque.

At a linguistic level, the novel plays with the entire spectrum of language "impurities" that the normalization of Basque has created by default over the last few years. Hybridization ranges from the non-normative dialectal forms of the "natives" (reflected in the title¹⁶), to the new "dialect" of *euskaldunberris* and the Spanish and English registers of mass culture and commercials. *Euskaldunberris* are "new Basque-speakers" who have learnt Basque later in life and, in the learning process, have created a new "dialect" consisting in grammatical and lexicographical errors that sometimes border true surrealism. The novel does not only satirize the nationalist construction of the Basque Country, but it also creates a form of Basque literary hybridity that is at the core of the reason of its success. Opposite *Otto Pette*, Sagastizabal's novel manages to connect the reader's real situation (as either dialectal speaker or *euskaldunberri* and influenced by either Spanish or French) with the Basque standard norm that is only spoken in the media. The playfulness of this novella exceeds simple pleasure –or global imaginary identification– and reaches real *jouissance*. The novella suggests a Babelic Basque: an impossible hybrid form that comprises the norm and its infraction, the underlying nationalist ideology and its subversion, the colonizer and the imperialist, the local and the global, etc. In a sense, this novel is close to a comedy-version of Juan Goytisolo's *Count Julian*.

As a result of this linguistic enjoyment, Sagastizabal creates a new space, that is Basque but is exterior to the Basque nationalist discourse and formation. With *Show Me*, the

15. Personal communication of the author.

16. More literally the novel's title could be translated as something like "Shome daway, Bel."

Basque reader is positioned before Babel in the sense that the novel moves the reader outside Basque nationalism but within Basque language. The reader can look at the nationalist construction of the Basque Country looking back at him or her in the same way that any global subject can: from the exterior. In more Lacanian terms, it could be said that in *Show Me*, the Basque reader is looking at himself or herself from a global position that allows him or her to contemplate himself or herself as a subject of global and local hybridity. However, this look can only be placed within Basque language, since the enjoyment of the novel relies in its linguistic register. Thus, this position, global and Basque at the same time, opens up Basque literature to Babel and the result is sheer enjoyment or *jouissance*¹⁷. I would conclude that, with his novel, Sagastizabal closes the nationalist phase of Basque literature: the representation of the nation no longer is a political, nationalist task, but rather a moment of enjoyment and subversion. At this point, the Basque Country can be viewed as a double, hybrid space that can no longer be reduced to a single discourse or homogenizing practice¹⁸.

The comparison with Atxaga's *A Translator* is illustrative in this context. In both texts the global and postcolonial subject is incorporated. However, in Sagastizabal's novel the global subject is incorporated within the Basque Country, and as a result of the deployment of a colonial register, one could even conclude that the Basque reader becomes the postcolonial subject of nationalism's imperialist tendencies. As a result, the violence of subverting the nationalist norm is enjoyable and transcendental. In the case of Atxaga the postcolonial subject remains outside and its effects are violent and destructive, nearing the uncanny. No enjoyment is afforded in Atxaga's text unlike in Sagastizabal's *Show Me*. This shift, exemplified by the difference between Atxaga's and Sagastizabal's texts, which could be summarized as one *from national violence to postnational jouissance could be one of the most important historical changes in Basque literature over the last several years*.

As stated above, in order to preserve a nationalist and homogeneous hegemony, most established male writers have ended moving the irreducible hybridity of Basque culture to the European postcolonial field (Atxaga), the domestic space haunted by violence and abuse (Saizarbitoria), or the artificial linguistic paradise of Basque nationalist masculinity (Lertxundi). However, Arantxa Urretabizkaia, one of the few coetaneous women writers of the above mentioned three writers, has moved in the opposite direction. She has hybridated national, domestic scenarios, which were predominant in her prior narrative (*Zergatik panpox?* 1979, *¿Por qué panpox?* and *Saturno* 1987, *Saturno*), with more political situations where Basque nationalist discourse appears for the first time. In her latest novel *Koaderno Gorria* (1998, *The Red Notebook*), Urretabizkaia writes about the story of a woman who becomes involved in the terrorist group ETA and alienates herself from her family—or vice versa; this point is not explained in the novel. As a result, her husband takes their daughter and son away and relocates in Venezuela, where he begins a new life with another woman. He also tries to erase his children's memories of their biological mother. The novel begins years later with excerpts from the diary that the mother has written in Basque for her children

17. The romance between the "native" Isabel and the "imperialist" protagonist is not consummated so that the ultimate linguistic pleasure of the novel is not overdetermined by sex.

18. Koldo Izagirre's *Agirre zaharraren kartzelaldi berriak* (*The New Imprisonments of Old Agirre*) could also be read along the same lines, although this time the *jouissance* is not linguistic but political. The protagonist travels to another heart of darkness: the prison where Basque political prisoners live. Here, by way of irony and wit, he creates a space of enjoyment that is not reducible to the nationalist political order but nevertheless is interior and does not transcend it.

since the latter's disappearance. At this point, she has finally had news about the location of her children. Although her son is very young, her daughter is now thirteen years old, and so the mother hopes to establish contact with her daughter. But, since she continues involved in ETA, the mother sends her best girlfriend to locate her children in Venezuela and give the eldest, the daughter, the notebook.

The novel tells the ordeals of the girlfriend trying to contact the daughter whom she does not want to alienate and is not even sure remembers her mother. At the end, they meet on a beach. The following day, they meet again and the girlfriend gives the mother's notebook to the daughter and then leaves closing the novel with an open end. The magic moment of the novel takes place when the girlfriend and the young girl meet on the beach and, before the girlfriend has a chance to approach her, the latter actually understands who the girlfriend is and recognizes her by posing a question in Spanish:

"La está mandando ella, ¿verdad? [in Spanish in the original: "She sends you, right?"]", she [girlfriend] hears before she reaches her. She does not have to rise her eyes to know whom the girl is addressing. She has met the mother's eyes again and she is awestruck with her mouth open, like a fish out of the water. "Sé que la está mandando ella" [original in Spanish: "I know she sends you"], the girl says, and L. nods with her head. (111)

Precisely in this recognition that defies rationality, there is a moment when the Basque girlfriend and the daughter bond in a way that transcends geographic and linguistic differences without erasing them. They bond over an absent mother who also does not renounce to her own political differences and yet makes herself present as literature: the red notebook. At this point, the mother's two realities, love and political commitment, emerge outside the Basque Country and in Spanish language, as two different realities. The novel does not attempt to solve them under the homogenizing discourse of nationalism—only the heterodiegetic, omniscient narrator might still provide a nationalist point of view that controls the entire story. The novel does not either condemn or legitimize the mother's political convictions, nor does reduce them to some political understanding of what motherhood should or should not be. In other words, in front of a daughter who lives in the larger Babel outside the Basque Country and language, the novel presents a non-reductive *jouissance* that bonds together mother, daughter, and girlfriend. Although the red notebook the girlfriend delivers to the daughter is written in Basque, and she warns her about the difficulties of understanding a language the latter has almost forgotten, the daughter is fully confident that she will understand it—perhaps beyond linguistic communication itself. In other words, even communication is hybrid; a Basque writer is read by a Spanish reader. However, this ultimate *jouissance* that bonds women serves as a way to locate the subject of the novel before Babel: a hybrid location that is not reduced to any nationalist discourse. In this way, the red notebook also becomes the novel, one that the reader must read from the point of view of the daughter: a Spanish-speaking position located in Venezuela.

The other woman writer who has emerged over the last two years as a new celebrity is Jasone Osoro. With only one book published, a short-story collection entitled *Tentazioak* (1998, *Temptations*), she became an overnight bestseller and celebrity, and as a result, she was offered a position in the Basque television as presenter. The unifying topic of most short stories is sexuality, understood in its broadest sense. The stories are short, and as Patxi Ezkiaga already announces in the introduction to the collection when he refers to Raymond Carver, they could be categorized under the rubric of "dirty realism" so characteristic of Carver's narrative—most tellingly *Cathedral*.

The story entitled *Ostiral batez* (43-6, *On a Friday*) is very representative of the collection. A young woman is about to go out on a Friday night but, as she is choosing her wardrobe,

becomes so insecure and frustrated that instead decides to stay home at the end. In the same fashion, another story about two women entitled *Estreinakoa* (59-65, *The First Time*) is very representative of Osoro's style. The two women lock themselves up in the bathroom to massage each other and talk about their sexual experiences with men in a graphic way. When one of the young women mentions a message left by a new boy or man who is interested meeting the other woman, the latter dismisses it and ends the story as the two women move into the bathtub. Osoro's stories could be characterized as light yet highly sensuous, innocent yet funny. Other books such as Banana Yoshimoto's *Kitchen* come to mind.

The way in which her work has been received somehow resonates with the reception given to Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* or Almudena Grandes's *Las edades de Lulú*, although the dominant sadomasochistic tone of the latter does not prevail in Osoro's collection. This novel has also been received with a sophisticated level of voyeurism that did not exist before in the Basque Country. Rather than pure eroticism, *Temptations* is a combination of a minimalist anguish –an almost non-expressed existential malaise– and sexuality, which makes the collection very compelling and attractive. In other words, a barely intimated and yet very real anguish over a minimal problem, such as getting dressed (*On a Friday*), combined with a high degree of narcissism and exhibitionism, gives Osoro's story collection its specific character and popularity.

Ironically enough, this story collection also captures the problem of locating the global hybridity that defines Basque young culture. These stories present a pleasure that is global: consumerist in nature and not related to any Basque nationalist discourse or ideology. However the stories displace pleasure onto the (mostly female) body as the latter engages in different sexual activities. The contradiction of this displacement lies on the fact that it is violent. As the body is rescued as a new site of pleasure, it also becomes a domestic site violently voided of any positioning vis-à-vis Basque culture, social classes, postmodernity, and politics. It is this lack of positioning, beyond that of the body itself, which makes it ironically the new body, not the subject, of Basque nationalism. In other words, the sexualized treatment of the body from within Basque literature and culture, automatically converts this body, by default, into a site of nationalist pleasure and voyeurism. In other words, the body becomes a site of homogeneous pleasure where other types of conflicts and hybrid realities are repressed. Thus the repressed eventually reemerges under the unconscious affect of light anguish, ennui, boredom, etc.–that is, the characteristic affect of hegemonic middle- and upper-middle class global literatures such as Generation X's. The story collection presents pleasure and anguish as irreconcilable and yet unavoidable. This contradiction is not given up by the stories but is not solved either. This is the new hybridity that Osoro's work brings into Basque culture: global pleasure is unconsciously hybridated with Basque nationalist culture.

We must conclude that Osoro's literature is one of the first representations of a desire that is class-marked and internal to Basque nationalism. If this is so, perhaps a new hybrid reality is emerging within Basque nationalist culture, which no longer coincides with the subject of Basque nationalism, as represented in the work of Atxaga, Saizarbitoria, or Lertxundi, but is contained within Basque nationalism. However, this hybridation of pleasure and nationalism does not yield *jouissance* but rather anguish and existential ennui. In short, Osoro's work is one of the first chronicles of the birth of a new nationalist self, no longer hegemonically signified by a political and masculinist subject, but rather by a non-political, individual, feminized self, marked by its sexual desire. In this sense, Osoro's work is a witness of the "birth of a new Basque, individual, nationalist self of desire."

If Atxaga, Saizarbitoria, Lertxundi, and Osoro cannot transcend the location of Basque nationalist discourse and its homogenizing effects, Epaltza, Sagastizabal, and Urretabizkaia

exceed it through different strategies of global hybridation. The effects of violence and enjoyment respectively deriving from the two above strategies point to the fact that both alternatives are taking place at the same time in the Basque Country, and the location of Basque culture before Babel, although changing and unstable, is still operative.

4. BASQUE TELEVISION

When compared with other media, Basque television presents a very interesting and challenging location vis-à-vis Basque culture and globalization, due in part to its origins in premodern, oral culture. It is paramount to study the specific ways in which premodern, oral Basque culture has managed to mutate and flourish in television when mapping out the location of Basque culture in globalization.

In order to understand the formation and definition of Basque oral culture in relation to television, one must go back to the years of the end of the Franco dictatorship and the transition to democracy. This historical moment represents a crucial moment when a Basque public sphere represented both in Spanish and Basque languages was formed for the first time ever—the Second Republic constituting a very important but short-lived precedent.

In this transitional period, the Basque people occupied the public space for the first time; till that moment it had been regulated by the Francoist regime and its state apparatuses—from police to censorship. Here the term “occupy” is meant in its most literal sense: during this time the streets of the Basque Country were literally occupied by the bodies of Basque people. The level of demonstrations, mostly of political nature, was unprecedented and, although there are no serious studies on the topic, exceeded any modern standard. The ability to mobilize half a million people out of a population of two million defies any political organizational practice in the West. This was the first time that the streets were occupied not only to celebrate festivities, which were permitted by Francoism partly because of their religious connection, but also to express political opinions and thus signify the political identity and agency of the Basque community as such. At the same time, the Basque Country literally became a forest of graffiti and posters where any type of subversive messages, convocations, and slogans were posted so that the public space was for the first time written by and for Basques. Literally, the public space of the Basque country was occupied and “written” by the bodies and writings of the Basque people. Although this activity was centered in the three Basque Provinces, it also extended to Navarre and the French Basque Country.

This was also the time in which a feverish activity began among people involved in the promotion of Basque language to create all sorts of dictionaries, histories, and encyclopedias. In other words, not only the public space but also language itself was occupied by writing. Basque language, which till then had remained basically an oral language, was mapped out, defined, codified, and expanded as if the world was occupied for the first time by Basque language and vice versa. Although this process began in 1968 with the first linguistic bylaws of codification and normalization approved by the Academy of the Basque Language, they developed and flourished in the 70s and 80s as “the Basque Country was written” by bodies, graffiti, and dictionaries. Although to this day the ability to massively mobilize people and occupy the streets has persisted, as it was made clear by the demonstrations following the murder of Miguel Ángel Blanco in 1997, the frequency has diminished considerably. In this sense, the practice of occupying the public space no longer is politically motivated. One of the ulterior mutations of this ability to occupy and “bodily

write" the public space consists in the *Korrika*-s and *Ibilaldia*-s, as documented by Teresa del Valle. These are marches in which the cause of Basque language and schools mobilizes an immense amount of people in large events where, following Benedict Anderson's definition, the Basque Country "imagines itself."

However, in this process of "self-imagining," the subject had to be present in the public space as both "represented community" and "imagining community," especially in the case of "bodily inscription." To borrow once again Mignolo's distinction, the locus of enunciation and the subject had to coincide in the most physical sense: the subject's body became part of the enunciation. In the case of graffiti the subject had to be present in the public space only as imagining subject, the poster or graffiti standing for the represented community. Only dictionaries and encyclopedias could allow the reader to be absent from the public space both as representation and "imager." However, the fact that many times dictionaries were used in classrooms and similar pedagogical environments (libraries, etc.) means that, even in this case, the act of community imagination was partially bound to the public space. At the same time, in all the above instances the subject's immediacy to itself, as representation and "imager," implies that there was a sense of presence to oneself that justified a nationalist, self-sufficient, and homogeneous understanding of the Basque Country. The Basque Country was present to itself; to a large extent the community's identity was immediate and transparent to itself.

However, it took the establishment of television in 1982 for the Basque Country to begin to imagine itself, not only as a public community, but also as a private community and subject. Only from the domestic and (TV-) media-based space of the private sphere were the Basque people able to imagine themselves also as an individual, non-political subject. Basque television gave rise to a Basque public and private sphere fully constituted as Basque. Here I use the term of *public sphere* after Habermas's theories and must be distinguished from *public space*, which is an urban, physical space. According to Habermas, the origins and organization of the public sphere derive from the private organization of bourgeois individuals, so that public and private sphere become complementary spaces of a single social structure:

The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without precedent: people's public use of the their reason. (26)

Till that point, only the Spanish television, the local press controlled by state censorship, and some small local radios had the ability to construct a public sphere of debate and political reasoning, but none addressed its audience as Basque. The media under Francoism could not create a Basque public sphere, only Basque television (and Basque radio to a lesser extent) had that effect for the first time in 1982.

The occupation of the social space that began with demonstrations, graffiti, and dictionaries, ended with the establishment of television. At that moment, the Basque community was no longer imagined as a public collective present to itself in the public space, but also as a collective of private and individual subjects that could imagine their selves (self-s) for the first time as Basque. In other words, television culminated the process of the creation of a social space divided in public and private spheres from which a national self was imagined as Basque.

At the same time, Basque Television brought about the introduction of American mass culture and commercials as a constitutive part of the Basque process of community- and self-imagination taking place in the new Basque public and private spheres. Therefore, at the moment in which Basque television constituted a Basque social space and self, it also brought about the hybridation of Basque culture with globalized mass culture in a ratio where the domestic production only occupied a symbolic or qualitative position, not a quantitative one. Thus one could claim that at no point in history has ever existed a “homogeneous, local, pure, national Basque self.”

Since its inception, Basque television has been organized in two separate channels divided according to the two official languages of the Autonomous Basque Community. In terms of political influence and debate, the Spanish-speaking channel has more weight since it is the only one understood by the entire community, at least on the Spanish side. However, the Basque-speaking channel occupies a more central position than the Spanish-speaking one in terms of the symbolic weight it carries. This is not an exception but a general rule for most national televisions including the Spanish. Even in Spanish televisions, the domestic programming is symbolic vis-à-vis the overwhelming quantitative presence of global (mainly North American) shows.

Although the Basque speaking channel, or ETB1, presents a varied programming venue, historically speaking three types of programming have carried the most weight: soccer, programs of oral literature called *bertsolaritza* (rhymed oral poetry), and Basque soap operas. However, and as I will discuss below, when one concludes that the origin and format of Basque soap operas is also oral, then we only have two types of programming: soccer and “oral” programs. Although soccer has historically been important in the construction of national identity, in the Basque case, it was organized before the Basque Country was constituted politically as a community. Soccer follows the Spanish national organization (provinces, regions, Spanish nation) and only contributes partially to the process of Basque community-imagination.

In the case of *bertsolaritza* or oral poetry and soap operas, ETB1 drew from the limited resources already existing in Basque culture and, after several experiments, realized that in a first moment the *bertsolaritza* show on Sunday mornings became the program with the largest audience. Ironically enough Sunday morning became the prime time of ETB1—a very catholic and rural prime time, since it follows the schedule of the catholic mass of Sunday mornings¹⁹.

Bertsolaritza is oral poetry which was practiced mainly by women in the Middle Ages, but in modernity was reappropriated by men. It consists of improvised and rhymed verses that are sang following prestablished metric rhythms. In the twentieth century it became a form of competition, which mostly took place during the summer festivities of most towns, and later also developed into a national championship. Thus *bertsolaritza* requires a massive public that is present during the performance. Finally, the public sometimes sings along when verses are repeated; sometimes verses are printed and memorized, and lately are recorded and videotaped as performances.

Bertsolaritza was already popularized with radio, but with television it experienced an unexpected resurgence. Although the interface between *bertsolaritza* and television has not

19. Most of the data discussed here have not been documented yet. I rely on oral reports from the producer of the *bertsolaritza* show, Joxerra Gartzia, and one of the main actors of the entire process of conversion from theater to soap operas, Mikel Garmendia.

been thoroughly studied to this day, it seems that *bertsolaritza* represents the natural extension of the community occupation of the public space during the summer festivities now also reaching the private sphere organized in the households around the television set. At the same time, the participative dimension of *bertsolaritza* (when the public sings along and memorizes) as well as its competitive format, where poets or *bertsolaris* compete against each other, already made this oral genre a perfect transitional program for television. The fact that topics are popular and not intellectual or derived from high literature completes the picture of the televisive success of *bertsolaritza*.

However, another popular genre has taken over *bertsolaritza* in the 90s: soap operas. As I will discuss below, and because of the oral origin of this type of programs, it is paramount to emphasize the fact that Basque soap operas are a mixture between comedies and melodramas—a mixture particular to the Basque Country. In other words, soap operas constitute a hybrid genre that encompasses both comedies and melodramas. The origin of the Basque genre must be found in popular, oral theater. After the Basque Government organized a theater school, several of the graduating actors wrote and produced a play that, in the new democratic climate of the nationalist Basque Country, revived the popular, oral theater that was dormant since the turn of the century. The play *Ama begirazazu* (*Look mother*) toured the Basque Country with an unexpected success; so much so that some of the scriptwriters and producers were hired by ETB1 to produce a comedy show, *Bi eta bat* (*One and Two*), which also became a huge success. This later program led in 1994 to the production of a large-scale soap opera, *Goenkale* (*High Street*), which, as of 1999, still is on the air in its fifth season. This program is the longest running soap opera in the Spanish state.

The most interesting aspect of *Goenkale* consists in the fact that during the first seasons the amount of viewers exceeded the number of Basque speakers in the Basque Autonomous Community. This excess of viewers can only be understood as a result of the unprecedented and impacting effect of watching for the first time ever a televisive representation of a Basque community. *Goenkale* represented the first instance in which the Basque Country could imagine itself, watch itself, represented as Basque community, from within the public sphere constituted by television while situating itself in the private sphere of the household. In other words, *Goenkale* represents the conditions of possibility for the formation of a nationalist self both public and private.

Thus retrospectively we can conclude that, the commercialization and globalization of culture as well as the formation of Basque public and private spheres no longer favor the conditions under which literature is capable of representing the Basque Country. At that point television becomes the new ideal place where this task is undertaken. As a result, in the 90s, the Basque Country becomes allegorically represented in a soap opera whose origins are oral. If Atxaga managed to crown modern Basque literature's project of representing the nation through the national allegory in the late 80s, this activity moved to television by the mid 90s. One could entitle one of the most important cultural changes of the last years in the Basque Country: "from Obaba to Goenkale." It is not a coincidence if the title of the Basque soap opera is also the allegorical name of a location, a place: *Goenkale* or High Street.

Furthermore, this analysis of oral literature and culture allows us to reread written literature. More specifically one can retrospectively read Atxaga's literature from this new framework of oral literature and television. As Marijose Olaziregi reports, "over the last few years the lectures given by Atxaga, just in the Basque Country, exceed the number of 2000" (8, my translation). If we consider a time span of five years, as a numerical translation of "few years," the above number represents an average of *eight lectures per week*. In the case of Atxaga, there is another aspect of his literature that is performative, oral, and popular. He has

toured most villages, towns, and cities and has popularized his literature through the oral genre of the lecture. If the Basque public rushed to buy *Obabakoak* (1988) the week of its publication, creating a new phenomenon without precedents in Basque culture (a literary release as public act), perhaps this event has to do with the orality of Atxaga's work. By touring, he made an active advertisement of his work, so that by the time it was published the publicity was already unparalleled.

But most importantly, perhaps one can venture the hypothesis that *Atxaga's literature (Obabakoak)* was not sold as written literature to be read but as a commodity that served as *momento or reminder of an oral performance* that, unlike his literature, was not high art but popular, massive, and oral. At the same time, if Jasone Osoro went directly from publishing a book to landing a job on television (written > oral), reversing Atxaga's trajectory or strategy (oral > written), maybe then, *we have to rethink the relation between oral and written literature in the Basque Country* as well as the parameters by which we can talk about the *constitution of a "Basque, individual, self," for its origins and development might be constitutively oral and not print-based.*

At the same time, television, because of its popular origins and format, allows for a higher degree of hybridation than literature. Television is much more capable of representing or imagining a new hybrid and globalized version of the Basque community. In *Goenkale*, homosexuals, immigrants from other parts of the world and different races, etc. come together and interact with other Basque characters. The linguistic limitations to represent the other, unlike in literature, rather than becoming a problem are a further motive of enjoyment or national *jouissance*. Only viewers of minority languages can understand the confusion and simultaneous enjoyment experienced when witnessing for the first time, a first foundational time, other nations and ethnicities speaking their minority language. A Western where both cowboys and Native Americans speak Basque was motive of discussion, puzzlement, and enjoyment in the Basque Country when the ETB1 dubbed them for the first time. The commercials that advertise local and global commodities during the breaks are simply a further expansion of a show that is already hybrid in nature.

Furthermore, this kind of linguistic *jouissance* connects with popular theater of the turn of the century, as practiced by play writers such as Marcelino Soroa (Villasante 286-88). This theater relied on the linguistic and carnivalesque hybridation of Spanish and Basque as a way to reverse the hierarchy between both languages and cultures as well as the position they occupied in society (Basque = rural, premodern; Spanish = urban, modern). This reversal was enacted as enjoyment precisely because it was performed in the absence of a strong nationalist discourse in which both realities were opposed and excluded from each other.

Finally it is important to notice, for future research, that the central character of *Goenkale* is precisely the phallic mother so marginally present in Basque literature. The name of the character is Marialuisa (actress Kontxu Odriozola). She eventually dropped out of contract after the initial seasons, but after ratings started to falter, the producers brought her back to the show in the 1999-2000 season as a way to bolster the show's popularity. Interestingly enough, the most marginalized figure of Basque literature, and the most central in its marginality (Gabilondo "Exilio"), the phallic mother, has found a new place in television. Although a detailed analysis of this figure is impossible here, it points to the possibility that even the phallic mother takes a different position within the hybrid and popular medium of television, and as a result she joins the place of the "new woman" of which Osoro's characters are part. In other words, television has refashioned the old paradigm as "the new phallic mother." Only a thorough textual and sociological analysis would be able to determine the politics of such a refashioning and its popularity.

Although there is no room here to pursue a full analysis of the ways in which the above images create specific hegemonic positions and structures within Basque nationalist culture, it is important to underline that television is tightly controlled and regulated by the government, in this case a nationalist one. Nevertheless the effects of hybridation exceed such control. Thus, television's nationalist ideology could be placed at the level of the format (oral genres, allegories of the Basque community) rather than the specific contents which tend to show high levels of hybridity and heterogeneity. In other words, as long as the soap opera *Goenkale* continues to represent allegorically the Basque Country, the hybridating presence of characters alien to Basque nationalism and commercials from other cultures might not challenge nationalist ideology. However this point remains to be studied in detail.

To conclude it is paramount to emphasize that the globalizing effect of television rather than representing a break or disruption with oral culture in the Basque Country represents a continuation. As a result oral culture is being globalized, located before Babel, thanks to a post-literacy media: television. The political juncture that remains to be explored and studied in detail is one resulting from the hybridation between the new audiovisual generic representations of the nation and the globalized consumerist culture that is in origin mainly North American. I have emphasized the perduration of oral culture in Basque television in order to underscore the complexity of hybridation between the local and the global. One synthetic way to pose the complicated dilemma of Basque television, which seems to work for other cases such as the Japanese (Miyoshi and Harootunian), is the following: *premodern oral culture has survived and thrived in postmodernity because of the specific locational structure* ("beforeness") that modernity had in the Basque Country. Globalization has permitted the perduration of premodern subject structures. In this way, the Basque "beforeness" to which I referred in the opening section of this article takes a whole new meaning when confronted with Basque television.

5. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM BILBAO

Another media where the Basque "beforeness" vis-à-vis globalization can be mapped out is the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (henceforth GMB). Unlike literature, the GMB represents a completely exterior position to Basque culture. Neither the majority of contents nor the building were created by Basques; furthermore the final word about the exhibits and scheduling comes from the Guggenheim headquarters in New York. That is, the cultural activity and flow of the museum are directed and regulated by the Guggenheim of New York and its current director, Robert Krens.

If compared with television, in so far as both are forms of global media, the GMB represents the inversion of Basque television. Like television, the GMB is located and functions from within the Basque Country. However unlike television, the symbolic and central element of the museum is the building and the exhibits, which are not meant to be Basque or referentially represent the Basques. Rather it is the opposite case: both the museum and the exhibits are supposed to be globally recognized so that any visitor can relate to them as global art, rather than Basque—hence the privileged position given to North American and European modernist and avant-garde art, the two most abstract art forms in Western art history. In short, unlike in television, the Basque community does not imagine itself at the GMB. Rather, Basque culture represents the global through the GMB, i.e. what is not Basque.

Furthermore, even the social space organized by the GMB is the reverse of television. Although a privately owned space, the museum is not private as in the case of television's reception, but public: the people need to occupy the physical and urban space within and

around the museum in order for its representations to work. The museum cannot be watched from the private and domestic space of the household. Thus by entering the museum's public space, the visitor experiences global culture, so that ultimately the public space of the museum no longer is Basque but global: it is a global public space mediated and constructed by non-Basque high art. As the global is re-presented, through paintings, installations and so on, even the Basque visitor imagines himself or herself as part of a global community and space. For the Basque visitor it is important the presence of the foreign visitor, for the latter signifies ultimately the global nature of the museum. The Basque visitor looks at the displays of the GMB as displays looked at by foreign visitors. Ultimately, the Basque visitor imagines herself or himself being looked at by the foreign visitor through the display. The distinction between public and private which is central to the construction of a Basque social space and self is secondary in the case of the GMB.

Since its opening two Basque artists have been featured at the GMB, Cristina Iglesias and Eduardo Chillida (Guggenheim Bilbao "Museoaren"). However, the function of the GMB ultimately is to bring the global into the Basque Country so that the Basque Country becomes the context, the location, where the global becomes placed as Basque and hybridated by its Basque re-location. In short, the GMB situates the Basque Country before Babel in the sense that, in order to access to this new manifestation of the global, the visitor must first place himself or herself in the Basque Country. One arrives to the GMB through the Basque Country. The GMB represents a hybridation of location between the local and the global, not a hybridation of representations as it is the case with literature and television. It is the locus not the enunciation what is being hybridated.

However in order to understand the way in which the hybridation of loci (global/local) takes place at the GMB, it is important first to understand the logic behind the Guggenheim's decision to place itself in the Basque Country. As Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff state in their *Museum Culture*, "The past generation has seen both an unparalleled increase in the number of museums throughout the world and an unprecedented expansion and diversification of their activities" (ix). According to these two authors, "The concept of museum emerges as a field of interplay between the social histories of collecting, classifying, displaying, entertaining, and legitimating" (x). One must conclude that the globalization of the Guggenheim has to do with the fact that the social histories of collecting, classifying, displaying, entertaining, and legitimating have acquired a global dimension. Indeed, when Krens writes a prologue to Van Bruggen's monographic on Frank Gehry and the GMB, he begins by stating the global expansion of the Guggenheim throughout Europe. He maps out the globalization in its historical course: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (1959, New York), Peggy Guggenheim Collection (1976, Venice), Guggenheim Museum SoHo (1992, New York), Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin (1997), and now the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (1997; Van Bruggen 9).

Furthermore, it is important to note that Krens is at the avant-garde of the movement of globalizing high art. As Herbert Muschamp, the architecture critic for *The New York Times* states, "Krens... has been frequently maligned by those who resent his global aspirations" (54). This process of globalization has been named informally "Mc-Guggenheim" linking it to a more general economic trend of global franchising led by multinationals such as the fast-food company McDonalds. This connection would suggest that the main reason for the Guggenheim's expansion is economic. As Zulaika explains indeed there are economic reasons why the Guggenheim and Krens want to franchise the museum:

Krens proved as much when he came to Bilbao with his grand plan for establishing museum franchises all over the world, nicknamed "McGugenheims." The key to the equation is that the host

city pays the bills, while New York runs the show. Krens tried the idea unsuccessfully in several European cities—Venice, Salzburg, Vienna, Graz, Madrid, and Moscow to name several. In the meantime a financially strapped Guggenheim had to repay about \$7 million a year for the \$54.9 million in bonds issued for its 1992 renovation and expansion on Fifth Avenue. (“Seduction” 62, my emphasis)

Zulaika ironically celebrates this new economic logic when he quotes Krens stating that “I am a professional séducteur, I don’t earn money but I raise it. I seduce people into giving \$20 million gifts. I am in a way the greatest prostitute in the world” (“Seduction” 62).

In order to understand the historical meaning and magnitude of Krens’s maneuver, it is important to compare it with economic trends in other areas of culture. If, for a moment, we contemplated Krens’s activity from a film-industry perspective, his approach to globalization would seem very normal and perhaps even somewhat outdated. In the last years more than half of the revenue of any major Hollywood film release comes from outside the USA, that is the rest of the global world. As Tino Balio states: “By 1994, the overseas market surpassed the domestic in film rentals for the first time” (60). As he discusses in detail in his analysis of Hollywood, globalization in North American film is a well-established historical event since the mid-80s.

Furthermore, if new trends in audiovisual culture are extrapolated to the Guggenheim, the globalizing attempts effected by Krens have to be understood, not simply in economic terms—as an ingenious solution to a dire economic situation— but as a general cultural trend of globalization. Of course, this trend is related to the expansion and commodification of culture undertaken by multinationals, but then this is the history of Western and non-Western culture at the end of the twentieth century.

Thus the reason for Krens’s strategy is not simply economic. Economy does not explain the unique situation of the Guggenheim. It is only the consideration of high art as separate, different from mass culture, due to ideological assumptions that date back to the nineteenth century, that explains the Guggenheim’s juncture as revolutionary and yet maligned. These ideological assumptions could be summarized in the following way: on the one hand, modern art ideology dictates that art is not commodifiable and must function outside the circulation of capital; on the other, Western history marks museums with the old colonizing logic of displaying the other for the empire and its cosmopolitan public. These two ideological components preclude most museum practitioners from joining Krens and his strategy.

At least from the point of view of the Guggenheim institution and its current director, Krens, their attempt to globalize museum culture responds to a well-calculated and revolutionary act of redefining the whole museum world. If Sherman and Rogoff characterize the concept of museum “as a field of interplay between the social histories of collecting, classifying, displaying, entertaining, and legitimating” (x), in the case of the Guggenheim we must understand that the first and most important social history that Krens is attempting to tell is that of “collecting, displaying, entertaining, and legitimizing the global itself as high art.” Krens also, is attempting to map the global, just like the Basques—although the presuppositions, interests, and goals of the two parties involved might be diametrically different.

If the comparison with film industry is further expanded, Krens’s decision to hire one of the most influential North American architects of the twentieth century responds to the need to attract museum-goers with a building that is as exciting and enticing as the new high-end, spectacular cineplexes are for movie-goers. As Balio states for cinema, “Two factors boasted foreign box office: better cinemas and more effective marketing.... To resuscitate moviegoing, the American majors and their European partners launched a campaign during

the 1980s to rebuild and renovate exhibition in Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain and other countries" (60). In this context, the Guggenheim's decision to tour the shows that are released first in New York through their other museums overseas responds to the same logic of production and distribution adopted by most North American film studios. They also control the film distribution in many nations throughout the world. In this sense, Krens is simply following Hollywood's globalizing lead.

If we pause for a moment in the choice of Gehry as the architect of the GMB, we see that it also responds to the above cultural logic of globalization. If we consider Gehry one of the best North American architects of the twentieth century, then Krens's remarks are revelatory of the magnitude of the "new high-art cineplex:" "In this case, we –the Guggenheim Foundation, the Basque Administration, and the people of Bilbao– enjoy the tremendously good fortune to have elicited from Gehry his best work" (Van Bruggen 9). Furthermore, according to *Time* magazine, this building is one of the five top buildings of the century (quoted in Guggenheim Bilbao, *Informe* 10).

The reason for placing this exceptional museum in Bilbao is definitively connected to very specific and historical constraints. As Zulaika argues, many cities turned down the project and only a community, a postnational community, managed to strike the deal. The Autonomous Basque Community's government possesses enough economic autonomy and political cohesion to impose from above a multimillion-dollar deal without consulting with its political constituencies and institutions. The Basque Autonomous Community has its own taxing system and institutions and over the last twenty years has been hegemonically nationalist. However, from the perspective of the Guggenheim institution and Krens, the specific choice of Bilbao is incidental since both the building (with or without Gehry) and the exhibits can also be franchised elsewhere. In the logic of franchising, the particularities of a place are secondary to the functioning of an entire network of franchises that follow basic standards.

In this context the choice of a playful, naive, and "genuinely" North American architect such as Gehry is necessary since his style reflects global culture, regardless of location. As most critics have already pointed out, the figurative nature of Gehry's buildings makes the viewer engage in a free-association process that reverts back to his or her own imaginary. As Muschamp insists, "Bilbao is a sanctuary of free association." Thus when he concludes "The museum looks like nothing else, but nonetheless looks at home," one wonders to which home he is referring. However, his own free associations clarify this point. It is the home of North American mass-culture:

I went back to the hotel to write notes. It was early evening and starting to rain. I took a break to look out the window and saw a woman standing alone outside a bar across the streets. She was wearing a long, white dress with matching white pumps, and she carried a pearlescent handbag. Was her date late? Has she been stood up? When I looked back a bit later, she was gone. And I asked myself, why can't a building capture a moment like that? Then I realized that the reason I'd had that thought was that I'd just come from such a building. And that the building I'd just come from was the reincarnation of Marilyn Monroe.

Muschamp is conscious that "Her presence in Bilbao is totally my projection," but precisely because of his limitation to his own projections, he becomes unaware of the ultimate consequence of this individualized association process. The foreign visitor is subject to his or her own projections, so that "the museum looks at home," and as a result "home" is always anywhere in the globe but in the Basque Country. The Basque Country is never home (I will come back to the associations of Basque visitors later).

Even Gehry seems to be projecting his own imagination, for one way to analyze the GMB is as a "deconstruction" of the original Guggenheim located within the national

American territory: Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim. At an architectural level too, the story told by the GMB is North American. Finally Gehry's insistence on the idea of Bilbao as a "tough city" (Zulaika "Seduction" 61) represents an attempt to contain the geocultural context of the museum within an old-fashioned paradigm of masculinity that would ultimately refer to a social class structure—industrial capitalism and the working class—that nowadays is in decline. In short Gehry is containing the presence of the Basque city by relegating it in history to an older time and social structure. Gehry's building, in contrast, would reflect the new, gentler, and androgynous masculinity arising from the men's movement in the USA in their fundamentalist reaction against feminism. Muschamp captures some of this logic when he concludes that "What twins the actress and the building in my memory is that both of them stand for an American style of freedom. That style is voluptuous, emotional, intuitive, and exhibitionist. It is mobile, fluid, material, mercurial, fearless, radiant and as fragile as a newborn child."

In this sense the shooting of videos on the premises of the MGB by internationally known music artists such as Simple Minds, Mariah Carey, and Smashing Pumpkins (Guggenheim Bilbao, *Informe* 10) further emphasizes the non-Basque, global logic of the museum. The shooting of the James Bond film "The world is Not Enough" in the museum tops so far this global relocation. All these representations further enhance the global reflection of the GMB. The Basque Country disappears behind this complex but global process of projection, just like the support of a mirror disappears behind the mirror's reflection.

In his playfulness, Gehry could constitute a new type of global architect who would resemble a similar group of cultural practitioners in film: the director of global blockbusters, the likes of Steven Spielberg or George Lucas. Spielberg's and Lucas's own fascination with figurative cinematic elements—of which E.T. or the Jurassic dinosaurs and the expensive special effects that come along are the epitome—would resonate with Gehry's and would form part of a single, continuum *global imagination*: ubiquitous, postmasculinist, associative, and projective (in the sense mentioned above).

The projective process also expands over the political. Zulaika notes that, in his interview with Krens, the latter denied knowing Xabier Arzallus, the president of the Basque Nationalist Party, the party in power since the democratic transition in the Basque Country²⁰. Zulaika adds:

This datum reveals something more than his lack of knowledge about Basque reality. Krens, of course, goes on to not learning Castilian and not reading the Basque press. The fact that he does not know the president of the party in power does not turn out to be as strange if we remember that the local press failed to identify the museum's president too, whom they described as Krens's "assistant". The fact that Arzallus was the ultimate responsible of the decision [to fund the museum] without Krens never even noticing the latter's name, points to the game of concealment that power enjoys. (*Crónica* 217, my translation).

As Zulaika clarifies later on, Krens had met Arzallus but did not recall the meeting. As far as "power's concealment" is concerned, I am more inclined to believe that it is rather the opposite. Arzallus is meaningless in his full visibility to the global positioning of the museum—as long as the official president of the government signs the contract. It is the reflective logic of franchising that renders Arzallus visibly meaningless.

In short, the Guggenheim Museum is structured as a global mirror where the foreign visitor can reflect back his or her image as global. The GMB tells "the social history of

20. As I recall, I brought Arzallus's name to the conversation myself and thus I take responsibility for it.

collecting, classifying, displaying, entertaining, and legitimating" (Sherman and Rogoff x) the globalized self of the visitor through high art. In front of this mirror, the Basque "support" must disappear behind the reflection: neither the economic, political, social, or cultural reality of the Basque Country must emerge. In short, this time homogenization is sought after by the global order itself, rather than Basque nationalism: the Basque Country is meant to be a homogeneous invisible background, only recognized because of its proverbial "toughness" (Gehry). As we will see, Basque nationalism further emphasizes this mirroring global effect of homogenization—although, for different purposes.

If we turn our attention to the Basque side, we might begin to complete a preliminary map of the GMB's location. At the level of the Basque nationalist authorities, the Guggenheim is void of interiority and globalizing mirroring effects. The Basque authorities use a similar strategy of containment as the one deployed by the Guggenheim but on the reverse way. For the local authorities, GMB becomes the symbolic jewel of a new plan to reorganize the city of Bilbao, so that it hides the ruinous, decadent Bilbao left from its industrial era: the tough Bilbao Gehry admires so much. In this sense, more than a *mirror*, the Guggenheim serves to the Basque authorities as a projection device and *screen* where a new image is projected, a global image of the Basque Country, so that the screen itself, the *GMB*, *disappears*. If the visitor/viewer follows the nationalist setup, rather than the one arranged by the Guggenheim institution, he or she does not see his or her own image projected back as global, but rather that of a new globalized Basque Country with no traces of its polluted industrial past. In this sense, considering the long historical tradition of understanding houses as "the father's house" (Aresti) in Basque culture, where the house itself is feminized, then perhaps, the GMB represents a new type of "father's house:" "the father's global shopping mall," where the globalized image of the Basque Country dwells and is up for sale as feminized commodity. In any event, the new Basque projection also avoids historical and local hybridity and attempts to show a homogenized, global Basque Country.

Obviously, the uses of the museum as mirror (Krens) or screen (Basque nationalist authorities) are not incompatible as long as they are kept separate and differentiated as two self-contained, discontinuous discourses, which are nevertheless homogeneous in their own terms. Masao Miyoshi and Henri Harootunian have studied a similar strategy of North-American mass-culture consumption in postmodern Japanese society. In this sense, the positioning of Basque society and culture vis-à-vis the new global Babel is not exceptional or new. However, the element that would make this separation and differentiation between the Guggenheim and nationalist strategies possible—culture—is related to another element that is shared by both parties: economics.

According to the latest report (Guggenheim Bilbao, *Informe*), so far all economic indicatives are positive:

- "the amount of visitors has tripled over the original estimates, thus exceeding in twelve months the number of 1.360.000" (3).
- "the second most visited art museum at state level after the Prado" (3)
- "84% [of visitors] have traveled to Bilbao with the main purpose of visiting the museum" (4).
- "geographic origin of visitors (10.19.97-10.18.98): Basque Country 41%. Rest of the state: 32%. Abroad 27% (4)
- "8,500 press-release entries collected... of which 60% correspond to the international press" (9, all the above quotes are my translation).

Which leads to the following economic results:

- “self-financing rate is 67%... an outstanding rate in the context of cultural institutions in the State” (25).
- “revenue total: 3,512,665,682 [pesetas] (10.19.97-10.18.98)” (26).
- “generated added value and riches to the economy of the ACBC [Autonomous Community of the Basque Country]... amounts to 24,043 million [pesetas] of the GDP (0.47% of Euskadi’s GDP [Gross Domestic Product])” (27, all the above quotes are my translation).

In other words, the economic outlook of the museum is positive so far. However, in order to keep up with the economic prosperity that the museum is bringing to the Basque Country, the collaboration between both parties will have to increase so that the feedback helps to keep up with the specific trends and necessities of the visitors. In other words, the information about visitors who actually come to the museum will depend on the local collection of information. In the same way, the political climate will directly affect the performance of the museum and so on. The interruption of a nationalist rule in the Basque Autonomous Community and the establishment of a government ruled by a centralist Spanish party could considerably change the original agreement as well as the economic and cultural standing of the GMB, indirectly jeopardizing the global future of the Guggenheim institution. At the same time, the direction of the Guggenheim could change its directives towards globalization and so forth. In other words, once the economic element is incorporated in the picture, the collaboration between the two parties has to increase in order to maximize the revenue. In the case of McDonalds, the importance of the bathroom and the French fries in Asia, rather than the meat, were discovered as a result of the interaction between the local franchises and corporate headquarters, which then led to a global reorganization of McDonalds, and so on.

In short, I would like to reiterate that there is a tension between the cultural *homogeneity* that both the Guggenheim institution and the Basque nationalist government want to implement, on the other hand, and the *economic hybridity* that such implementation requires on the other.

Obviously cultural studies, just like any other discipline in the humanities, cannot predict the future of an institution such as the GMB. However, cultural studies can historicize and delineate the larger cultural factors, limits, and trends that shape a new project such as this one. In that respect Theodore Adorno’s reflection on museums and ruins could be key in order to understand the ultimate implications of the inevitable hybridization that awaits this new franchising enterprise. Adorno coined the adjective “museal” (175) in order to convey the idea that works displayed in a museum are “objects which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying.... Museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association. Museums are like the family sepulchres of works of art” (175). According to my above analysis, the building upon which the museum is organized in globalization is part of the displayed objects. The building itself also participates in what I have defined, following Sherman and Rogoff, “the social history of collecting, classifying, displaying, entertaining, and legitimating the globalized self of the visitor through high art.” In that case the building itself is part of the museal collection on display. In other words, once the museum is globalized and the dichotomy between cosmopolitan/colonial, commodified/cultural no longer is valid, then *the museum itself becomes museal*. In other words, museums no longer are displays of European imperialism and commodification, but

rather the opposite: they become *sites of global decay and death*, where the local is taking over the global and is hybridating it with enjoyment.

In order to understand the hybridation already taking place at the GMB, which is counterbalancing the effect of the global mirroring and exclusion of the local, allow me to refer a joke I heard in Bilbao. As the newest pamphlets of the GMB already advertise in its merchandise-form (Guggenheim Bilbao "Museoaren"), there is an installation set up on the premises of the museum in front of the entrance: Jeff Koons's *Puppy*. The installation generated so much popular attention that eventually was kept as a permanent display. *Puppy* is a several-dozen-foot-high installation consisting of a metal structure in the shape of a puppy. Real flowers of many colors cover the surface. Incidentally, the popularity of the installation indicates that the people prefer a soft, organic, and earthy version of the museum's surroundings over the "tough" one that Gehry would like to preserve.

The joke told in Bilbao takes this installation as excuse and makes fun of the stereotype of Bilbainos as arrogant and simple-minded in a self-ironizing way. The joke goes this way: one Bilbaino asks a visitor, "Have you seen the puppy? Isn't that great?" When the visitor answers approvingly, the Bilbaino adds "and what about the doghouse behind, isn't that something too?" The doghouse of course refers to the museum building.

Indeed the laughter of the joke is directed to both the new organic and popular appropriation of the museum as well as the global exteriority of the same. In the joke, *Puppy* does not have an interiority: international art does not flow through its interior. *Puppy* becomes an opaque body resistant to global influx. In its colorfulness, the puppy also defies the severe, international texture of Gehry's postmodern design and its free-association logic: the puppy can only be a puppy. With this resistance to the global, the puppy becomes the main display for the people, displacing the museum to a second plane. Furthermore, the interiority of the museum is also ignored and erased, so that it is void of any power to mirror the global, although the joke underscores the uniqueness and exceptionality of the building as a "doghouse" worthwhile exhibiting to a foreigner. The enjoyment of relocating the museum as doghouse in the Basque Country already represents a symbolic way in which hybridation is taking place against the designs of both the nationalist Basque government and the Guggenheim institution. These practices of hybridation and enjoyment remain local (in the Basque Country and abroad) and thus must be collected, published, and discussed. However they are signs of a larger hybrid picture that I would like to discuss at the end.

Perhaps, the GMB permits us to see another "museal" reality, so far completely marginalized in Basque nationalism, as becoming central to both the museum itself and the Basque Country: the Basque American diaspora. Perhaps another hybrid, joyous, and ruinous (museal) way to think of the GMB, and theoretically intervene in its identification and enjoyment, is to think of it as a new Basque-American reality, where both ends of the hyphen (Douglass), the "Basque-" and the "-American," can no longer be kept separate. In this case, the GMB would no longer be a North American building constructed by a North American architect, but rather *a Basque American building and institution*²¹. At this level, the identity itself of the museum would begin to hybridate, so that the original investment made by the Basque Government would also become not only a financial bet on an institution but also on an identity, which already was Basque in its diasporic context. In that case *the Americans are becoming Basque and we are becoming American in such way that globalization begins to*

21. I owe to Joseba Zulaika the initial idea of considering Gehry a "Basque architect."

be ruined in its postmodern, first world, hegemonic economy. The enjoyment of ruining global identities must be further studied and documented; however it has already begun.

6. BABELIC HEGEMONY, ETHNIC ECOLOGY, AND ENJOYMENT

The analysis of the three media effected above reveals first of all that postnationalism, hybridation, and enjoyment are relations that at the core of the formation of new subject positions in the Basque Country. At the same time, the analysis proves that hybridation is not about the opening of a new form of global identity, but about the incorporation of other subject positions at the local level, which defy global and nationalist discourses' homogenizing effects (literature). At the same time, postnationalism represents the continuation of existing cultural structures and institutions (TV) and the ruinous local relocation of the global (museums). In other words, hybridity is an ecology and economy of very different results, which can only be understood through a multilayered analysis of the local. In the case of the Basque Country, this cultural economy is foremost a postnationalist and ethnic ecology.

At the same time, the ethnic ecology of the Basque Country, when historicized, yields a postnational anamnesis of the nation-state: the Basque community had developed a political discourse and positionality vis-à-vis modernity when the Spanish (nation)-state was being formed, thus preceding it. In other words, the same way that globalization is not a break, or discontinuity, the history of Spain does not retroactively represent the "origin" of the Basques, as Aranzadi and Juaristi would have it. The Basque Babelic positionality is as old, or older, than modernity. At the same time, this anamnesis of the nation-state also requires that the history of the Spanish (nation-) state be rethought beyond homogeneity. Spanish history must incorporate hybridity (ethnic, racial, sexual, etc.) into its narrative, so that Basques are not an exception, corruption, or deviance, but rather a constitutive part of Spanish history. The case of France and the USA vis-à-vis the Basque Country should also be rethought along the same parameters.

Globalization has brought a diversification of subject positions within the Basque nationalist hegemony and its discourse. In this respect, diversification must be studied in local terms, for no global map serves to chart its specificity. The equation between the postcolonial and male homosexual subjects (Atxaga), or the new incorporation of the Basque-American diasporic subject into the center of Basque culture (GMB), constitute particular and specific formations; they cannot solely be understood from a global perspective. When Stuart Hall reflects in the diversification of the United Kingdom, he concludes:

This marks a real shift in the point of contestation, since it is no longer only between anti-racism and multi-culturalism but *inside* the notion of ethnicity itself. What is involved in the splitting of the notion of ethnicity between, on the one hand the dominant notion which connects it to nation and "race" and on the other hand what I think is the beginning of a positive conception of the ethnicity of the margins, of the periphery. That is to say, a recognition that we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position as "ethnic..." We are all, in that sense, *ethnically* located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are. But this is also a recognition that this a [sic] not an ethnicity which is doomed to survive, as Englishness was, only by marginalizing, dispossessing, displacing and forgetting other ethnicities. This precisely is the politics of ethnicity predicated on difference and diversity. (447)

A similar diversification is taking place in the Basque Country. But Hall does not remark the hegemonic hold that the subject of Englishness still has in Britain, in the same way that

the subject of Basque nationalism still possesses in the Basque Country (Atxaga, Saizarbitoria, Lertxundi, Osoro). In this respect we have to emphasize that diversification does not preclude nationalist hegemony.

That is why enjoyment, as a violent practice of subversion and creation of new spaces and positions, must be emphasized. Globalization has brought a diversification into the nationalist Basque Country, which permits to deploy enjoyment as a subversive practice of location. If I began this article emphasizing Basque positionality's "beforeness" vis-à-vis globalization, I have to conclude by underlining the fact that this position still works in the present as a way to define the Basque Country. Only the implications of this positionality have changed as a result of postnationalism and hybridity.

It is this specific historical positionality deriving from globalization, ethnic ecology, postnationalism, hybridity, and enjoyment must be further analyzed, discussed, and practiced in order to advance progressive politics in the Basque Country and the world, so that we understand how we, Basques and non-Basques, stand before Babel.

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