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THAT BOMBSHELL CALLED INTIMACY

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Abstract || The different ideologies —Jansenism, armed struggle, and the current monstrous neoliberal market— that have had an influence on the Basque Country, did not left much space to women. For that reason I analyzed the works of different authors (Leire Bilbao, Miren Agur Meabe and Ana Urkiza, Katixa Agirre, Beatriz Urruspil, and Eider Rodriguez), as well as Jasone Osoro's report *Bi marra arrosa*. The sense of intimacy in the writing of these women is terrifying. It becomes the last place left to occupy. Page after page, intimacy assaults like an act of resistance, drown by fears, blood, and desire. For women who write in Basque, intimacy becomes the instrument to make us hear their excluded voices and dismantle the nation's structure.

Keywords || 21st Century Women Writers | Intimacy | Body | Desire | Resistance.

*Bularrak lehertu guran nituen.
Euria ari zuen nire klitori gainean.*

Miren Agur Meabe
Azalaren kodea, 2000.

When we read Basque literature written by women, we face the existing tension between the different images of intimacy. At times one can feel discomfort: why put matters of intimacy into writing? At other times, there are emerging questions suggesting that these stories of intimacy can reveal something of major importance that has been kept under wraps by society. For example, the development — or recovering— of the Basque body, whose condition as a source of pleasure has been denied. In either case, one of the characteristics that we have to consider when studying the latest generation of Basque women writers is the perturbing nature of their works.

While participating in the 2011 conference «Inhabiting Gender», held in Barcelona by the members of the International Hispanic Women's Association of Literature and Culture, I followed Otilia Cortez' talk with special interest. In her analysis of Claribel Alegría's (El Salvador, 1924), Gioconda Belli's (Nicaragua, 1948), and Ana Istaru's (Costa Rica, 1960) work, she demonstrated the close relation that exists in Central American poetry between concepts such as the city and the fatherland and women related issues. To support her argument, she made use of the Sandinista hymn "Ay Nicaragua, Nicaragüita", created by Carlos Mejía Godoy, the one that we all sang along with some songs from The Clash.

During that joyful visit, I met the equally smiley and generous Ileana Rodríguez, a Nicaraguan professor working at the University of Ohio. She aroused in me a strong desire to re-read Amaia Lasa's collection of short stories, *Malintxearen Gerizpean*, published by Pamiela in 1988. I was obviously driven by my intentions of a better understanding of her work; but I was also moved by my desire to find responses to the concerns, worries and doubts that I was experiencing at the time. Once I had returned to Bayonne, Claribel Alegría's *Carta a un desterrado* became etched word for word into my memory and shortly afterwards I managed to get the two books published by Ileana Rodríguez in Minnesota.

From then onwards, I knew that, in spite of the fact that Basque women writers are not amazed by the 'Basque' or 'feminine' labels, when they write one and again, with harshness, about vaginas, pregnancies, stomachs, feelings, the temptation of dying, the running away, and sexual relations, they refer to this land of ours as if referring to a permanent ruin of the fatherland and society. In short, they are talking about the unchanging conflict between the genders

that armed violence seeks to stifle. Intimacy is a minefield, but we have no other foundation upon which we could build the future. This is the conclusion that I wish to offer in this study.

In deciding to write this short and, hopefully, poetic piece of work, I have come to believe that it is perhaps possible to recognize something of the charming chirp of the hummingbird from the parks of Managua in the laments of the nightingale in the thickets of the Basque Country. Here as well, in a similar manner to Ileana Rodríguez' speech, as in many Central American places, women writers are able to re-sew, through literature, the fabric that unites women, guerrilla and love, without refusing to investigate what or who brings together the home, the garden and the fatherland. For centuries we have been at war for thousands of reasons, beginning with the conflicts between feudal warlords, followed by the Reform and the Counter-Reform, up to the struggles in favour and against our independence from the beginning of the 19th century until today. ETA has only just abandoned their arms. It may be the right time to make a new interpretation of our common literary past, using the scanner or the ultra-sound just like Leire Bilbao.

The pages of our books, whether written by men or women, are brimming with the lack of joy of bodies that are always mutilated, unappreciated, defenceless and muted. Each written word is charged with a terrible violence, as if the word itself were a corpse, a victim of cruelty. When poets and writers read their creations in public, there is an abundance of tragedies recited with subtlety, because we are too well educated. I believe that instead of applauding their skill we should break down in tears. But tears, like sperm and the moistness of a vagina dripping from the pleasure praised by Monique Wittig, are no more than shameful bodily secretion. The patriotic mystic, not to say nationalist, in the same way that drove previous generations, makes us endure the fourteen Stations of the Cross and condemns us to a daily mortification in the name of the Basque language and of being Basque. Whilst martyrs, prisoners and exiles are elevated to higher altars than those who live under the banner of a certain normality —what is an authentic model of normality?, this condition will always be a constituent part of our culture. What is more, our two neighbour states that we label as fierce enemies do not help to prevent us from feeling like victims.

The melody of Pier Pol Berzaitz' *Baratze bat nhai deizüt egin*, belonging to Muskidi's 1991 pastoral *Harispe*, is full of calm and emotion. Without doubt, during its three and a quarter minutes, this melody serenades, pacifies and warms profoundly our hearts in its representation of a garden in the terms of a paradisiacal land of salvation that we have never had. It takes us back to our childhood, to times where there were no wars or massacres, to memories of the

smell of incense that overwhelmed our breathing in churches on eve days, up to the entrails of a world disappeared long time ago, which is precisely towards the essence of our lost sincerity. Through the woman to whom he writes, Pier Paul Berzaitz, just like Carlos Mejía Godoy, speaks affectionately to the mournful people that he loves. Which is a rarity, a very seldom circumstance.

Here we have the final pages of Jon Mirande's *Haur besoetakoa*: Teresa goes to drown herself in the waves off the coast. Consequently, we are left with a difficulty for our interpretation, since the corpse disappears from the limits of the text. This is an important image for our understanding of Basque literature. We can't prevent ourselves from conceiving it as the corpse of the feminized nation, devastated by the anxious desire of men and the thrusts of the crowd. In an era of guerrilla warfare, like that which has threatened our people for nearly two centuries now, there is barely room for the woman unless she becomes masculinised and performs the man's role, taking part in an armed combat. When this happens, if she surrenders before their time, it is much worse. Here I use the assassination of Yoyes in 1986 in Ordizia Square as an example. Although belonging to different echelons, the corpses of Teresa and Yoyes can converge as a summary of the central concepts of action in the Basque world, because they respond to the general threat that may be implied in a seemingly forbidden kind of intimacy.

With few exceptions, women are the great absents of Basque literature. They are a defenceless black hole; an unexplored and uncharted continent. A corpse shaped by centuries of a violent Christianity; a source of sin and dishonour that is marginalised generations after generations, by those waiting to be educated. As Joeba Gabilondo accurately demonstrates in his study of women writers from the 1980s, the majority of female characters are represented as if in a photo's negative. They are always awaiting a husband, a man or a boyfriend that has fled. This also applies to the figure of the female zombie in Bernardo Atxaga's *Zeru horiek* (1995). After spending a great deal of her life behind bars, she wanders through the streets of Donostia and Barcelona. She is an alien to reality, marked out as a traitor, an utterly hopeless walking corpse. I enjoyed the 2005 feature film directed by Aizpea Goenaga because it perfectly captured the physical and intellectual solitude that, unlike men, women suffer from. To be a heroin one must die by enemy bullets. But up until now, who remembers ETA's women who were sacrificed? For example, Susana Arregi Maiztegi?

Language is also a corpse. It is often said that Basque is the mother tongue. At the end of the performance of which Maialen Lujanblo turned out to be the winner, she sang emotively —needless to say, words coming out of her mouth are more than just merely words— to

the group of women that play a role in the transmission of language: the grandmother, the mother, the daughter, the sister... Men are represented as forensic surgeons, ready to leave the corpse of language under the responsibility of women, just like Koldo Izaguirre in his interesting essay-collage *Autopsiarako frogak* (2010, Susa). We are given the chronicle of a death foretold by the stench of decomposition. At this point it is necessary to ask the following questions: how are we to write, how are we to live, how are we to survive when the language that we have at our disposal is no more than a corpse? When will the Basque language be granted the right to reinvent itself as an animated being? Perhaps it suits us to rediscover intimacy in its purest form, giving way to the many *self* that are hiding behind the oppressive pride of the *us*?

In the meantime, let us talk about the lead male in Basque novels. In Kirmen Uribe's successful novel, he roams in the ethereal atmosphere of an aeroplane *en route* to New York from Bilbao. In Iban Zaldúa's *Euskaldun guzton aberria*, he is a professor at the University of Anchorage in Alaska. In Ur Apalategi's short story collection *Fikzioaren izterrak* we encounter a similar protagonist. Closer to the present, we find him in Mikel Antza's prison hospitals or trying to make an inventory of the grief caused by a thousand cases of abandonment in Iñigo Aranbarn's *Zamaontzia*. These examples show how living great distances from Euskal Herria seems to bring about a better realization of the individual. There, in cosmopolitan foreign countries or in the anonymity of large or medium sized cities, characters are able to associate themselves with peace and quiet. They are able to forget their women-maids who are looking after their children back at home, even though it was these same women who accompanied them to the airport. On their return, men find them as faithful, silent and humble as when they left. If the woman used to be of value to relieve the guerrilla fighter, she is now the solace of the highflying elegant international professor. We must admit that the Basque writer is no longer the hungry wanderer or rusty priest of several decades ago. He has climbed the social ladder and this has evidently changed his perspective.

These characters have a tinted vision of the Basque Country: sometimes a land torn apart by strife is surrounded with nostalgia, since the ancestors who must be honoured belong to them. In the majority of cases, however, a sense of embarrassment mixed with provocation, scorn and irony prevails. Distance allows them to liberate themselves from the daily torpor. For this reason, they are unable to enjoy the young women they seduce and persuade to accompany them into bed for something other than sex: their experiences abroad are also empty, as though savouring intimacy beyond the borders of your native land was not permitted. This can be seen in the case of Iban Zaldúa's Joseba Anabitarte. In the literature written in Basque,

both by women and men, there seems to be a great incapacity to write about sex. It almost appears as though we do not have the words to depict intimacy or as if we are afraid of them. In many novels, as we are made to wait for the sexual encounter, we often end up suspecting that it will never take place —is there such a thing as orgasmic peace?— with our nation devastated, because we have lost all contact with it.

In Iban Zaldúa's book and in the stories contained in Beatriz Urruspil's *Gizaki Bakartiak*, the fear of homosexuality emerges: the girl who refuses to sleep with Joseba Anabitarte seems to be a lesbian and Beatriz Urruspil's solitary feminine figures fear that they will be badly judged by men, that is to say, that men will think they are lesbians or label them as *gouine* because they are used to spending time on their own. Which is an astonishing thinking, for society in Euskal Herria is organized and displayed homosocially, affecting equally men and women. Indeed, since childhood everything is organized according to gender difference: squads, teams, cells etc. This is a phobia that effectively puts into doubt the logic of the compulsive heterosexuality.

We already know that there is not such a thing as a literature that is specific to women, but only one written from the perspective of women. If what is considered as universal literature is men's literature, then woman's literature, just like lesbian literature, is minority literature, as it is magnificently explained by Wittig. For many centuries, we have listened to one voice only: that of men, priests, and leaders. We are well aware that in this regard, the fertile land of the literary production in Basque language has become more pluralized. The incorporation of new voices in our choir has led us to consider the current situation in a new light. Nevertheless, women writers remain in their place, which is the bedroom, kitchen, or garden. They have not been able to enter into universality without totally masculinising their speech and interests. They seem condemned to preserve the corpse, to endlessly grow feminine elements of culture: sweetness, maternity, and seduction, among others. Yet, they are unable to confront the implicit violence charged in each of these elements. When writing about the worlds of work, politics, and armed struggle—which continue to be in the hands of men— women writers come up against difficulties worthy of mention. And this is the crux of the matter.

We have chosen several books published in the last few decades in order to develop this poetic-political study. All these women writers are creative and have created a fertile trajectory for themselves. They are Leire Bilbao's *Ezkatak* and *Scanner*, Miren Agur Meabe's *Larruaren Kodea* and *Bitsa Eskuetan*, and Ana Ukriza's poetry collection *Bazterreko Ahotsak*; and, among short story writers,

Katixa Agirre's *Habitat*, Gizaki Bakartiak by the *donapauleterra* writer Beatriz Urruspil, and Eider Rodríguez' *Katu hendea*, which like Jasone Osoro's work *Bi marra arrosa* can be read as a journalistic report. It could be objected that this is an excessively restricted study, yet I believe that it also provides us with an analysis of our preoccupations regarding femininity. It also enables us to determine the fields that men and women establish mutually, well beyond the painful verse «*nagoen lekuan irauten irakatsi didate*», repeated by Leire Bilbao in her poem.

After the rich and transgressive generation of writers such as Marijan Minaberri, Amaia Lasa, Arantxa Urretabizkaia, and Laura Mintegi, these writers have come to prominence loaded with experience and knowledge, using language to scream out loud the circumstances of the lonesome Basque woman. They do not fear their body or what might be said of them. They leave evidence, with great clarity, about the details of their everyday life: menstruations, abandonment, the available options to be a mother... They create an abyss between their work and their personality, a recoverable distance that is beneficial for literature. It may be that they are producing *self-fiction*, but it is also a turning point from which readers can ask themselves about what is beyond this bare explanation of intimacy: what are they referring to when they mention the moistness of the vagina? Is the body, particularly that of women, perhaps a metaphor for our nation or our territory? When we shed tears for deceased mothers, are we in fact mourning for our decaying nation? When I let myself lose in the words of these writers, their demands make me shudder.

It seems to me that Basque women's writing of the twentieth century was more firmly rooted in the nation. The surroundings and the countryside were more prominent or at least they were more imaginable throughout our reading. In the rural surroundings, the roles of a woman were more clearly defined, her body would not be mentioned, it seemed as though it didn't even exist. They were mothers and haughty housewives; young women who would educate themselves before marriage by reading priest Pierre Narbaitz' work *Kattalinen gogoetakv* (1955); spinsters who dared to barter in the songs of Elizanburu. Growing grey hair and ageing saved women. Older women no longer appear in the pages of today's writers. This is a space that could be filled by Arantxa Urretabizkaia's novel *Hiru Mariak*, where the symbolic fraternity of the rural setting and the continuity of life are updated beyond widowhood. The female characters of that period would accept to a certain extent the weight of man's absence: he had gone to war, was a smuggler, or spent his evenings with friends in the bar. Changes due to urbanization resulting of industrialization did not greatly alter the situation, since rural and urban customs were at one in a fragile equilibrium. Beatriz Urruspil's young girls and women, who live between the *baserri* and the city,

already experience a solitude that is trapping them. In Iparralde, as in Hegoalde, society has begun a process of disintegration, of soliloquy and globalization that throws the boundaries between genders into doubt.

Although the planet's sensitivity is feminine, the reaffirmation of the national patriotic concept has masculinised Basque society to the extent that it completely excludes women. Only men are shown in newspaper headlines. As the famous saying goes, when we are dealing with matters of importance, men always have the last word. They are the compulsory example, the model, and any woman, even if she happens to be a writer, is restricted in the majority of cases to the role of the trophy wife. In today's neoliberal life, when only money is free, masculinisation has strengthened since 1968 up until today, questioning the rights earned after the bitter struggle of feminism. It is not easy to be a woman of whatever class when men's violence incessantly stands up above against children and women in the work place, in the politics, in the mass media, in the sport world or even in their own homes.

Women, just like the immigrant or the lumpenproletariat, figure as one of the most widely recognised losers of neoliberalism. They have been sacrificed in the altar of productivism that oppresses body, thinking, class, and gender. What has been imposed is the folklore of femininity, as it has been demonstrated by the Nicaraguan Ileana Rodríguez: it is expected for women to cultivate beauty, tenderness, silence and humility. And the same is expected from women characters. We do not know a women serial killer. The figure of the character Lur, whose enterprise is murder and who was adapted by Uxue Apaolaza for her novel *Mea Culpa*, can be positioned along with Jennifer Tilly and Gina Gershon's interpretations in the film *Bound* (1996) directed by the Wachowski brothers.

Poetry «está muerta pero no he sido yo», wrote Sarrionaindia in 1991 in one of his poems written when he was incarcerated. Since then, we have allowed ourselves to be blinded by it, as if —according to what is said— the most valuable sons of our nation are stuck behind bars or in exile, as we are not allowed to enjoy the pleasure of living. What is more, the hedgehog that knew no more than 27 words was crushed after coming stuck in the headlights of Atxaga's car. Coming out to the open roads and squares has become difficult, since everybody freezes at the danger of death. We find ourselves in front of what seems like a *tabula rasa*: *Etiopia* was devastated in the hardest part of the struggle, and *Harrizko Herri Hau* was despatched by stormy northwest wind after stormy northwest wind. When we find ourselves lost, women writers can show us the path, by placing intimacy before our gaze, so that what is now a corpse can finally become pleasurable. Women, who are asked to secure the future by

carrying the Basque language, have also known for centuries how to reorganize this chaos, how to live with the direction when in despair, and how to administer care to the most painful of wounds.

Here and there an idea that I have heard on more than one occasion is consolidating itself: feminization has brought about the divulgation of a domesticated version of Basque poetry. Perhaps this is because there is an abundance of domestic topics. That is to say: women's matters. We are far, therefore, from the biblical tone of Aresti's verses or from the Rimbaudian refuges of the *new a, e, i, o, u* that Amaia Lasa defended towards the end of the sixties. Now it is all about minutia, about domesticity of home life, bedroom matters, roles of women, children and, of course bodies. Our young poets are also taking this path, which was once opened by women, or we must consider that at least Iñigo Astiz Astiz's *Infinitua dastatzeko* and Jon Benito's *Autorretratu gaurkotua* are doing it. Intimacy is the only pocket of resistance yet to be occupied, particularly in Basque language. Some deal with it using tenderness, others using irony and sarcasm. Intimacy represents a chaotic environment that women writers have been able to make their own and consolidate word by word.

In an article published in *Berria* newspaper in December 2010, critic Iban Zaldúa defended the need for a manly literature written in Basque, that is, a more macho one. The goal seems to distance the reader from voyeuristic tendencies as well as from wet representations of intimacy. He pointed out the problem with a doubtless provocation: the emergence of the new wave of gay and women writers challenges the role of man, the value, and the gender differences established by tradition. The professor in Joseba Anabitarte's novel *Euskaldun guztion aberria* is in Alaska conjuring up a fantastic-phantasmic vision of Euskal Herria. Whilst emulating Don Juan the womaniser, Joseba Anabitarte, the manliest of men, is worried by doubts of his sexuality. So much so that he refuses to recognise this himself. These doubts referring to his sexual preference are as embarrassing for him as his other personality traits. He makes the return journey home to be with his wife whom he guards as a captive through marriage. Security is based upon a weariness of intimacy.

On the other hand, the intimacy found in the texts by the women writers that we have selected is terrifying. In every piece of writing and poem we encounter elements deriving from thriller. These represent sneak previews of a future that does not branch out beyond the vagina. Home, bedroom, garden, and of course, the nation are all scenes of fear. Intimacy breaks out in the face of the reader page by page and word for word. As she finds herself marginalized from public life and social relations, a woman has few escape clauses, yet her literature continues to saturate the market. With few exceptions, it is almost as if it were a reflection of the permanent marginalization

of women in society. Women, who are equally neglected by men and political discourses, more often than not appear in stories and poems playing the role of the *mulier dolorosa*. Both the Marxist ideology of the past and today's neoliberalism favour the masculine: action, victory, strength, and economic domination. In sports, like in no other field, this phenomenon is manifested with great clarity. The American physicist and novelist, Josh Bazell, claims that we do not tolerate either physical or mental weakness and it is because of this that we so much cherish the champion and the athlete, despite the current twisted nature of sport because of recent doping scandals. We scoff at feminine values and admire those who pride themselves on violence, be it genuine or subliminal. Intellectuals are hated as if they were nothing but useless extensions of the feminine in this era of *bling bling*.

Home for today's Basque woman writer is no longer the rural hamlet, even if it often is her second residence. After half a century of different conflicts, our society has become completely urbanized, its habitat has changed, and to a certain extent, civilization has taken the lead over barbarism. It could be said that the elements are there to build a nation whose existence at this time is only a reality on paper: territorial boundaries have been established and a literary market suitable for the European standards has been created by a cultivated elite, ready to culturally conquer the world. The characters created by Kirmen Uribe, Ur Apalategi, and Iban Zaldúa have made the leap, leaving their women to wither amongst the pots and pans in their kitchens. Other writers gnaw away at our nation's evils — the Civil War, ETA activity, social conflicts— in works where female characters hardly appear. In any case, the standard family model —fathers, brothers, and husbands, which was considered the origin of law and the symbol of the nation, has come undone in the last few decades. Women writers bring us close to a melancholic memory of the past that is neither idealized nor alienated.

In this regard, Miren Agur Meabe's long poem «Hobia» from her collection *Bitsa eskuetan* (2010) is hair-raising. The poet elaborates a brief biography of her dead mother and in doing so, for the first time in her life she is able to pinpoint her story in the first person. At the same time she pays homage to a generation that is disappearing. It has been long since what Miren Agur Meabe writes about became an absolute past.

Poets of the new generations feel the urge to define themselves again, by naming the body, establishing the sources of pleasure and pain, and stripping language down to the bottom of intimacy. To a certain extent, both men and women already find themselves on the same path because man knows that he belongs to a greater group. Jon Benito asserts in the final poem of his collection *Bulkadak*: «no

es más que mi historia y tampoco es sólo mía». On the other hand, as soon as they are named, women begin to function as somebody capable of crudely appreciating the lack of the *phallus*. They do not use the bodily fundamental to convey the universal, except whilst in the service of man who gives form to the universal —particularly in French, in the grammar classes of scorn, since childhood we have been taught that «el masculino lleva implícito el femenino». Women find themselves in the service of man when they dream of transforming into a man in order to be included in the world of careers, battlefields, and disputes. This is the symbolic *phallus*.

Having intimacy as their core axis, it seems as if one of the hidden plans of women writers is the deconstruction of the fatherland model, so that they can offer the reader a new foundation upon which a new nation can be built. According to Ileana Rodríguez, literature is the place where discursive theories of historical processes are formed, where nostalgia, melancholy, and contemplation are legitimized without *pathos* or a severe logic. Characters hold up a conversation with absent interlocutors, the silenced voices, the ones that have lost their voices, the massacred bodies. They talk with the others that are the masses or the women who criss-cross the country's history, from the refuge of a solitary individual who is wearing nothing but pyjamas. In Katixa Agirre's short story «Pijama Festa» there are pyjamas that are the same as those mentioned in the poems of Castillo Suárez, or that can be found in Amaia Iturbide's last collection of poems. It seems as if (Basque) women do not wish to leave the house or bedroom again, as a form of demonstrating their discontent with society, a non-violent bed-in that recalls Yoko Ono and John Lennon's in 1969 in Montreal and Amsterdam in response to the Vietnam War. Our fatherland spans within the limits of a bed.

Since woman's sexuality is denied in literature, language is unable to express sex without condemning it, without fleeing from the oppressive clutch of the scrawny *phallus* and liberating itself from solitude, with the purpose of founding a new way of life through maternity. Throughout the last years, there have been two or three works explaining word by word the paths of maternity: Jasone Osoro and Arantza Iturbe, amongst others, have written about pregnant women, the roundness of their tummies, their dreams and doubts, the blood and screams of labour, all the stages of pregnancy. Their books are interesting because they show maternity as a fundamental and voluntary act, which confirms the traditional role of the woman yet they speak as crudely as they do admirably of this physiological process that is universal but at the same time censored.

The topic of relationships represented from women's point of view lacks room in Basque literature in general, and its pornographic absence is never mentioned. The fatherland and the language are

presumed injured or dead. In Gabriel Aresti's inflammatory poem "Nire aitaren etxea" what the enemy tears to pieces is supposedly the body of a woman, the fatherland that before its future horrible suffering has become feminized once and for all. Man finds himself at her side, to narrate that which is happening: he is a witness, not a saviour. The will to make use of this intimacy that populates the books written by women provides a contrast, which on occasions becomes repletion. This intimacy is active and loquacious; it speaks of the bare skin of the neglected body, and of the lineage of women who come one after another, from mothers to daughters, perpetual silence. It would seem that all of these works are published to prevent a plot that seeks to sacrifice women. In this way, intimacy raises itself in front of us page by page as an act of resistance stifled by longing, fear, blood, and desire.

We can perceive this fear in both Katixa Agirre and Eider Rodríguez's stories. They both masterfully show the foul and prison-like atmosphere that is found within the limits of home. Under these conditions, there are no suicides and no crimes are committed, as we see in Katixa Agirre's story «Jaun eta jabe», in which a character peels an onion with a knife in her hand... The mortal anguish of kitchens and ship cabins cannot be related to anybody and this is the most important component of solitude: the two girlfriends, who take part in the pyjamas game, do not share their intimate truths. The woman stays within herself, she monologues, completely abandoned not only by everybody else and but also by herself, being unaware of what to do with the desire that she feels for a man who is just as out of the picture as she is, and with literature as the safest way to reflect her situation. Basque literature creates ghostlike characters. Sometimes it reflects our reality(ies).

Leire Bilbao's poems in her collection *Scanner* demonstrate how writers are able to make use of scientific advancements to rediscover the self lost as a result of the taboo of masculine conflict. The scanner does not lie. In this way Leire Bilbao seeks to remember her mother and father so that she can establish the basis of her personality exactly as she was in the moment that she was conceived, «inork ez (bait)digu esaten hiltegiak dauzkagula zain». The meaning of life is woven with a morbid intimacy and it is because of the lack of any meaning that the poet seeks to create. An individual's intimacy, therefore, can be a wake-up call, especially if it breaks out in the face of the reader. Women writers compose brief and rounded discourses, which are at the same time distant and close to the universal, in the hope that someone will be able to break the vicious circle. This is in spite of the fact that there is no masculine self that has responded to women writers by filling their pages with universal neutrality. Quite the opposite, there is some sort of muted terror that forces silence of spaces, opinions, geographic locations and languages. Legitimacy is

afforded to intimacy, in a way that it becomes the only space where the poet can come to terms with and dare to deal with the general.

In conclusion, we can say that the use of intimacy by female Basque writers is still a resource that allows them to make their voices heard from their marginalized positions. It is a resource that has allowed us to embark on a beautiful and emotive journey. The desire for heterogeneous literatures that speak of orifices, arseholes, clitorises, and vaginas, in other words the bodies that have not been sacrificed at the altar of our fatherland. Yet, these bodies are as unstable as they are warm when compared with those mouths that try to vindicate themselves, those feet that march or those raised fists. One day, when we have finally assigned to the fatherland the characteristics of neutralized genders, perhaps we will realize that these characteristics complement each other and that they both speak of the crisis that supports the feminized nation. The works of female Basque writers is a no women's land, which is a product of centuries of *marasmus masculinus*, the vigorous desire to save the environment from exploitation that would offer us a potential growth in intimacy.

The diverse ideologies that mingle in the Basque Country — Jansenism, armed struggle, and today's neoliberal commercial beast— afford little space women. Many women from our mothers' generation left their hamlets to work as maids in Paris or Bordeaux, in order to earn money of course, but also to lead a freer life: with fewer prohibitions and more opportunities to enjoy themselves. The writers that nourish their texts with this visible intimacy are the daughters of the maids of that era. They bring transgression and revolution to our gardens, homes, kitchens, and bedrooms, using the resources of poems and stories, and the weaponry of words and grammar, without feeling any necessity to distance themselves from our nation. They speak of the body and this body symbolizes our nation in crisis, perhaps the whole world. The miraculous vagina of Courbet's *L'origine du monde* painted in 1886 is still the only way that we can understand the crux of the matter.

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