

# SOLITUDE IN THE WORK OF ITXARO BORDA

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**Abstract** || Solitude is one of the most obvious subjects in Itxaro Borda's works. Since it is a complex theme that takes different forms in her writings, we will first situate the notion in Western literature, in order to better understand the basis of Itxaro Borda's modernity. Then, we will study the different and paradoxical aspects of solitude in the author's books, and underline which problems related to expression are linked to that subject. Finally, following our thoughts about solitude in Itxaro Borda's universe, we will compare the writer's poetical and prosodic works, so as to underline where, in our opinion, lies the great audacity and modernity of her novels.

**Keywords** || Solitude | Itxaro Borda | Modernity | Novel | Poetry | Paradox.

*It is possible to be alone and not to be alone at the same moment.*  
P. Auster  
*The Invention of Solitude*, 2005

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## NOTES

1 | Itxaro Borda writes a review of this book in the article “Jump!” (Borda, 2007c: 22).

2 | This attitude coincides with the current critical reflections in the “Modernités” research lab of University Michel de Montaigne in Bordeaux. Based on the study of contradictions, aporias, and paradoxes in contemporary literature, particularly within poetic and narrative works written in the first person, it asks to what extent the usual critical methods can be avoided. See the collection *Apories, paradoxes et autocontradictions: la littérature et l'impossible* that will be published by the Presses Universitaires de Burdeos in December 2013.

## 0. Introduction

Solitude is one of the themes that recur most often in Itxaro Borda's poetry, novels and narrative texts. She herself confessed as much to Ana Urkiza: “bakartasuna da gehien galdezkatzen dudana alorra” (the area of solitude is the one I question most) (Borda, 2006: 299). Solitude is, in itself, a significantly diverse concept; at times it is cause for delight and at other times, despair. Just as Octavio Paz expressed, it is a “labyrinthine” concept (Paz, 1959)<sup>1</sup>, given that it can integrate notions such as contemplation, meditation, enlightenment, inner peace, egotistical happiness, and yet can also mean exclusion, marginalisation, exile, introversion, solipsism, insanity, misanthropy, paranoia, schizophrenia, inequality, and abnormality. It is, therefore, a very broad theme, and the fact of its being a much-studied element in the work of Itxaro Borda indicates that it might require several interpretations. In this study we shall propose a personal reflection on the solitude in Borda's work: we shall intentionally delimit our exposition regarding its philological value and restrict ourselves to the literary perception that as readers we have of the same, while remaining aware of the numerous reflections Itxaro Borda's writing can generate, particularly if we make direct reference to the critical traditions that address psychoanalysis, feminism, poststructuralism and postmarxism<sup>2</sup>. In the first place we shall try to identify the form and the characteristics of the solitude as it appears in Itxaro Borda's books. We shall then make the argument that solitude can be interpreted in a very innovative way, in both Borda's narrative texts and her poetry, particularly if we consider Amaia Ezpeldoiz's escapades. However, the ultimate objective of this work is to show that the solitude in Borda's poetry is lyrically presented as both an internal experience and the author's personal recollection, directly recognisable and, therefore, clearly sharable in a collective and supportive manner. Conversely, we believe that since the solitude projected in the narratives, and particularly in the novels, is transmitted through prose and it cannot be sung, it can only be communicated in an indirect manner. As such it is consequently not aimed at a group of readers, but instead, ultimately and paradoxically – following the path marked out by contemporary authors who cannot and do not wish to sing – just as Maurice Blanchot emphasised, it is directed at solitary readers who, via a fragile “amistad”, create “comunidades intangibles” (Blanchot, 1971; 1983). In other words, it seems to us that Itxaro Borda's poems provide the reader with a kind of collective salvation, and it is clear that Basques and Basque speakers would only access salvation if it is this sort of collective salvation; whereas her novels, which certainly envisage ruin for the Basque community

and Basque speakers, will contrarily turn out to be a salvation for the solitary reader, shattering and liberating his own indivisible personal life.

## 1. Certain Remarks

### 1. 1. Solitude in Literature, synonymous with Modernity

It seems crucial at this point to recall certain historical notes in order to place the solitude presented in Itxaro Borda's work in perspective, so as to be able to understand and locate it better within the field of modern literature.

Just as Dominique Rabaté shows in his introduction to the collection *L'invention du solitaire* (Rabaté, 2003: 7-21), solitude – whether that of the lyric voice of poetry itself, of the narrator or narrative characters, or of the writer herself – is one of the most distinctive characteristics of modern literature. The majority of contemporary works available to us make some reference to solitude. Thus, for example, in the letter Kafka wrote to Felice:

Tu m'as écrit un jour que tu voudrais être assise auprès de moi tandis que je travaille; figure-toi, dans ces conditions je ne pourrais pas travailler (même autrement je ne peux déjà pas beaucoup), mais là alors je ne pourrais plus du tout travailler. Car écrire signifie s'ouvrir jusqu'à la démesure; l'effusion du cœur et le don de soi le plus extrêmes [...]. C'est pourquoi on n'est jamais assez seul lorsqu'on écrit, c'est pourquoi lorsqu'on écrit il n'y a jamais assez de silence autour de vous, la nuit est encore trop peu la nuit. [...] J'ai souvent pensé que la meilleure façon de vivre pour moi serait de m'installer avec une lampe et ce qu'il faut pour écrire au cœur d'une vaste cave isolée [...] Que n'écrirais-je pas alors ! De quelles profondeurs ne saurais-je pas le tirer! (Kafka, 1972: 282).

The following is from the essay Samuel Beckett wrote about Marcel Proust: "La pulsion artistique ne va pas dans le sens d'une expansion mais d'une contraction. L'art est l'apothéose de la solitude" (Beckett, 1990: 75). Paul Auster entitled his first book *The Invention of Solitude* in 1982. And the French author Emmanuel Hocquard recounts the following in relation to the term *solitude*:

Avant de désigner un fléau social à la mode, le mot a été (et demeure) un des grands fléaux poétiques. Un de ces mots qu'il faut retirer du langage et donner à décrasser avant de le remettre en circulation. Gilles Deleuze, par exemple, s'y emploie quand il dit que son rôle de professeur a été d'apprendre aux étudiants (en quête de communication parce qu'ils se sentent seuls) qu'ils doivent être heureux de leur solitude. Qu'ils ne peuvent rien faire qu'en fonction de leur solitude. «Ça c'était mon rôle de professeur, les réconcilier avec leur solitude» (Hocquard, 2001: 411).

It can be concluded then that solitude is one of the great issues to concern writers, and Itxaro Borda processes it in this way throughout

her work (“decrasser” as Hocquard puts it).

We must note that according to Dominique Rabaté’s aforementioned text (Rabaté, 2003: 7-21), the origin and evolution of this literary theme was inextricably tied to the history of individualism. Examining the origin of the word *solitarius*, it can be observed that it dates back to religious terminology: in the XII<sup>th</sup> century, *solitarius* referred to an individual who, after fleeing the multitude, withdrew to a solitary place (usually the desert) to prepare for spiritual salvation. Therefore we can say that, fundamentally, the solitary person is a misanthropic and melancholic being who considers that human relations are a path to ruin and, as though he were an exceptional person, searches out the happiness prior to the fall of Adam and Eve (see the classical works: Montaigne’s *Essais*, Pascal’s *Pensées*, La Bruyère’s *Caractères*). In a much more profane manner, Descartes in his renowned *Discours de la méthode* demonstrated that in order to achieve true wisdom, that is, in order to attain intellectual salvation, it is necessary to experience radical isolation.

During the Age of Enlightenment, the century of sociability par excellence, the notion of solitude became tarnished by a negative connotation: *La Enciclopedia* energetically condemned the vacuity of friars and nuns; and Diderot, in his novel *La Religieuse*, spread the idea that solitude was synonymous with abnormality and moral disturbance. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, through his writing, initially responded to Diderot by inventing a *Social Contract* that would respect the individual, and subsequently, by distancing himself from society as a result of his paranoid delusions, modelling an art to live (*Les Confessions*, *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*). Similarly to Immanuel Kant, in the works mentioned Rousseau wanted to demonstrate that the individual must be lead first and foremost by his conscience, disobeying the laws imposed by society. Thus modern individualism was born. From this point, through the radicalisation of Rousseau’s ideas, the Romantics began to extol solitude and push for differentiation between society and personal development as measurement of History. Later on, Baudelaire recreated the image of the solitary poet in great cities, lost in anonymity amidst the masses, yet paradoxically capable of communicating with other human beings. Solitude then became linked with depersonalisation in the works of Baudelaire’s followers<sup>3</sup>. Borrowing from the title of Dostoevsky’s well-known work, it was then that the ‘underground monologue’ spread, as a symbol that solitude cannot be shared with other beings. Finally, within contemporary literature, solitude lies trapped by various contradictions: the individual as such realises the singularity of his personality, but is simultaneously conscious that he cannot live removed from the herd. In other words, individuals are presented to us as monads (beings without windows or doors), but even so, we are conscious that this solitude exists precisely in relation

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3 | Ixaro Borda looks for this depersonalisation that characterises modernity, so masterfully explained by Hugo Friedrich in his book *Structure de la poésie moderne* (Friedrich, 1999) : “Nahi nuke beste gauza batetan ere sinetsi: norberak bere burua ezabatzeraino idatzi ahal izatea. Ni, lehen pertsona erabiliagatik, ez hor izatea pertsona bakun gisa, ni hori hor izatea ni izanez eta gu izanez aldi berean, gu orain, gu atzo, gu bihar” (Borda, 2010). See, also, the interesting discourse made by Jean-Christophe Bailly on this theme in the text “L’action solitaire du poème” : “Au moment t du commencement du poème, il n’y a rien, mais ce goulot d’étranglement n’est pas un filtre par où s’écoule un sujet qui se rêve, c’est un bief par lequel le monde entre” (Bailly, 2011: 18).

to other individuals. An 'I' is not only a differentiated being, it can also gather other personalities within it ("I is another", Rimbaud wrote), or it is possible to live in other 'I's through literature. Irrespective of whether we wish it so, the solitude of the individual is connected to the solitude of those who are similar and, at the same time, different to him. So then, solitude arises in contemporary literature as something plural and paradoxical, and provides an outlet for a series of plural voices in modern works, a multiplication of voices and sounds through different paradigms.

On the other hand, when solitude emerged as an important literary theme in Rousseau's work at the same time as individualism, the following preoccupation inevitably arose, which to this day has not been resolved and can be considered a basic characteristic of literary modernism: how to express the personal and differential 'I' through words belonging to the multitude? How to express one's own individuality through the faded speech and expressions imposed by past generations? All these questions posed by Rousseau have been asked by great contemporary authors, especially post World War II authors, and in particular and with more perseverance, by those from Germany and Austria. And from this very inquisitiveness comes the image of the shunned and exiled writer from the XIX<sup>th</sup> century up to the present day. In conclusion, and increasingly frequently, texts which have a greater personal charge are not written so as to be communicated in an instantaneous manner, but rather, as Stendhal declared at the end of *La Chartreuse de Parme*, they are published for some 'happy few' who will come to understand them at some later date.

## 1. 2. Multiple forms of solitude in the work of Ixaro Borda

In this modern society of ours, and following Diderot's line of thought, solitude is conceived of as an illness, and similarly, solitary individuals are seen as sensitive and bitter. In the case of Ixaro Borda, this bitter aspect of solitude appears often, both in the literary stance of the writer herself as in the characters of her novels or in the lyrical voice of her poems. However, it is undeniable that Borda is a marginal writer, a fact that is evident within the context of universal literature (given that she writes in Basque), but also within Basque literature. In the Basque literary system as well as in the literary subsystem of the Northern Basque Country, she is a marginal<sup>4</sup> author precisely because she is a woman (and not a man), she does not have a university education in literature (she studied history), she is not an academic, she does not have a terribly satisfactory career (she has an ordinary job in a post office), she is from the Northern Basque Country (and consequently, she is distanced from the literary circles of the Southern Basque Country), and she has a very reduced readership in the Northern Basque Country. On the other hand, the

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4 | See the following article by Ur Apalategi in reference to this theme: "Iparraldeko azken aldiko literatura euskal literatur sistemaren argitan (eta vice versa)" (Apalategi, 2005: 9-21).

themes Itxaro Borda tackles in her books are very anticonformist and provocative (homosexuality in women; work; family; criticism of our coded, standardised and standardising society; as well as anti-capitalism and anti-consumerism; ridiculing of the notion of *Euskaldun fededun* (Basque, Catholic); irony/taunting/sarcasm regarding Basque institutions, nationalists, and in general towards those who defend a 'pure' Basque or a 'standard Basque based in the Gipuzkoan dialect'<sup>5</sup>; ridicule of those who wish to impose at all costs an ethnocentric and consecrated image of the Basque Country etc.), thereby provoking feelings of aversion and marginalisation in a great number of readers. Consequently, the characters and narrative or lyrical voice in Borda's works are often orphans, exiled in their homeland from a moral, social and linguistic point of view, misanthropic, melancholic and filled with doubts: on the one hand of marginal faith and ideology, and, on the other, of unconfirmed geographical, national, political, social, psychological, sexual and linguistic personality (often they have paradoxical, double or multiple personalities). For this reason they are presented as unwanted by our society, which feels safe with a singular way of thinking, unpardonable, despised, rejected and injured. "Halatan, aitor dut, bakartia, bakartua, sekula ez barkatua sentitzen naizela", says the narrative voice of *%100 Basque* (Borda, 2001b: 77). Thus the author reveals that her solitude is obligatory, given that it is caused by the prejudices and hostility of the herd.

Nevertheless, this theme of solitude that recurs so frequently in Itxaro Borda's work does not always appear as a negative and painful feeling. In the footsteps of Rousseau and the Romantics, the attitude of the writer can be interpreted as a vindication. Thus, Borda remains deliberately outside the literary circles: "periferia horretarik idazten dut, idazleetan ere periferikoa naizelako. Baina hori da neure nahia" (Borda, 2007d). She continues to work part time at a post office so as not to lose touch with reality and to anchor her literary works more firmly in the severity of life. On the other hand, by keeping herself on the margin she allows herself the freedom to write whatever she wants to in the way she wants to, unlike those authors who strive to maintain a good standing in this conformist society, thereby silencing and impairing their literary work. This choice of freedom, aside from the social sacrifices it entails, implies a great privilege for the writer ("a gift" says the same Itxaro Borda – Borda, 2012c-), given that she writes without frustration about those themes that are of interest to her, playing with literary genres as she sees fit and cultivating her interior universe and style away from all social and academic models<sup>6</sup>. Even then, though, the solitude of the writer is not of great lyricism like the heroic solitude of the Romantics: it is based on depersonalization and anonymity and, as Maurice Blanchot related, the search for "la soledad esencial" is an essential modern requirement to access the "espacio literario" (Blanchot, 1955). And in his way, Mallarmé, the

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5 | This is what Itxaro Borda related to Ana Urkiza: "Eta egunen batean eginen bada zinezko batua, ez gipuzkeraz egindako batua, baizik eta denentzat baliagarria dena, Amaia Ezpeldoiren liburuan agertzen den horren itxura handia izanen lukeela iruditzen zait. Gertatzen dena da, ez dela egiazko batua egin nahi" (Borda, 2006: 313).

6 | See also the following words of Itxaro Borda: "Periferiako idazle izateak erran nahi du, batetik, literatur zurrumbilo horren erdian ez izatea, ziklonaren begian ez izatea. Beraz, libertate gehiago ukaitea gaiekin, hizkuntzarekin eta gure harreman eta iritzi politikoeekin. Baditu abantailak" (Borda, 2010).

main begetter of modern poetry, wrote the following: “Mesdames et Messieurs, sait-on ce que c’est qu’écrire? Une ancienne et très vague mais jalouse pratique, dont gît le sens au mystère du cœur. Qui l’accomplit, intégralement, se retranche” (Mallarmé, 1945: 481). So we can state that in the same manner as a series of modern writers, Itxaro Borda is “una escritora sin casamientos” (Bertrand, 1996) and that this very solitude is what marks her specificity.

It must also be pointed out that the misanthropy conveyed by the voice and the characters is superficial. These characters often feel affection and startling compassion towards others, despite which this humanism turns out to be paradoxical. This is basically what Borda says of Amaia Ezpeldoiz: “Oro har, oso humanoa da bere itzal eta argiekin” (Borda, 2007*d*)<sup>7</sup>. So by only maintaining superficial relations, Itxaro Borda’s frivolous, nomadic and volatile characters are better equipped to bear the vital social necessity towards others; in lacking clarification themselves on intimate sentiments, as much their own as other people’s, they perceive the full extent of the pain, obsessions, hatred, frustrations, and anxiety of others in the same harsh manner with which it manifests in themselves. But it is particularly within these superficial intense relations that these characters coincide and involuntarily share their existential solitudes. So these superficial relations are the nexus linking the solitude of all people, thereby creating ‘sympathy’ in the bosom of the narrator and reader towards others (in the original sense of ‘compassion’ and ‘sharing of pain’). Therefore, solitude in Borda’s characters arises in a transitory and inseparable manner. In general terms it is apparent that the personalities of these modern characters are completely confused, schizophrenic, and paradoxical: they speak a creolized language, they believe in conflicting socio-political principles, they are bisexual (at least), they are semi-street, semi-domestic, etc. So then the solitude of the characters in Borda’s novels is not similar to that of a hermit; rather, it seems to be a solitude that is altered, and social in an unusual way, given that it is unaffected by the influence of the solitude that other human beings experience. Consequently, in an analysis of the superfluous relations maintained by the characters of Borda’s novels, it can be concluded that these protagonists are, in essence, more philanthropic than misanthropic, although this philanthropy appears in the form of “un amor sin esperanza” (Borda, 2006: 290).

### 1. 3. Bakartasuna eta hizkuntza

Solitude is, therefore, a complex and paradoxical notion in Itxaro Borda’s works. At times it is a painful expression of rejection, and paradoxically, at others is a touching sign of social attitude. The repercussions to this contradiction lie in the style of writing. The reason is that, on the one hand, and in order to express her own solitude,

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7 | The paradoxical solitude reflected in Borda’s work (simultaneously forced and freely chosen, misanthropic and social) works well in the role of detective. However, the most solitary protagonists are found in the crime novels, first and foremost the criminal and the detective (See Rabaté, 2003: 379-394). Amaia Ezpeldoiz may be, then, the most emblematic of the solitary characters who are full of contradictions.

the author wishes to demonstrate, through her writing, that she does not accept the language of a coded and exclusive society, that is, the language of the faithful Basques, of nationalisms packed with ideological and ethnocentric slogans<sup>8</sup>, of a passive, liberal, capitalist, consumerist, uniform, and homophobic society full of clichés, nor that of ‘purist’ linguists or of those who defend a ‘standard Basque of Gipuzkoan dialect’ which is finding a foothold. What a challenge to invent a new language for an author who, in her solitude, feels so different! But, on the other hand, she wants in turn to communicate that, ultimately, an isolated solitude does not exist, given that every human being (be they anticonformists, faithful Basques, speakers of Gipuzkoan dialect, nationalists or capitalists) lives his or her solitude in a similar way, able to share it in an involuntary and moving manner through superficial, intense relations. In order to achieve this objective, it is then imperative that the author make use of well-worn words belonging to everyone, given that these are the only ones capable of transmitting the very existential solitudes specific to human beings. Consequently, the writer finds herself faced with this modern paradox: the desire to reproduce a new language to express her specificity and individual differentiation; and, simultaneously, the need to make use of speech common to all in order to communicate the idea that incoherent individual solitude is socially shareable.

In response to this challenge, Itxaro Borda cultivates a linguistic and stylistic plurality in her books. As much from one book to the next as within the same book, she makes use of different dialects of the Basque language or, as is the case in *Amorezko Pena Baño*, she proposes an innovative Basque ‘dialect’. She introduces non-Basque vocabulary and expressions in her works, and increasingly resorts to self-translation. On the other hand, if we analyse the narrative and poetic voices, we can perceive that they are always plural (schizophrenic): converging in each of them there are irony and compassion, happiness and sorrow, hope and resignation, the capacity to enjoy the moment as well as melancholy, which always lead to paradoxes and contradictions. Finally, we can assert that the sphere of literary references in Borda’s work is also plural, since the writer refers to writers such as Axular and Jelinek, Homer and Wittig, Voltaire and Bernhard, Delirium Tremens and Mozart. Eclectic references both Basque and foreign are gathered together, creating a tremendously personal universe that can also be widely shared. In this way, that paradoxical solitude expressed by the voices and personalities of Itxaro Borda’s books is channelled thanks to this linguistic and stylistic plurality, to create a very particular universe, which is, however, also in constant communication with the reader.

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8 | “Euskal kultura masa konpaktua eta uniformizatua dela sentitzen dut eta kudeatzaileek hori sustatzen dute. Merkatuari begira daude. Merkatua ase behar dute. Komunikabideek ere indar handia dute horretan. Gauza batzuk finkatuak dira, aspalditik, hiru edo lau lema, eta horiek ereiten dituzte. Lema horiek “Euskadiren alde”, “herriaren alde”, eta “etorkizuna” dira. Eta edo bizi zara masa konpaktu eta uniformizatu horretan edo eta masa horretatik kanpo zara. Eta kritikatzan dut beti” (Borda, 2006: 290).

## 2. The notable modernity of the novels

If we analyse Ixaro Borda's books of poetry and narrations separately, our attention is called to the fact that solitude is not addressed in the same way in each genre, therefore this evocation of solitude does not have the same affect on the reader of the poem as it does on the reader of the novel. Borda's poetry is certainly lyrical in the traditional manner (the same poet refers to her works as "archaic"<sup>9</sup>) and through metaphor wishes to convey that the sound of the words as much as the rhythms of the lines are very carefully devised; that is, the poetry can be sung and shared directly<sup>10</sup>, at least it encourages its reading aloud ("car même celui qui lit un poème est enclin à lui prêter sa voix pour un auditeur éventuel", Walter Benjamin told us –Benjamin, 1972: 138). It is well known that various bands and singers have adapted Borda's poems to be sung, to the author's delight<sup>11</sup>, and Borda has also, from time to time, been known to offer poetry recitals with musical accompaniment. These specificities of Borda's poems affect the way in which they direct the theme of solitude. However, when the lyrical voice alludes to its solitude, it directly touches the solitude of the reader himself and his existential worries and doubts regarding life and death. Even when it exposes the hidden nooks and contradictions to be found on the problematic search for one's personality, the poetic voice of Borda's poems makes the reader feel that those very problems affect him in the same way, as a full member of the social community. Perhaps this sense of being a member can explain the perception defended by Ibai Atutxa that an innovative notion of nation can be conceived on reading Borda's poems (Atutxa, 2010<sup>12</sup>). This phenomenon is even clearer if the poems are sung or read before an audience, presented as performance; it is then that the singer as much as the reader, along with the listener, easily perceives a profound union that goes beyond the mutual understanding that can be felt between everyone.

Her novels, however, cannot be shared directly: one section or other can be read in front of a radio microphone or to a group of listeners as a kind of taster, but they are chiefly written to be appreciated in their entirety, alone and in silence, given that they are intended for an ordinary solitary being. Just as Walter Benjamin explained in a text entitled "Le Conteur" (Benjamin, 1972), customary lyrical texts (poems or stories) result from a communicative experience (and here the word 'experience' can be understood in the manner Rilke describes it<sup>13</sup>) and consequently the lesson or meaning it conveys can be expressed directly. Contrastingly, in Walter Benjamin's opinion, novels have not been created out of a communicative experience, but rather stem from a limitless solitary base, and consequently they cannot be shared or communicated directly.

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9 | In an interview granted to Xan Aire, Ixaro Borda confessed: "Idazle arkaikoa naiz. Ez dut idazten niretzat bakarrik, baina oroitzeko. Herriko zaharrek horrela egiten zuten, eta nik ere bai!" (Borda, 2012c).

10 | In the interview granted to Xan Aire, Ixaro Borda wrote the following about the book *Noiztenka*: "Munduari kantu bat da ere" (Borda, 2012c)..

11 | "Hori da ene beste maitasun handietarik bat, olerkiak idaztea noizbait kantatuak izango direlakoan. Eta askotan hala suertatzen da, kantatuak dira, mugaren bi aldeetako kantariak hartzen dituzte, eta enetzat hunkidura handia da hori, emozio handia" (Borda, 2010).

12 | Ibai Atutxa presented a masterly demonstration of how the solitude that arises in the poems can merge with the Basque community. For this reason we do not wish to reopen this discourse in our analysis and we invite the reader to refer directly to Ibai Atutxa's writings. Neither do we wish to focus on Atutxa's thesis since our objective lies in another vein: we want to show that an irreconcilable contradiction persists between the solitude that appears in Ixaro Borda's poems and that which occurs in her novels. From the moment the first can be sung, the members of a nation can receive it directly and reflect upon it (as diverse as this nation might be); we consider that the second, on the other hand, since it cannot be expressed through song, can be read by the individual in a more existential manner.

13 | "Car les vers ne sont pas, comme certains le croient, des sentiments (on les a toujours assez tôt), ce sont des expériences" (Rilke, 1980, 25-26).

Écrire un roman, c'est exarcerber, dans la représentation de la vie humaine, tout ce qui est sans commune mesure. Au cœur même de la vie en sa plénitude, par la description de cette plénitude, le roman révèle le profond désarroi de l'individu vivant (Benjamin, 1972: 121).

The diverse forms of solitude transmitted by the novels, lacking the possibility of being shared directly in front of a mass audience, appear to the solitary reader in a pre-recorded manner. Therefore, although the reader can identify with the solitude of the narrative voice, she does not feel like a member of a group of readers: the reader feels alone and lonely before a narrative voice that seems to be as alone and lonely as herself, a voice from the past that cannot be listened to directly. Unlike the poems, her novels cannot be communicated to the public on the spur of the moment and, unintentionally, are directed at solitary beings and not to a group of listeners that could form part of a community (or of a utopic nation), and it is possible that perhaps, more than the poems, they can touch solitude itself in its particularity and dissimilitude. Here consists, it seems to us, the great modernity of Itxaro Borda's novels. Given that in contemporary and innovative literature we still do not encounter a singing lyricism or one that can be sung, but rather a common lyricism that still cannot be sung, and which paradoxically can be referred to as objective, the aim of which is to explore with greater depth the secret and unshareable hidden crevices of our existential doubts (read by way of example the meticulous works of the following poets<sup>14</sup> that Jean-Marie Gleize refers to as "neo-poets" and "post-poets", who at their outset were greatly inspired by the minimalist and objectivist poetry from the United States: Anne-Marie Albiach, Claude Royet-Journoud, Emmanuel Hocquard, Nathalie Quintane, Victoria Xardel, among others<sup>15</sup>; and novelists such as: René-Louis des Forêts, Thomas Bernhard, and Elfriede Jelinek).

In line with the most daring contemporary writers, Borda's novels do not represent singing and music by means of a subjective and optimistic lyricism, as her poetry. Rather, they serve to express the distressing and definitive loss of this lyricism: in her poems, the musicality of the lines helps to immortalise special moments of life, which Jean Tortel refers to as "momentos calificados" (Tortel, 1973); whereas in the novels, singing and music reproduce the protagonists' nostalgia for a literary immortalisation that is already unbelievable (for example, Posa Ngaka's songs, or the whales in the novel *Ezer Gabe Hobe*). Fundamentally Itxaro Borda does connect her novels with singing, but rather does it, "sin ningún género de duda, con la pintura" (Borda, 2006: 304). We consider that this contrast is tangible if we analyse the images of the desert and minerals in Borda's books: thus, for example, in the collection *Ogella Line*, the mineral beach of Izpazter reflects, through short lines, the optimism of the lyrical voice (the last poem is entitled "I hope so") and peace with itself, over the solitude

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14 | See *Sorties* by Jean-Marie Gleize on "lirismo objetivo", "neo-poesía" y "post-poesía" (Gleize, 2009).

15 | The works of all these poets have been created to be seen, not to be uttered and still less to be sung. Thus, in the reading he offered of the book *Les objets contiennent l'infini* in l'École Normale Supérieure in Lyon, on April 17<sup>th</sup> 2002, Claude Royet-Journoud said: "la lecture à haute voix ne me paraît pas nécessaire, je pense que c'est un malentendu, dans tous les sens du terme" (to access the video of this lecture, see: [http://cep.ens-lsh.fr/37471920/0/fiche\\_\\_pagelibre/&RH=CEP-AUTEURS](http://cep.ens-lsh.fr/37471920/0/fiche__pagelibre/&RH=CEP-AUTEURS)).

16 | The phantasmagorical images of Itxaro Borda's desert and minerals can be compared with those of Mallarmé's "monument", given that he also dreamt that his poems might reflect the definitive, just like the "monuments".

of the voice and of all existential doubts<sup>16</sup>; whereas in the novels, the mineral desert (that of the Bardenas, one in the United States or what might also be the Isturitz caves) reproduces a dreamy and utopic happiness (of an otherworldly appearance, of the idealised solitary shepherd or of phantasmagorical beings of the Neanderthal era), that is, a provisional happiness, in general terms, which will swiftly disappear through the anticipatory, fleeting and inescapable force of writing. In other words, Borda's poems can be the culmination of a collective salvation for the reader or listener; her novels, however, unless suggesting an existential assurance and displaying wandering people with a tumultuous way of life (the "desassossego" referred by Pessoa), cannot be more than a path of destruction for the multitude, although also a salvation in a paradoxical manner for the solitary reader searching for help to elucidate his shameful existential doubts in front of the (Basque) group.

The protection as means for salvation that the novels afford to the solitary reader is based, it seems to us, on the determination to survive that the protagonists attribute as a counterpoint to their problematic lives. That is to say, to all their personal sorrows and contradictions, even above their anxiety over living in a coded society such as ours, in the struggle of these characters to try to realise their most intimate desires, whether these desires are carnal, amorous (the desire that others accept their love or the desire to be loved), or literary. Hence we are reminded that Amaia Ezpeldoi wishes to have sexual relations in the most complicated situations, in the natural oblivion that goes along with the desire to find peace for oneself and for others (see for example the desire Amaia Ezpeldoi feels for a policewoman in *Boga Boga*, something that even today Basque society would have rejected). Similarly, for the narrator of *Post Mortem Scripta Volant* literature is the last refuge from the absurdity of this world.

This is the ethics of Ixaro Borda's novels: that each of us feed our own desires, even without any hope of them being realized, particularly the carnal, amorous and literary desires, given that these are the most certain means of survival in our society. These intimate desires only represent the path to salvation for the solitary reader: they do not offer hope within a collective behaviour and ideology – and for this alone they do not serve as a basis for any ideology – but they make it possible to a large degree to accept one's ordinary human nature, full as it is of self-contradictions and mysterious paradoxes. In other words, although these desires do not offer dogmatic solutions (socially, politically, linguistically), they do contribute to the liberation of one's essential intimacy<sup>17</sup>, and along the same lines, the author, by presenting this assistance to others, saves herself:

Niretzat idaztea ene bizitza da, eta ene bizitza dela erraiten dudalarik ene bizitza dut idazten, baina badakit ene bizitza ez dela ezer funtsean,

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17 | In another way, Francis Ponge wanted to express a similar idea to the text entitled "Les plaisirs de la porte": "Les rois ne touchent pas aux portes. Ils ne connaissent pas ce bonheur" (Ponge, 1995: 44): the post-romantic lyric poets did not take into consideration the common and intimate carnal pleasures, which are, however, for "solitary beings" (Urruspil, 2010) the fitting means of survival when they merge with literature.

besteek ere bizitza antzekoak dituztela, hori da ene justifikazioa, ene salbamena. Eta hori dut partekatzen, hori dut ene hoberena irakurle goari edo entzule goari oparitzeko (Borda, 2010).

So then it can be asserted, following Maurice Blanchot's reflection, that this precarious surrender to be found in Borda's novels, and based on the nourishing of intimate carnal, amorous and literary desires, helps to create a kind of "amistad" between the author and her solitary readers (Blanchot, 1971), and that ultimately and paradoxically, these solitary beings make up "una comunidad intangible" (Blanchot, 1983), which can never be found directly outside this "espacio literario". Despite all that, and borrowing Dominique Rabaté's words, we could say that for the reader, the complex solitude presented to us in Borda's novels would be, in a modern sense...

une projection mentale, une limite, un désir, un repoussoir, une tentation. Et sans doute est-ce là la tâche, encore plus nécessaire aujourd'hui, de la littérature: être l'espace de cette rencontre improbable entre deux solitudes, entre toutes les solitudes (Rabaté, 2003: 21).

### 3. Conclusion

In our analysis we have come to the conclusion that the solitude in Itxaro Borda's work, whether that of the author, that of the lyrical voice or that of the characters, is always paradoxical, but at the same time, and in line with the etymology of the word *solitarius*, is always linked to salvation and survival. We have tried to demonstrate that the salvation that is present in her poems, written with the usual subjective lyricism, can be communicated and shared, and consequently, can offer a salvation to the reader. Contrarily, the solitude that appears in the novels, which can neither be sung nor shared and can turn out to be a path to ruin for that society searching for the light, can at the same time be salvific for solitary readers who make up "una comunidad intangible", given that it demonstrates to those solitary beings that ordinary carnal, amorous, and literary desires are the path to survival in our coded society (to be a survivor', as the author often writes). In our desperate society and its hysterical need to communicate, our sole objective is to meet in the 'intangible community' of writer and readers, in the 'literary space' of Itxaro Borda. Thus, Borda can continue to be the "intérprete de aquello que no se puede comunicar", like other authors "sin casamientos", because "si tout échange humain se heurte à l'incommunicable et n'est possible que médiatisé par le livre, il revient alors au spécialiste des mots, à l'écrivain, d'exprimer ce qui s'y refuse" (Bertrand, 1996: 203).

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