

POETICS OF RESISTANCE IN ITXARO BORDA¹

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Abstract || Itxaro Borda presents in her poetry a visionary aesthetics of plurality (of language, body, sexuality, culture and geography) that point to a celebration of alterity and of resistance toward values imposed by a univocal and hyper-masculine Basque nationalism which the author often explicitly denounces. Her criticism of the language/nation from within the language/nation that includes differences allows the fixity of the discourse of power to be dismantled, resisting its essentialisms and hierarchies from a «centralidad móvil» (mobile centrality), or peripheral mobility, in the fluctuating aesthetics present in her poetry.

Keywords || Basque Poetry | Queer Studies | Translation | Resistance | Nationalisms | Feminisms.

Itxaro Borda (pseudonym of Bernardette Borda) was born in Bayonne in 1959; «aunque ser, es de Oragarre»,² as she has stated in various sources, adding that she also works as a «cartero» (postman) (Borda, 2006: 35; 2004: 114),³ which emphasises from the outset the mobility of her identity which is a key element in both her personal and literary poetics. Her date of birth places her in a generation that grew up and began to write, in the words of Manuela Palacios, editor of the compilation of translated poems *Forked Tongues*, «in a very hostile social and cultural context before 1979» (Palacios, 2012: 12). In October 1979, four years after the death of the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco, the Statute of Autonomy of the Basque Country was approved in Spain. It was also known as the Statute of Gernika, which distinguished it from the short-lived previous Statute achieved during the Second Spanish Republic in 1936, which was limited to the province of Biscay. The emphasis placed on national identity by the Statute of Autonomy led to the construction of literature as a nationalist structure which has continued to be developed as the Basque language has begun to be used in universities and schools. «La nation est une création littéraire», said Ur Apalategi, while at the same time discussing the dominated and peripheral quality of Basque in relation to prevailing linguistic and territorial units, such as French and Spanish (Apalategi, 2008: 149). By the same token, Apalategi insists that «à l'auteur que l'on trouve au centre du champ littéraire national, on ne demandera jamais d'où il vient ou quelle langue il utilise». He extends this premise to Basque nationality, claiming that Basque authors who write in the standardised language are never asked these questions either, but that authors who write in variants of Basque are, on the assumption that the latter group is making «une revendication» (2008: 150). In the face of this dilemma, any alteration in the way in which the centralised structure works would require a literary-political revolution, as well as a linguistic one, Apalategi concludes. For Itxaro Borda, this dilemma also extends into identity of gender and sexuality, as well as the heteronormative and masculine expectations which result from nationalism and the Basque canon, which Apalategi assumes in his own use of the universal masculine: «el autor», that is, the author as a man.⁴

As such, Itxaro Borda places herself geographically and linguistically in the area in which the Navarro-Lapurcian dialect of Basque is spoken, in Iparralde (Northern Basque country), in a language that, although prestigious, is considered secondary to the language of the Southern Basque Country, despite preceding the first writings there by more than two centuries. In any case, neither tradition became truly literary until the 19th century, either because themes of religion and apologetics had dominated until then, or because of the need to maintain the considerable oral tradition which was still being used. In the words of the historian and lexicographer Gorka Aulestia, regardless of this, despite a greater recognition and real-life practice

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1 | A segment of this work was presented under the title “Po/ética de alternancias: autoras miskitas y en euskera” (“The Poetry and Ethics of Alternation: Miskito Women Authors and Writing in Basque”) at the Modern Language Association Annual Convention in Boston in January 2013.

2 | Oragarre is a rural village in the Lower Navarre region of the Basque Country where the author grew up. She has also lived in Pau, where she graduated in Agriculture and History, as well as in Maule and Paris. She now resides in Bayonne, and travels frequently in her work as a guest and speaker.

3 | The word “cartero” appears as such in the mentioned sources. However, Borda’s real job title is “guichetière à la poste”, that is, she works behind the counter at the post office dealing with the public, or similar.

4 | For a study on systematic androcentrism in the creation of Basque nationalism, see Begoña Echevarría (2003).

of the Basque language, «it has never transcended its status as the language of peasants» (2000: 1).

Itxaro Borda reclaims this status; she is and identifies as a descendant of farmers and herders, a feeling that is conveyed in her poetry as a cultural, personal and linguistic identity in a permanent state of recovery:

Llevo mucho tiempo escribiendo en euskara, porque me parecía que pertenecía a un mundo que estaba desapareciendo, a ese mundo de agricultores del interior [...]. Ser escritora es una gran suerte y eso me hace sentir que el mundo que represento cuando escribo no cambia, no cae, no se hunde, no se desgasta, no se pudre (Borda, 2010a).

The process of «viaje» from the periphery to the centre discussed by Apalategi with regard to Borda's strategies of writing/reclaiming has historically been inverted in the Basque diaspora, such as that of the shepherds who introduced seasonal migration to the vast plains of the United States, some of whom the author herself knows. Susan Lloyd alluded to the romanticised presence of the Basque shepherd in her piece significantly titled «Vanishing Breed»: «They had become legendary herders. Self-sufficient wanderers and storytellers as well, they were mystical mountain men in the 'golden fleece' days of the West» (Lloyd, 1997: 10).⁵ Lloyd captures the pride and sense of community in her observation of the exoticised culture of genuine Basque enclaves in the American West, the perishable quality of which grew stronger after the death of the last shepherds, among them Isidoro Martínez and Jean Urruty. Borda dedicated her poem «I am the Resurrection and the Life» to the latter of these two, which was quoted by Susan Lloyd in her article for *The Denver Post*:

Now you are gone... Life has a beginning and an end
I stay here full of tears, full of rising memories,
Now the red land of Colorado
Will softly dry your old bones. (Borda citada en Lloyd, 1997: 10)

The elegiac weeping of the poem along with its title connect with the tradition of apologetics and religion present in Basque poetry, a connection that is hinted at in Lloyd's article: «we are closer to God in the mountains than down below», says Domingo Aguirre, one of the Basque people whom Lloyd met during the Elko festival in Nevada. «That's why they say we Basques are mystics» (Lloyd, 1997: 10). However, Itxaro Borda, always questioning and overcoming labels and rules, transcends such issues and makes them her own with the sole aim of vindication and resistance. In conversation with José Arregi on the subject of her religious beliefs (Arregi, 2010: 39), Borda explains that her literary and stylistic education in Basque started with missals in the language, which she later distanced herself from and began to criticise the institutional concept of god (systematically

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5 | What Lloyd fails to mention in her article is the discrimination to which Basque shepherds were victim, working as they were as foreign immigrants doing a little-recognised job, or one associated with the ranch-owners who saw them as a threat to their livelihoods. This all served to increase the isolation experienced by Basque shepherds, which simultaneously contributed to the creation of their identity as a cultural and linguistic community. For more information, see Elizabeth Shostak (2013), among others.

written by Borda in lowercase). Yet at the same time, that vehicle of knowledge surrounding the language and the spiritual path that it provides (Borda says that as a child she wanted to be a nun) allow for «the Resurrection and the Life», the recovery and celebration of a culture and language seen to be in the process of disappearance.

Itxaro Borda resists that perception of agony also emphasised by Apalategi regarding the sociolinguistic situation of Iparralde, in which he considers Borda to be suffering from the «syndrome du dernier des Mohicans» (Apalategi, 2008: 158-159). In contrast, Borda celebrates her language and culture through what I consider a «mobile or erogenous centrality» with strategies that have an impact on hybridisation, on reflections on the limits of language, on her identity and consciously lesbian perspective, and on an alternative visibility which complements the appreciation made by Ibai Atutxa through translation and citation of Joseba Gabilondo's work: «a través de los significados de la lengua y su ausencia (el mutismo), creo que nuestra escritora también puede ser muda, una muda que habla muy alto, de más de una manera, y en más de una lengua» (Atutxa, 2011: 202).⁶ In regards to this, Itxaro Borda insists: «Cuando escribo me da igual leer una estadística que mencione la pérdida del euskara en Iparralde, para mí no se pierde, cuando escribo no se pierde, creo que cuando escribimos, o cantamos, o pintamos [...] no se pierde» (Borda, 2010a).

This epic statement from a spiritual/reproductive premise is one of the afore-mentioned strategies which I consider to have a «reactionary» purpose.⁷ It relates to what Gabilondo, as cited by Ibai Atutxa, calls «migración melancólica», that is, the process of permanent loss of «su casa original» (Atutxa, 2011: 202, footnote 8), and which Atutxa associates with the hegemonic Basque system's concealment of all territorial, sexual and geolinguistic otherness (2011: 202). Borda's books of poetry, such as *Alfa eta Omega euripean / Alfa y Omega bajo la lluvia* (Borda, 1999), *Begiak erre argiz / Los ojos encendidos de luz* (Borda, 2006), and the «Cantos Tribales» series I and II (Borda, 2010b), permeate this nomadic spirit which leads to new genealogies. The epigraph from Turkish writer and activist Nazim Hikmet which is included at the beginning of the anthology *Alfa y Omega bajo la lluvia* is significant: «Algo de gran importancia/ te diré/ la gente cambia/ cuando cambia de lugar» (Borda, 1999: 5). Itxaro Borda positions herself within a matrix of geographical, reproductive, tribal and linguistic flux, a peripheral space in which she expresses her thoughts on the language in words that are both divisive and reflective: «Las palabras,/ En la Arcadia a menudo están de más,/ O no son suficientes» (Borda, 2006: 84). Much like the Latin American post avant-garde poets, such as Olga Orozco of Argentina, the loss of confidence in the communicative ability of the sign is expressed through images that allude to the fragment, to the allusion of lost

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6 | Ibai Atutxa is referring to Joseba Gabilondo's study (2006): *Nacioaren hondarrak, Basque literature garaikidearen history postnazional baterako hastappenak*, Bilbao: University of the Basque Country.

7 | For more information, see my work on the reactionary generation of contemporary authors (Escaja, 2009). Borda's work is part of the second stage of «fractura»: «Fractura: Ontología. Refracción como afirmación trascendente» (2009: 375-380).

Unity, to that unapproachable intermediate point between signifier and signified. In the case of Borda's poetry, the ontological quality of the language as a creator of culture is also a part of this reflection, in which Unity is tied in with the «casa perdida» and with notions of the nation and the «mother», in the epic and nationalist sense argued by Gabilondo, as referenced by Atutxa (2011: 201), but which could also be extended to a more elementary concept of vaginal and lesbian identity, that fundamental place in which Borda lies and towards which she leans: «todos mis poemas son lésbicos, claramente o subliminalmente, y eso desde el principio de mi camino de escritora» (see Appendix).

Silence, invisibility and the inability to speak form the seemingly unapproachable intermediate point between these fluctuations, becoming that mutism which Atutxa associates «a la inexistencia de la identidad propia en el contexto hegemónico vasco actual» (2011: 202), and which extends to all examples of hegemony that exclude or distort the differences present within it: «Yo no soy Ulises,/ Nadie me espera,/ En ninguna parte» (Borda, 2006: 85); «Tengo ojos y soy ciega./ Tengo oídos y camino sorda» (Tribal Song II; Borda, 2010b). Attempts to resolve this insurmountable distance are made through analogy, allusion to footprints, fractures, and repetitions: «El camino de polvo distraído» (Borda, 2006:84), «La interferencia incontrolada de las lenguas/ Y el lento fluir del tiempo/ Parten tu ser/ De lado a lado: ¡jama!» (2006: 85). The effect of repetition, mutation and footprints ultimately reveals the notion of «simulacro» and instability in the very construction of gender identity as proposed by Judith Butler, whose work Atutxa applies to the construction of Basque nationalism, the binary and essentialist hierarchy of which is resisted by Borda (Atutxa, 2011: 200).⁸ In the above lines of poetry, Borda exposes the role played in construction and imposition by historically and implicitly heteronormative politics that separate the poetic voice («parten tu ser»), and based upon which she proposes as an alternative a multiple identity which affects both plurality and the body: «¡jama!»

In this imperative, which also has an implied reproductive element («¡jama!»), Borda separates herself from existential poets and the exclusive essentialisms of sexual/nation building. Despite questioning the communicative power of signs, Borda systematically maintains a demiurgic confidence in language/languages to describe reality, and to recreate it, from both a political and a gender perspective:

Yo, Jean, llegué
A Patmos en lo profundo de la noche.
[...]
Contemplo cómo la voz rebelde
Se petrifica
Y oigo cómo el verbo

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8 | Ibai Atutxa also alludes to Homi K. Bhabha's concept of "ambivalencia" in power discourse as a basis for the intervention and eventual undermining of hegemony (Atutxa, 2011: 212). Other theories also apply to Borda's peripheral and deliberately "móvil" aesthetics, the most obvious of which is Rosi Braidotti's theory on "sujetos nómadas". However, precisely because it is obvious, and in order to avoid dominating theoretical essentialisms, I prefer to limit this discussion to the current focus. In regards to the rest, Borda proposes a type of nomadism that is "fija" rather than "flotante", as mentioned by Braidotti in *Nomadic Subjects* (2011: 10).

Se encarna
En trueno.
En el calor de la cueva
Percibía la paz.
Sigo dando a ver
Lo que de verdad
Ha acontecido. (2006: 85)

The poetic voice of Itxaro Borda appears as witness, writing and participating in the reproductive and demiurgic process in which tribal creation intervenes, which is also inserted into a wider tradition of global interdependence (Greco-Roman epic and mythology in *Los ojos encendidos de luz*; the frequent references to the exiled Chinese poet Li Po with whom Borda's poetic self identifies in this and her other books of poetry):

Como el niño que nace sin avisar,
Los idiomas rasgan la carne y golpean
La cavidad bucal,
Estrangulando las lenguas.
Mi sombra y yo creímos
Que los vientres mudos de los verbos
Desconocidos iban a explotar.
Las lenguas locales, regionales y extranjeras
Se unían en una danza vertiginosa. (2006: 84)

The reclamatory and visionary attitude of plurality (of the body, of language, of sexuality, of culture, and of geography) in perpetual movement and harmony («Las lenguas locales, regionales y extranjeras/ Se unían en una danza vertiginosa») points to a celebration of alterity and of resistance toward values imposed by the univocality and hyper-masculinity of a Basque nationalism that Itxaro Borda often denounces. Her criticism of the language/nation from the language/nation accomplishes a number of objectives which Apalategi summarises in his article. On the one hand, according to Apalategi, Borda questions the imposed geolinguistic hierarchy of the Basque language, denouncing «la domination du basque unifié et de Donostia-Saint Sébastie qui représentent le centre du système basque» (Apalategi, 2008: 156). On the other hand, Borda proposes, claims, and therefore, equalises, variants within these same geolinguistic differences (Apalategi, 2008: 156). Borda's series of novels starring the lesbian detective Amaia Etxepare, is written, argues Apalategi, not only in the Souletin, Lapurdian and Peninsular Navarro dialects (2008: 155) as well as Standard Basque, but also, on top of these, in numerous language varieties that often integrate words from other languages such as French, English or Castilian Spanish, and that reflect the conversational reality of these languages (a fact which in itself questions the assumed «authenticity» of any language that is claimed as such). Borda refers in her lecture «Así nació Amaia Etxepare» to her desire to «dar una visión completa

de nuestro territorio» on a historical, geographical, sociosexual and, in particular, linguistic level, denouncing the fact that «la sociedad vasca, conflictiva, fagocita esos cambios socioculturales» (Borda, 2012a). In this comprehensive enterprise of resistance, which Apalategi links to a revolutionary will and to the creation of a «nouvelle langue littéraire» (Apalategi, 2008: 156), the author manages to also claim a real dialogic identity of her own, one that is complex and not fixed, silenced but present and speaking «muy alto», as proposed by Gabilondo (Atutxa, 2011: 202), within what I consider a «centralidad móvil» (mobile centrality) which distorts the alleged failure argued by Apalategi apropos Borda's work towards centrality. The fact that Borda has been awarded the most prestigious of Basque awards, the Euskadi Award, for her significantly titled novel *%100 Basque*, awarded by the Lehendakari and broadcast live on television, paradoxically confirms, according to Apalategi, the Basque central authority and the central-peripheral constructs which label Borda as an author of the Northern Basque Country who finally is being published (and read) in the Southern Basque Country. According to Apalategi, such recognition both relativizes and underscores the centre-periphery relationship/dominant-dominated culture in a process or «viaje» towards the centre by the author which the critic considers to be «inachevé», frustrated, maintaining Borda's inevitable status as, in his words, an «écrivaine périphérique de la périphérie de la périphérie» (Apalategi, 2008: 153).

However, it is precisely in this peripheral and critical mobility, which disagrees with and resists essentialisms and hierarchies, wherein lie the originality and the permanence of Itxaro Borda and, ultimately, her universal character that «desborda» the strictly Basque conceptualization.⁹ Writing in the third person as part of her contribution to the significantly titled anthology *Once (poetas) para trescientos (lectores): (Mujeres poetas en el País Vasco)*, Borda points out that «[s]iempre ha escrito desde la frontera o el límite de la lengua, su paisaje vasco-norteño o desde su propia experiencia, de manera nerviosa y alarmada, utilizando sin cesar la lengua poética y ese sujeto poético, ese yo tan denostado por la *clerocracia* para plasmar sus dudas acerca del mundo vasco» (author's emphasis, Borda, 2001: 79). It is this questioning and polyvalence in which the «centralidad móvil» of Itxaro Borda is to be found, a conscious and alert positioning between fluctuating aesthetics from the point of view of a lesbian and uterine self or female other(s) in accordance with the polyphonic identity (sexual, geolinguistic, cultural) of the reality which nationalist and patriarchal norms are attempting to constrain. Ibai Atutxa qualifies Borda's proposal as a «Queer Basque Nation» (Atutxa, 2011), attributing to the English language the fortune of having its own exchanges and fluctuations in lesbian identity—multiple, vital, «alarmada», claimed by the author—from an inclusive theoretical perspective. Joana Sabadell would identify this space

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9 | The reference to “desbordamientos” refers to Joana Sabadell Nieto's feminist approaches towards a “feminación” [feminist+nation] (Sabadell, 2011).

as «feminación» (Sabadell, 2011), an «acogedora» or welcoming space which does not exclude national concepts from feminism. The analysis of the poem “Credo» in its various translations will allow us to bring ourselves closer to that deliberately fluctuating aesthetic of resistance present in Itxaro Borda’s poetry.

OUTSIDE/CREDO	CREDO (trad. Itxaro Borda)	CREDO (trad. Tina Escaja)	OUTSIDE (trad. Celia de Fréine)
Outside nago. Has been baino has behin Bat baizik ez naiz Oraindik ere. Ene poesia a-soziala dela dinotsut outsidersa deitzen zaitudan bitartean. Ez dut laudatiorik nahi Basamortuan oihuz dabilan Ahots alderraia/ibiltaria* Baizik ez naizelako Orandik ere. Ene poesia a-soziala dela dinotsut. Ez dut ezagupenik nahi ez egun, ez bihar, ez etzi, basamortuan kantari dabilan sakrifikuaren itzal alderraia baizik ez naizela dagoeneko. Ene poesia a-soziala dela dinotsut. No future outsider: Ahantzi dezatela Ene poesia a-soziala gure amen izerdiak ahantzi diren bezala. Amen.	Je suis outside. Plutôt débutante Encore que Has been, Je te dis Que ma poésie Est a-sociale Quand Je t’invite Outside. Pas de losanges pour moi Puisque je suis toujours La voix nomade Qui perce en criant Dans le désert. je te dis Que ma poésie Est A-sociale. Pas de reconnaissance pour moi Ce jour, ni demain, ni après- demain, Puisque désormais je suis L’ombre nomade Du sacrifié qui chante Dans le désert. je te dis Que ma poésie Est A-sociale. No future outsider: Qu’ils oublient Ma poésie A-sociale Comme ils ont oublié La sueur de nos mères. Amen.	Existo outside. Debutante acaso más que has-been. Te digo que mi poesía es a-social. Mientras te invito outside. No busco honores puesto que soy tan sólo la voz nómada que persiste en gritar en el desierto. Te digo que mi poesía es a-social. No busco reconocimiento ni hoy, ni mañana, ni más tarde puesto que de ahora en adelante soy apenas la sombra nómada de la sacrificada que canta en el desierto. Te digo que mi poesía es a-social. No future outsider: que se olvide mi poesía a-social así como se olvidaron los sudores de nuestras madres. Amén.	I am outside a beginner rather than a has-been. I tell you my poetry is a-social When I invite you to come outside. I don’t want honour because I am but the voice of a nomad howling in the desert. I tell you my poetry is a-social. I don’t want recognition not today or tomorrow or the day after because from now on I am but the shade of a sacrificial nomad chanting in the desert. I tell you my poetry is a-social. No future outside: may my a-social poetry be forgotten as our mothers’ sweat has been. Amen.

Several of the elements previously discussed can be seen in this poem, originally (or simultaneously) entitled «Outside» in the 2012 compilation of works by Basque authors *Forked Tongues* (Borda, 2012c: 87-88), where the poem appears as «unpublished». That same year Borda published a collection entitled *Medearen iratzartzea Eta beste poemak* (Borda, 2012b: 82-85), in which the poem, alongside a translation by the author into French, appears under the title «Credo». The release of the two titles simultaneously implies a fluidity of choices or a fluctuation in the creative act of which we are all part, and in which the author attempts to place herself through her series of verses in the style of personal and poetic «artículos de fe» or «credo», of which the poem is composed. Right from the title, this «credo» dismisses the regulations of Catholicism and its exclusive, univocal and patriarchal discourse, replacing it with an alternative creed in constant fracture and fluctuation both in terms of content

and of form. Accordingly, the author's direct and appellative poetic self is established, as already explained in her anthology, at «la frontera o el límite de la lengua» (Borda, 2001: 79): «Outside nago»; «Je suis outside». This border entity acquires an ontological, original character in the first verse; it is a paradoxically «fixed» entity within the mobility and continuously fluctuating aesthetics between dialectic, ideological and gender spaces which the author proposes, by way of a «centro móvil», in perpetual motion. Amid the play on fluctuating aesthetics the author's active and present voice can be perceived, both in poetic terms and in political and geolinguistic terms. The initial bilingual anchor: *Outside nago / Je suis outside*, responds to Borda's declarative and fluctuating endeavour in resistance to univocity, and which for the same reason, reveals a real and complex personal and poetic self which is traditionally hidden by canonical language and patriarchal/national legislation: «Existo outside»; «Soy outside»; «yo outside» would be a possible alternative in Castilian to that instance in which the author's absent/present self is located.

This analytical approach is based principally on the author's own translation into French; Borda, in a personal interview, revealed her sense having a dual identity, both Basque and French (see Appendix), a relationship that affects the very process of writing and of self-translation:

cuando traduzco al francés me parece hacer trabajo de arqueóloga, descubrir el texto original debajo de una nueva luz, y si estoy en un proceso de creación puedo cambiar el texto en euskara después de su traducción al francés, o según su traducción al francés, al final juego con las dos lenguas que son fundamentalmente mías.

Itxaro Borda makes us participants in this process in the transfer into French of the poem «Credo», during which a subtle but significant change to the original presumption is revealed. The verse «ahots alderraia» in «Outside» (Borda, 2012c: 86) appears as «ahots ibiltaria» in «Credo» (Borda, 2012b: 82), transforming the meaning implicit in the English translation «the voice of a nomad» (Borda, 2012c: 87), into the definitive, more inclusive and overall coherent «La voix nomade» (Borda, 2012b: 83), although a strictly semantic change would be between traveller (*ibiltaria*) and vagabond (*alderraia*). These negotiations also reveal the differences between what are considered «obligatory shifts» and what are «voluntary shifts» in the translation/self-translation from a «minority» language into a dominant language. According to the work of Olorntoba-Oju Taiwo with regard to such negotiations in the work of African authors, «shifts» or mandatory changes respond to the intention to create equivalence between the two statements, whereas voluntary changes are made in reference to aesthetic or ideological intentions (Olorntoba-Oju, 2009: 275-276). In Borda's case, both types are

woven together and «se desbordan» as multilingual registers are incorporated with a sole ideological, political and communicative aim.

In terms of her methodology during the actual process of writing, Borda states that: «[e]scribo el poema primero en euskara, aunque muchas veces lo he pensado en francés o con palabras del inglés o también del castellano» (see Appendix). The bilingual statement «Otsude nago», translated as «Je suis outside» by the author herself, is a clear example of the continuous process and effort to capture ontologically the complex expression, both poetic and personal, of that «yo tan denostado por la *clerocracia*» that she sets forth in her poetry (Borda, 2001: 79), thereby making her «creed» an act of demonstration and resistance. Fractures and fluctuations are also present throughout the poem in terms of syntax and content. The fluctuation between a self that is both nomadic and trapped in a continuous process of desertion and eradication («Puisque désormais je suis/ L'ombre nomade/ Du sacrifié qui chante/ Dans le désert»), contrasts, however, with the very act of locating and positioning oneself, which questions the reader insistently and with authority:

Je suis outside.
Plutôt débutante
Encore que
Has been,
 Je te dis
 Que ma poésie
 Est a-sociale

According to this, the nomadic self, or the voice of the nomadic self—perpetually moving «sin hogar», in the national and epic sense defined by Gabilondo (Atutxa, 2011: 202), silenced and oppressed by a patriarchal, national and linguistic body which represses and suppresses differences and, in particular, the mother/nation or the mother/matrix—denounces and reveals these discourses with authority and conviction through the use and subversion of those very same discourses. The alternation between Basque and expressions taken from dominant languages such as English and French, as well as the use of Catholic discourse with its illustrative and demiurgic guidance, permeate the irony and the final authority that dismisses the nomadic and ephemeral nature of the poetic subject, in order to create instead a sense of presence and vindication:

Qu'ils oublient
 Ma poésie
 A-sociale
Comme ils ont oublié
La sueur de nos mères.
Amen.

Attention is also drawn to the subversive irony in the final line, «Amen», in which the emphatic maxim «Así sea» is emphasised, but there is also a political statement: the word «amen» in Basque means «mothers».

In her poem «Credo», Borda achieves, in short, the ultimate goal of asserting a polyphonic reality that is both personal and, ultimately, universal, which subverts and resists the univocal, hypermasculine, heterocentric perception of the dominant language/nation concept. The originality and courage of Borda is based in this polymorphic expression of resistance, in the play of fluctuating aesthetics in which the poetic subject is revealed alongside her mobile and erogenous centrality, inaccessible to any monolithic evaluation of the work, the ultimate dominating archetype of which is recognised in the English language. In fact, it is characteristic that the translation into English of Borda's poem is the most inefficient, unable to reflect the complex and subversive nature of the original, limiting it to mere descriptive expression: «I am outside» (Borda, 2012c: 87).¹⁰ Within this limitation, it should also point the strength of data processors to otherness. When she wrote «Yo soy outside» (I am outside), the processor consistently 'corrected' the 'fault' as follows: «Yo soy outsider» (I am an outsider). The powerful affirmation of Manuela Palacios with regard to exposure of Basque authors to a broader audience: «Translation is a performative act by which the Other is acknowledged» (Palacios, 2012:7), it is in the case of the poem chosen for his anthology, «Outside», definitely (or inevitably) misleading. Manuela Palacios' weighty statement regarding the exposure of Basque authors to a wider public— "Translation is a performative act by which the Other is acknowledged" (Palacios, 2012: 7) —makes choosing the poem "Outside" for her anthology definitely (or inevitably) misleading. Its character of subversion and resistance resolves itself, finally, in an aesthetic that reveals the multifarious character of protest both in Borda's "fronteriza" poetry and in her personal and cultural identity which remains in a constant state of assertion, movement and recovery.

NOTES

10 | At this point it is interesting to note the fealty paid to the English language, which is contradictorily imposed as a lingua franca in the Modern Languages Association congress where I presented part of this work, in Castilian.

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Appendix

A conversation with Itxaro Borda about the poetic/linguistic process. Electronic interview conducted in December 2012 (unpublished).

Tina Escaja: As a poet at the borders of maps and imposed identities, as someone who navigates between different official languages, how do you approach a poem? Do you think of it firstly in Euskara? Do you anticipate the possibilities for translation to French or Spanish? If so, does it decide any of your choices (i.e., does it make you discard any image, for example)? On occasions, other authors who deal with languages deemed 'minoritarian' use such strategies.

Itxaro Borda: I first write a poem in Euskara, though in many occasions I have thought about it in French or with English, too, or with Spanish words. When I have to write a text in French, for instance, I first write a general outline in Euskara. This is a systematic habit, as if I were more confident in this language. When I started to write, at 7 or 8 years old, I had not been educated in Euskara, only in French, at the village's primary school. At that time I used to write little bucolic poems in French, describing my rural environment and my life as a farmers' daughter. When I was 12 I learnt how to read and write in Euskara and I have used it since, sometimes as a foreign language (!), in a sense that nobody in the Basque culture does use it, in a bit rough and DIY style.

Tina Escaja: Do you translate your poems to a dominant language, or somebody else does it? If the latter, to what degree do you intervene, or want to intervene, in collapsing the distance between the expression and the othering-instrument of a possibly foreign language? If you translate your own poems, or you write them in another language (on not), how do you reinvent the poem? And for what reasons, ideological, aesthetic, political, ontological, cultural...?

Itxaro Borda: it might be sometimes preferable if I wrote directly in French, because whenever I have to translate something it is very difficult, as the Euskara that I use is quite elliptic, not very functional, as the readers demand. At the same time, when I translate into French I feel like doing the work of an archaeologist, discovering the original text under a new light, and if I am in a process of creation I can change the original text after translating it into French, or according to the French translation, at the end of the day what I do is to play with my two languages. I do not know how to explain it. For an old, already published Euskara poem I do not change anything in the original and I work its poetic existence in the target language: expressions, images, according to the internal logics of the other language. I am lost in translation myself...When it is somebody else who is translating, I am interested in his or her work, but if they do not ask me anything I do not intervene. I understand that a translator, as a literary critic, needs to keep a space of freedom and decision to do their work, and if the author is constantly checking their work, life can be a nightmare, as if a guest would walk into the kitchen and check into the cook's work. You know what? When I write in Euskara I do not feel like writing in a minoritarian, minorized language, I do not think that my language is facing extinction, that it is stained and hyper-masculinized by terrorism during these last 40 years. I prefer to say that I write in a regional language: it is less contemptuous, and it allows me to work as an almost-normal writer in a national or international language. And as you know, I write every day before or after work, that is my rhythm, when I am not with my poems I am translating yours or Maria Mercè Marçal's, because I can read and understand other languages, like Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Italian, English, German...

My fountains to drink poetry and literary knowledge are numerous. You know, as daughters of peasants, we always believe that we know nothing, we seem uneducated in front of colleagues, for instance, because they are urbanites, and we try to learn *bulimically*.

Tina Escaja: What about the limits of love, of sex? Any comment?

Itxaro Borda: I think I always talk about love in my poems, even when they are or look political. In this sense, there are no limits. There are straight characters in my novels, but as for my poems, I think all of them are, explicitly or in a subliminal way, lesbian, ever since the beginnings of my work as a writer. Poetry was, for decades, my only real place until I came out in the 2000s. This has connected me with many crypto-lesbians in the Basque Country—almost until 2004, when gay marriage was approved in Spain, and 2013 in France (?)— [...] Now that we have peace again we need to work on the grammar and lexicon of sexual, cultural, political, sentimental diversity...