

Reyes Lazaro

**INTRODUCTION:
WORDS AND WORLDS DOUBLE ISSUE**

Poetry can feel and feed on ghost-limbs of amputated languages.
To Felipe Gurtubay and Clara Madariaga... rentzat, (1) who taught me a Basque I lost but
which tenaciously hangs on to me.

Way over yonder in the minor key.
Billy Bragg
(Homage to Woody Guthrie)

Poetry is not an uncommon activity, it is playing
at restauring the language,
looking at new ways of making connections,
composing imperfect works.
It is a human endeavour as dignified
as making lemonade.
Joseba Sarrionandia

This issue of *Metamorphoses* is in a certain sense a paradox because while it features prominently minoritized, non-dominant languages of Europe (Basque, Catalan, Irish Gaelic, Welsh and Galician) (2) it requests a reading for them oblivious to that fact. Bernardo Atxaga, the most international of Basque writers, said at a poetry reading he gave at Smith College in 2002 that writing in Basque for him was both central and irrelevant. It is central because it is the beloved tool of his trade, but irrelevant because for him, like for many other writers, poetry is above all else a means of communication across specific languages. Atxaga also described at a faculty-student seminar two opposing misrepresentations of peripheral cultures which are still very much alive today. Historically, the Enlightened thinkers—such as 18th century French mathematician, biographer and liberal thinker Condorcet—saw peripheries as backwards and even reactionary, whereas Romanticism constructed them as noble but outside modernity. As a consequence, when contemporary readers and critics turn what could be named "the minority language factor"—that is, the mere fact of writing in a minoritized language—into the central criterion for collecting texts (as they often do), responses to such texts are frequently prejudiced in extremely damaging ways. For that reason Atxaga asked that writers in minoritized languages be treated like any others. In other words, he requested a "normal" reading for them, that is, one unmarked by difference and exceptionality, which amounts to saying free of the prejudices towards peripheries imposed by the ideologically (rather than economically) still almighty state nationalisms. Unfortunately, readings unmarked by difference and exoticism are rarely granted to writers in minoritized languages.

Linguae Vasconum primitiae (First News on the Language of the Basques), is the first book known to have been published in Euskera or Basque (Bordeaux (1545)). Its author, Bernat

Dechepare, wanted to encourage the publication of Basque texts by means of the recently invented printing press. Thus he pushed the shy unknown ancient language to step into the public square of world languages and dance, in a much published quote: "Heuskara, ialgi adi plazara!" ("Basque language, come out into the public square!"). Dancing, however, particularly among prestigious attendants, requires more than just coming out into the public square; one must be aware of the latest fashions; it also helps to be escorted to the floor and invited back. Unfortunately, when a minoritized language shows up on the dance floor of dominant cultures, the others tend to believe they already know the complete stranger. As Atxaga told us, Euskera (or Basque) is frequently imagined as a farm girl, picturesque and noble but also old-fashioned, parochial and unworldly, definitely something of the past. Paradoxically, since her imagined archaism is precisely what got her invited in the first place, she is expected to dance traditional dances; if, instead, she breaks into "peteneras," she may not be invited back. (3) Of course, just like anybody else, minority cultures can dance peteneras or break dance if they so choose; they can even move to the rhythms of the Macarena if either poor taste or temporary mental obfuscation prompts them to do so.

Counteracting a prevalent trend in translation and publishing politics, which overwhelmingly favors writing in dominant languages, by inviting a diversity of minoritized writers to dance, (4) is a conscious goal of this issue. These specific writers share in a variety of merits: they have enriched literary registers, modernized literary expression, and/or given ammunition to political claims to cultural space for their languages by the very fact of their contributions. Minoritized writers also face common problems, which some of the texts included here address. For example, Menna Elfyn ("The Deep Sounds of W(h)ales. Writing in a Sea of Song") points out the tongue-twister contradiction of having to spend so much time speaking in English about writing in Welsh that she does not have much actual time to write in Welsh.

Common themes—such as, not surprisingly, death—also appear among these authors: Joseba Sarrionandia compares it to a pile of old shoes in a brief poem reminiscent of the powerful visual imagery of medieval Hispano-Arab poetry; Bernardo Atxaga's poem "The Death and Life of Words" deals with the disappearance of old words which currently affects all languages without exception, but which is accelerated in the case of minoritized ones; Maite González Esnal's short-story "Blackbirds in the Cornfield" is a metaphor of love and loss, in which a linguist's love for cemeteries is compared to the unflinching loyalty of the deaconess in charge of a cemetery towards both her dead partner and her dying variant of French Basque, Labortano.

However, relevance and commonalities aside, the circumstance of writing in a minoritized language is taken for granted instead of made into a central organizing principle of this issue, for a variety of reasons besides the one mentioned above. In the first place, saying that the specific language choice of a writer is important is a truism. Secondly, "European 'minoritized' writer" is not a precise category of classification, because each linguistic situation is unique: writing in a language with a long written tradition (such as Gaelic, Welsh, Galician, or Catalan) technically is not the same as writing in one with fewer literary "antecedents" or tools, like Basque; the institutional-political circumstances that surround writers vary greatly, even within the same language. French Basque writers, for example, work with less institutional support than the Spanish Basques: Basque is co-official within the Basque autonomy of the Spanish state, whereas it has no official status in France, where languages other than the dialect of the langue d'oeil which has come to be known as French (in a slow process since François I signed the edict of Villers-Cotterets) have no official status. (5) In terms of cultural institutions like publishing houses, etc., currently Spanish and French Basques relate among themselves, respectively, like center and periphery (a fact

which nobody could have predicted under Franco's dictatorship, when Spanish Basque nationalists crossed the "muga" (border) to "the other side" in order to be able to gather and celebrate literary contests, buy forbidden books, commemorate national holidays and speak in Basque; differential power relations also exist among the diverse variants or dialects according to their respective distances from the standard 'batua' ("unified" Basque created in the sixties). Even within minoritized languages, the dialects incorporated into the standard have more possibilities of survival than the more distant ones such as Labortano, a dialect of French Basque with a long poetic tradition during the Counter Reformation of the seventeenth century (when Labort, Labourd or Lapurdi was a kind of Basque Tuscany). Itxaro Borda's and Aurelia Arkotxa's Basque is much closer to it than anybody else's in this issue, and therefore their writing possibly expresses with more intensity a feeling of loss.

As I have stated above, there is another reason why writing in a minoritized language is not highlighted in this issue: classifying writers simply as minorities encourages ways of reading which are counterproductive. Anyone who organizes activities around minoritized languages knows of the hair-raising clichés, simplifications and plain ignorance writers have to face, and of their need to educate audiences, to the point of exhaustion. Such languages and the cultures they represent are seen and frequently referred to as "problems." Regardless of how heterodox their political ideas might be within their respective communities, writers in non-dominant languages are invited to lectures and cultural activities as political representatives, and they are asked political questions much more frequently than literary ones. If they have the audacity to consider their specific localities literary material they become suspect of provincialism (as if *la Mancha* for Cervantes or Paris for Balzac were any more/any less related to the local than the Basque imaginary town *Obaba* or the city of Bilbao for Bernardo Atxaga). They frequently have to answer impertinent questions which no other writer of a recognized nation-state is ever asked—such as why they write in their language. The role of basic educators into which they are cast keeps the level of discussion of otherwise interesting debates and encounters in which they participate quite low. This is particularly regrettable, because dialogues outside their regular environments offer these writers unique forums for discussing issues (such as literary ones) that are difficult to discuss at home, given the highly politically charged character of cultural life.

In an attempt to gather writers around literary rather than exclusively linguistic or political matters (narrowly understood), the title of the call for papers for this issue ("Words and Worlds") was broad enough to open a range of possibilities. The texts I obtained suggest, not surprisingly, profound differences among writers and reveal a variety of literary subjects and styles. In addition, these writers engage as much with the world, their immediate realities, as with words; moreover, most interestingly, they see the dichotomy word-world as a false one. The nature of reality today, a central philosophical concern of our time, is also a common preoccupation. Finally, a belief in the critical powers of writing as an alternative form of knowledge in this day and age comes out of many of these poems, essays, aphorisms and microfictions;—one which is complex, far from naïve, and very distant from the "boy meets tractor" style of realism so detested by Theodor Adorno in Soviet art. (6)

Bernardo Atxaga's "Confession," a patchwork of prose and poetry characteristically rejecting restrictive limits of literary genre, chronicles his intellectual and affective life and that of his generation, from the dark sixties and seventies of Franco's dictatorship to the present. The work is also an analysis of the evolution of Atxaga's poetics through life changes and the experience of death—in this case of a recently deceased painter friend and fellow artist, Vicente Ameztoy, to whom he dedicates an elegy. The passage of time produces an emotional distance which motivates a rewriting of old poems in lighter tones. What killed me

in 1975 felt already distant in 1990; thus the humor in sentences like "crying a la sniff-sniff," says the writer. (7)

Montserrat Roig's story speaks about the situation of a Catalan woman in England in the seventies (very different from today), and of minoritized languages vis-à-vis Europe, through the work of a Cuban writer. The narrator of "Before the Civil War" tells about her experience as a Catalan woman in Bristol, England. The setting is a multiethnic, multinational party in which music gets progressively louder and communication dwindles, with guests from England, America, an Indian man from Kenya, a Black man from Africa, Latin Americans, an Italian, the Catalan narrator—an obvious metaphor for the post-colonial Europe of the 1970s. The story has an epigraph from Cuban Nobel Prize Alejo Carpentier's *Explosion in the Cathedral*, an exposé of the Janus-faced double legacy of freedom and repression of the French revolution for France's colonies. Carpentier also establishes a connection between French colonial attitudes towards overseas colonies and its internal peripheries, specifically Basques.

"Solstici" by Maria-Mercè Marçal revives a medieval literary form, the *sestina*, with origins in twelfth century Provence, invented by Arnaut Daniel and cultivated by Dante and Petrarch, and in Spain by some of the poets of the Golden Age. The translator, Kathleen McNerney informs us that some Catalan twentieth century poets went back to it, such as Jaime Gil de Biedma and Joan Brossa, who dedicates one to Marçal. Made up of six six-line stanzas and a closing tercet, its enchainment makes it very complex: the last word in each stanza must end the first line of the following one, so that one of six key words dominates each stanza and leads to the next. The final tercet contains all six key words in a summation of the poem. According to McNerney, Marçal used this and other traditional forms to train herself to dominate lyrical language.

At times these writers recall meaningful words by other writers who are distant, culturally or geographically—such as Anne Sexton for Bernardo Atxaga, Feride Durakovic for Nuala ní Dhomhnaill, Elisabeth Bishop and Marianne Moore for Eli Tolaretxipi or John Berger for Ixiar Rozas. Literary relations among some of the writers included here are also expressed. Sarrionandia, dedicates a poem to his old friend and generational companion Bernardo Atxaga. (8)

These writings also bear witness to personal and literary private worlds. "Poems of the Infinite Silence" illustrates the personal and literary importance of Greece and the U.S. for Itxaro Borda, one of the best known French Basque writers. Originally written in Basque and translated by the author into her other native language, French, it documents an increasing tendency in Borda towards translating herself, which recently culminated in her own version into French of her novel *100% Basque*, winner of a national prize in the Basque Country. Childhood and adolescence are explored by Harkaitz Cano. The world of science is a significant referent for Tere Irastortza, as seen in her poem "Hawking." Phil Jenkins, her translator, explains that for Irastortza poetry might assume a responsibility for building a bridge between science and language.

Several of these writings display a profound concern for the loss of a sense of reality. Julia Otxoa's aphorisms, poems and microfictions, for example, denounce the degradation of what passes for reality. Manuel Rivas's "All Animals Speak" is part of *Las llamadas perdidas (Lost calls)*, a collection of short-stories which, as the back cover indicates, "demand more reality: that which is covered up, hidden, or masked." It is also a vindication of non-human forms of language, such as the language of animals. Historical crises provoke a questioning of

anthropocentrism: Friedrich Nietzsche, master critic of modern reason, hugged horses in his final madness in Turin, and U.S. comedian Jon Stewart finished his T.V. program by hugging a dog on in silence after September 11. Certainly, the work of Rivas and Atxaga, Otxoa and other writers included here, frequently features animals as characters or even narrators.

These writers are unapologetically "palabra en el tiempo," (word inserted in time) as Spanish poet Antonio Machado defined poetry. Poetry is described as an alternative type of knowledge based on the symbolism of the number three (Eli Tolaretxipi) or as a can of sardines which can produce either nourishment or revulsion (Harkaitz Cano). Manuel Rivas ("Manifesto against Silence") is not apprehensive about dealing with unhygienic realities, such as the black tide caused by an oil-tanker. Yet aesthetics is not a servant of politics even when writing a manifesto about one of the worst ecological crises of the twentieth century, which echoes Poe's raven and Baudelaire's albatross. Similarly, Atxaga addresses the dismal view of contemporary America which he presents in "Written in the USA" to a quintessential pastoral poet, Virgil, who, as the poem reminds us, also wrote under the constraints of his political times.

The task of writing in this day and age, as Nuala ní Dhomhnaill tells us in a poem with that title, is shown as fraught with difficulties. In spite of this, the writers featured here seem to place a certain hope, as cautious as it might be, in the restorative power of words in a state of grace. They seem to believe that thoughtful aesthetic words are alternatives to degraded political ones. "The Death and Life of Words" places hope in new words, those invented by children but also by poets. The euphony of the first stanza in Basque (which the CD allows us to appreciate), in which the silencing of words and the silence of a snowfall are expressed through the repeated use of sybillant consonants, reveals Atxaga's belief (tenuous as it might be) in the restorative powers of poetry at the very moment in which he laments the death of ancient words:

Holaxe iltzen dira
Antzinako hitzak:
Elur matazak bezala,
Airean zalantza eginez
istant batez, eta lurrera eroriz
kexurik ixuri gabe.

Perhaps Otxoa's "Grúas" (Cranes), representative of her recent interest in exploring uncertainty as a source of creativity, proposes a striking metaphor for writing today as both a casualty and a utopian alternative to politics: hanging poets who foster imagination.

Poets as translators

Translation "can become an addiction for writers of lesser used languages," Pam Petro tells us, and can even provide a space to reenact power-plays between languages in a way which the original by itself cannot. Menna Elfyn's article points out the importance of translation for Welsh. Tere Irastortza tells a brief history of Basque literature as a history of translation which probably has much in common with most other languages represented here: Between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries religious translations of the Bible had a literary and linguistic impact. In the twentieth century translation plays a central role as a tool for modernizing language, giving it flexibility and creating new registers. (9)

Some of these writers are translators of their own work and/or, occasionally, that of others. Included here are Bernardo Atxaga translating "Starry Night" by Anne Sexton; Nuala ní Dhomhnaill's free translation from the work of Bosnian writer Ferida Durakovic. Ixiar Rozas translates John Berger, whose "intra-historical" sensibility, not surprisingly, is akin to that of many Iberian minoritized writers. (10)

Some poets featured here translate others also featured here. For example, Eli Tolaretxipi translates Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill into Basque; Nuala's poems are also translated here into Castilian and Galician. They were read in the four languages of Spain, as well as in English and Irish at the Basílica de Santa María del Mar, in Barcelona, as part of the conference "Irish Literatures at Century's End" of the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures (IASIL), organized by Professor Jacqueline Hartley, of the Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana, and celebrated at the Universitat de Barcelona in July 1999. This type of translation among minority languages suggests the existence of an alternative politics of translation among minoritized languages, at least an attempt to broaden dominant circuits.

Metamorphoses Audio CD

This is the first time a CD is incorporated in *Metamorphoses*, to offer readers the rare opportunity to hear the languages included in the issue, read by the authors themselves, as well as Sexton in Euskera, Nuala ní Dhomhnaill in three languages of the Iberian Peninsula (Basque, Galician, and Spanish), or Bosnian poet Ferida Durakovic in Irish. Unfortunately, we can no longer hear Maria-Mercè Marçal, but the reader, Eva Juarros, has given us a spirited reading of "Solstici" in which the distinctive sounds of Catalan can easily be appreciated.

The background hiss that traverses Nuala ní Dhomhnaill's reading is a providential reminder that translation is always a mediation, not a transparent glass. "Komunikazioa/Inkomunikazioa," a song by Mikel Laboa which is, actually, the oral part of a performance, is included (even at the cost of losing the gestures) as a reflection upon the limits of communication, both in general and among languages. Laboa (a founding father of contemporary Basque music) calls it a "lekeitio." Lekeitio is a town in the province of Biskay where he spent his youth; it also has a peculiar inflection in Basque which Laboa (a child psychiatrist who has worked with speech impediments) explores in his work, as a means to investigate nonverbal forms of communication. This specific lekeitio has been a particularly productive piece of performance art in the Basque Country, where it has inspired multiple readings. For example, an independent radio station used it to authorize their use of non-standard, hybridized Basque; an art collective (Bigara) used it as background for an installation which explored in a general way the limits of communication, etc. It can also be regarded as a tool to think about communication in the context of minority vs. majority languages. The song includes a failed phone conversation in Basque, full of interruptions and miscommunications. Laboa also mimics the sounds of several languages, with no mocking intention, rather to experiment with sounds and render homage to admired artists. Laboa also allows an English speaker to hear English the way many people around the world grew up hearing it in popular music (certainly Laboa and most members of his and posterior generations in the Iberian Peninsula). They listened to songs they could not understand but which, nevertheless, influenced them deeply (they got hooked, for instance, on Dylan's howling, even if they did not understand a word he said—sometimes even after translation,

for lack of cultural references).

Illustrations

We include two paintings of the seventies by Vicente Ameztoy (1946-2001), an important painter whom Atxaga dedicates an elegy in "Confession." Both are untitled, as it was Ameztoy's practice. Two visual poems by Julia Otxoa: "Meditation on the Encyclopedia" (a collage based on a drawing of a cannon depicted in Diderot's and d'Alembert's Encyclopedia) and "El que tiene boca se equivoca" ("Those who have a mouth make mistakes"). Both revolve around the fixation and fluidity of language. Ricardo Ugarte's collage "Kurpil" (cartwheel in Basque) which illustrates the CD, was the cover of the first issue of a Basque literary publication with the same title in the 1970s, created to provide a space for Basque culture in Spanish and Basque under Franco's regime.

The O printed on page thirty-nine, a monotype of a letter described as "the sole survivor from a lost alphabet," is an obvious metaphor for this issue. Tere Irastortza pointed out to me that "Words and Worlds" could be freely translated into Basque as "Hitzak eta Biz (h)itzak" (Words and Lives), because, with poetic license, it shows that life has the word at its core. This O belongs to one of those abecedaries which contain worlds. This little universe of an O is also included to celebrate the ardent and wild patience which made it persist.

Acknowledgements

I am particularly grateful to fellow members of the 2002 Kahn seminar which I co-organized with Anna Botta, "Other Europes/Europe's Others" of the Kahn Institute; they provided an intelligent and warm forum to discuss some of the ideas which form the basis of this issue. Particular thanks are owed to its director Marjorie Senechal and acting director Rick Fantasia, as well as to Renee Heavlow and Cyndee Button for their support in organizing the "Other Europes/Europe's Others" seminar. The generosity of Kahn extends to their co-sponsorship of this issue of *Metamorphoses*.

Special thanks are due to Virginia Montenegro and Virginia Ameztoy for their permission, generous help and trust, enabling us to reprint Vicente Ameztoy's paintings. Julia Otxoa and Ricardo Ugarte generously gave permission to reproduce their work. To Martin Antonetti's expert help we owe the O monotype.

All the authors and translators who granted us the right to publish or reprint their work have made this issue possible. I am grateful to writers like Bernardo Atxaga, Itxaro Borda, Aurelia Arkotxa, Maite González Esnal who granted me interviews and gave me their work. Thanks also to the Elkar Publishing House (particularly Anjel Valdés); to Professor Jacqueline Hartley of the Universitat de Barcelona, who helped me obtain translations of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill's poetry by several hands into Galician, Spanish, and Basque: to Gomer Press (Llandysul, who first published the poems Menna Elfyn reads on our CD and which appear in this issue.

I would like to express my gratitude to my former students and current teachers Sarah Moon (who went far beyond the call of duty in assisting me with translation, editing, typing, and much else) and Kelsey Camire for their marvelous help, and to my colleague Charles Cutler for his wise advice. Charles Cutler, Marguerite Harrison, and Ana López offered invaluable help with translations from Portuguese and Galician. Thanks to Frank Citino for designing the CD label); Jo Cannon, Nickie Michaud, and Jeff Heath (the Media Services Manager who salvaged the recording of Nuala's reading, and who was reminded of his grandmother's Irish

while he listened to Nuala). Pam Petro, Laura Blosser, Lauren Armstrong, Martin Antonetti, Curator of Rare Books, and his great staff provided invaluable help, as did Dan Bridgman, Smith's visual communication specialist. I thank Dan Murphy for being my beloved accomplice in translation and other adventures. I also owe a debt of thanks to Julia Otxoa and Ricardo Ugarte, Tere Irastortza and Euzkal Idazleen Elkarte (Basque Writers Association), Eli Tolaretxipi, the library of Hondarribi, and the director of cultural center Koldo Mitxelena in San Sebastian, Eva Juarros, Bernardo Atxaga, Nuala ni Dhomnaill, Menna Elfyn who wrote in difficult personal circumstances and drove two hours to record her voice. Bernardo and Menna also shared their work with us at the Kahn Institute, as did Nuala who also co-taught with me. I have very fond memories of our conversations after class, with Susan Di Giacomo. Manuel Rivas, wild goose, transatlantic brother, thank you for your electronic gifts and humor! Thanks to Phoebe Porter for her patience with technology. Thanks to singer Mikel Laboa and his wife Marixol, whose calls from Spain proved that *Komunikazioa* and generosity are synonymous, and to all those who recorded for us so we could offer our readers the opportunity to hear the music of the languages in this issue.

Metamorphoses deserves much credit for the breadth of interests that the publication has demonstrated. In particular, its editor-in-chief Thalia Pandiri deserves all the credit for having encouraged and supported an issue largely centered around European minoritized writing shortly after an important one on minority languages of Sub-Saharan Africa—guest-edited by Katwiwa Mule (spring 2002). European minorities do not receive great interest in academia these days; an inaccurate use of the term "European" to mean "dominant European" is widespread, even in departments or programs with a tradition of innovative thinking. Thalia is courageous, patient and generous with her energies and talents, and her exterior toughness hides the warmest of hearts. I hope I have not blown her cover.

Notes

1 This bilingual form of writing, which writes a sentence in two languages (Spanish and Basque), taking advantage of their respective linguistic structures, is one form of negotiating bilingualism in public announcements, event programs, etc., in the Spanish Basque Country.

2 The names used to name the languages (Irish, Welsh) are those used by the authors or, in the case of Bosnian, by Nuala ní Dhomnaill, Ferida Durakovic's translator. On another related topic, it is not easy to find a generic term for these languages. "Non-dominant" obscures power relations which exist among and within them. Denominations such as "lesser used," or "minority" languages, obscure the fact that 'minoritizing' is an active political choice on the part of governments and institutions, rather than a natural phenomenon. Languages do not die like stars that lose their shine ("ces cultures qui meurent comme des étoiles"), as a contemporary French grammar book calls them (*Panorama de la Langue Française* by Jacky Girardet and Jean-Louis Frérot: Paris, CLE International, 2001:8). This is an euphemism that covers up as natural the results of the centralism of French cultural politics. "Minoritized" is also a more precise term because not all minoritized languages are spoken by a minority. As Chris Agee, (translator and editor of *Irish Pages*, one of the main Irish literary journals), pointed out to me in a recent phone conversation, BSC (Bosnian-Croat-Serbian), is the third Slavic language in terms of the number of speakers, as well as official in several countries. Similarly, practically everyone in Paraguay speaks Guaraní yet Spanish is the official language (Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine *Vanishing Voices. The Extinction of the World's Languages*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000: 8).

3 *Peteneras* is a dance from Southern Spain. "Salir por peteneras," in Spanish means, precisely, doing the unexpected.

4 It cannot be forgotten that most world languages are not written. Anthropologists and linguists provide sobering data: there are between 5,000 and 6,700 languages in the world today; about half, if not more, will become extinct in the next one hundred years. The top 15 languages of the world in terms of numbers of speakers are spoken by 47% of the world population. Much of the rest of the world speaks languages with fewer than 10,000 speakers. (Nettle and Romaine: 7; 28).

5 It seems that the intention of this edict (which declared French the official language versus Latin) was to defend vernacular languages. Ironically, its success was proven in the fact that at the end of the nineteenth century French was not spoken by a large part of the population. In the words of J. Carré, "inspecteur general d'Education Primaire," in 1899: "There are still areas in France where the inhabitants neither understand nor speak French, the language in which their obligations as men and as citizens are stipulated. These groups include the Flemish part of the districts of Dunkirk and Hazebrouk, the Basques in the Pyrenees, and the Bretons of Lower Brittany (the entire department of Finistere and about half of Côtes du Nord and Morbihan, except of course for the inhabitants of the cities and the sailors on the coasts." *Le bulletin de l'enseignement des indigènes* (1899); cited in Fanny Colonna's "Educating Conformity in French Colonial Algeria." In *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*. Edited by Frederic Cooper and Anne Laura Stoler. University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1997: 346-370). An informative report on the linguistic diversity of France and cultural-political attitudes towards it is provided in the book *Langues de France, osez l'Europe* (Indigène Editions, 2000) by Bernard Poignant, Breton socialist historian, mayor of Quimper, French representative to the European Parliament, and author of a report on the regional languages of France to Lionel Jospin. Until very recently, France refused to sign the European Charter for the preservation of lesser used languages, adopted in 1992 by the European Council. The following call to France to extend its political ideals to itself appears in the cover to Poignant's book: "La France ne peut continuer de défendre les cultures minoritaires à travers le monde et se montrer aussi peu généreuse à l'égard de son propre patrimoine, riche de 75 langues—21 en métropole et 54 outre-mer."

6 See Theodor Adorno. In *Aesthetics and Politics*. Debates Between Ernst Bloch, Georg Lukács, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, edited by Ronald Taylor. London: NLB, 1979: 173).

7 Conversation with Reyes Lázaro, 10 February 2003.

8 Sarrionandia is practically unknown outside the Basque Country due to political circumstances: he was imprisoned in 1980, accused of being a member of ETA; in 1985 he escaped inside a loudspeaker and lives in exile in an unknown location.

9 Poems of mine which I have found already written is an interesting book by Joseba Sarrionandia in which he explains the reading and writing preferences among contemporary Basque writers: Wordsworth, Melville, Yeats, Auden, Bobby Sands.

10 Philosopher Miguel de Unamuno called in 1897 "intrahistory" to the "undercurrents that lie under the surface of history;" that is, the history made by unknown people (En torno al casticismo). Berger has devoted many of his poems, novels and essays to the intrahistory of Europe, that is to say, the lives of farmers, immigrants, etc.