

Indifference as Terror: On State Politics and Basque Literature in Globalization

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Artikulu honek nazio-nortasunaren eta bestelakotasun historikoaren arteko harremana aztertzen du. Europar estatuarekiko azken teoriak (Zizek, Badiou) aztertuz, artikuluak nazio-nortasunaren definizio berri bat proposatzen du bestelakotasun historikoarekiko "estatu-axolagabetasunean" oinarritua, euskaldunen kasuan bezalakoa, horrek indarkeria dakarrelarik emaitza gisa. Euskal literatura kanonikoa eta ez-kanonikoa aztertzen ditu, estatu-axolagabetasunari eta indarkeriari emandako erantzunetan oinarrituta.

Giltza-Hitzak: Bestelakotasun historikoa. Estatua. Indarkeria. Literatura. Kanona. Neo-kostunbrismoa. Literatura neo-historizista.

Este artículo explora la relación entre la identidad nacional y la diferencia histórica. Mediante el análisis de las recientes teorías del Estado europeo (Zizek, Badiou), el artículo propone una nueva definición de la identidad nacional basada en "la indiferencia del Estado" con respecto a las diferencias históricas, como en el caso vasco, que se traduce en terrorismo. Las literaturas canónica y no canónica vascas son analizadas en base a sus respuestas a la indiferencia del Estado y el terrorismo.

Palabras Clave: Diferencia histórica. Estado. Terrorismo. Literatura. Canon. Neo-costumbrismo. Literatura neo-historicista.

Cet article explore la relation entre identité nationale et différence historique. En analysant les théories récentes de l'État européen (Zizek, Badiou), l'article propose une nouvelle définition de l'identité nationale fondée sur «l'indifférence de l'État» à l'égard de la différence historique, comme dans le cas basque, qui se traduit par le terrorisme. Les littératures basques canoniques et non-canoniques sont analysées en fonction de leurs réponses à l'indifférence de l'État et au terrorisme.

Mots-Clés : Différence historique. État. Terreur. Littérature. Canon. Neo-costumbrisme. Littérature neo-historiciste.

INTRODUCTION

The conference in which this article was originally presented was entitled “Literature and National Identities” (“Literatura eta nazio identitateak”)¹. However, in the following, I would like to explore the impossibility of national identity. More specifically, I would like to emphasize the problematic nature of the term “identity” and, instead, shift my analysis to the issue of “difference”, as the question of difference is always at the root of any identity, including the national. Moreover, an analytical shift towards difference sheds light on the fact that identity is always an effect of difference: a byproduct created to control and to govern the unintended historical effects triggered by difference(s). Moreover, and in so far as the (imperialist) State has been the sovereign subject in charge of regulating the identitarian economy of differences in modernity and globalization, one has to conclude that difference has been mobilized and/or subordinated to regulate the “identity” of the State: the nation. Thus, in so far as the State has used any difference to enforce state-identity, that is, national identity, we would have to conclude that all differences are regulated as national: they become national or they are not. As a result, no difference can be thought of outside the limits of the (imperialist) State; they become unthinkable outside the State. When difference cannot be fully regulated by the imperialist State, as in the case of colonial difference, it becomes constituted as a difference-unthinkable-to-the-state, thus becoming shaped by the figures of the uncanny, the sublime, the horrific, and the ideal.

Even the difference of “gender”, undoubtedly one of the most “natural” and “universal” differences, has never been thought of outside national identity. At least since the Renaissance, Woman has been thought as national, as Spanish, as French, etc. as Simone Beauvoir already pointed out over 60 years ago:

They live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, housework, economic condition, and social standing to certain men—fathers or husbands—more firmly than they are to other women (xxv).

It is not a coincidence that even “feminism” has been born in the first world, divided by nations, class, and race: feminism, in its origins, has been the social movement of middle-class, white women in few industrial countries. When Butler, following Foucault, reminds us that

[...] juridical systems of power *produce* the subjects they subsequently come to represent... the feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation (2).

1. I would like to thank the organizers of the conference and, especially, Josu Bijuesca for graciously agreeing to read the paper in my absence. I also would like to thank the following colleagues for their input: Iñaki Aldekoa, Mikel Hernandez Abaitua, Ibon Egaña, Iban Zaldúa and Virginia Ruifernandez.

Although Butler does not elaborate the formation of the “juridical systems of power”, they are ultimately regulated by the State *qua* sovereign subject. Moreover, and as Karen Kaplan, Norma Alarcón and Minoo Moallen argue, the State’s systems of power produce a gendered subject in such a way that the State condemns Woman to stand for the nation, as the embodiment of state identity, while, at the same time, denying Woman the status of state subject or citizen. As they conclude, the imbrication of Woman and nation: “refuses two temporally ordered entities of woman and the nation” (14).

Similarly, back in the 1980s, Benedict Anderson pointed out that nationalism and national identity was the problem that Marxism had overlooked when defining working class politics as “international”. Citing Tom Nairn, Anderson concluded: “[T]he theory of nationalism represents Marxism’s great historical failure” (3). Even today, some of the newest theorizations of globalization fail to account for the persistence and centrality of the State and, utopically, advance new theories of “the multitude” as the subject of an ubiquitous globalization without a center (Hardt and Negri); ultimately a subject ridden by the same problems of the “international working class”.

Therefore, I would like to emphasize the fact that the concept of “national identity”, in so far as the (imperialist) State regulates all identities, is a redundancy in last instance. From global economics to the gay movement (and the latest debate over the legalization of gay marriage), difference is always regulated by the State as national and, therefore, it is subordinated or forced to become a difference-of-State-identity. All difference becomes an extension of national identity, regardless whether it is a conflictive or “natural” difference. Even the ideological precepts of neoliberalism (“the market is the ultimate non-ideological space of social interaction”) rely on state markets to regulate and deploy neoliberal ideology. Granted, the dynamics between states have changed in globalization, and, therefore, globalization is a new historical stage in the development of the State (Harvey; 85). However, the market-oriented, “democratic”, capitalist State remains the basis of neoliberal ideology from Francis Fukuyama to Alan Greenspan².

Ultimately, the goal of this article is to analyze the ways in which the two states that regulate the European reality of Basque literature, the Spanish and the French, administer, manage, control, and subjectivize Basque difference, by focusing specifically on the reality and history of European Basque literature³. Conversely, it also aims to underline the impossibility of

2. From a historical, psychoanalytical perspective, and following Althusser and Žižek, one could conclude that the State is the “mirror” of the identitarian “mirror stage” elaborated by Lacan. In globalization, some states, such as the USA, might become the master State by which every other state mirrors and interpellates its citizens, but it is still a state-centered identification process.

3. In so far as Basque literature is written at least in Basque and English in the USA, I would also like to de-naturalize the identification that most critics establish between “Basque” and “European” by default.

an analysis of “national identity” that does not legitimize the power of the State. Any national understanding of Basque, French, or Spanish literature—and therefore any Basque, Spanish, or French ontological approach to identity—reifies and denies the ultimately historical nature of difference. Rather than Basque identity, French nation, or Spanish literature, I will resort to the category of difference. Ultimately all differences, including gender, class, and race, are also administered and regulated by the State—even when they are not fully contained, controlled, or subjugated by it. Therefore, the category of difference will be the departure point for this analysis⁴.

Moreover, I want to propose that the answer that states, such as the French and the Spanish, give to the historical reality of difference, Basque and otherwise, is indifference: *indifference to difference*—a term that Badiou already uses with the opposite meaning and purpose from the one I will elaborate here (*Ethics*; 27; *Being*; xii). More specifically, I would like to defend that the State regulates and administers *difference through indifference* and that state indifference is ultimately a form of violence. Indifference ultimately represents a form of *state terror*. Here, thus, I counterpoise *state terror* to *organized-group terrorism*.

Although every difference is irreducible to another historically speaking, the State organizes differences through indifference, so that they cancel each other’s history and irreducibility and, as a result, end up enforcing state power (upper-class, Basque women, for example, are made indifferent, oppressed, by Basques for being women and by Spaniards, including women, for being Basque, while they become indifferent towards lower classes in the Basque Country and Spain, so that ultimately their being upper-class-Basque-women is indifferent by various degrees to lower-classes, Basques, men, and upper-classes, so that the latter’s indifference ends up enforcing state power). Therefore, each difference must be studied separately vis-à-vis state indifference in order to underscore the way in which the rest of differences are mobilized by the State to enforce indifference towards the difference in question⁵. State indifference cannot be simply studied as a master signifier, discourse, or institution that, then, organizes the symbolic field of human interaction within the State. Rather the opposite: differences are the historical reality against which the State defines itself. Through indifference, the State legitimizes itself as the central and original institution

4. For the reader not familiar with Basque literature, I will point out that the literary model of “classical Basque” upon which modern, standard Basque is based, is originally French: the Labortan dialect and its literary rendition by Pedro Axular. At the same time, today, the Spanish Basque literary variety of the Autonomous Basque Community is economically and socially preponderant and imposes its cultural and literary standard over its Navarran and French counterparts; hence the importance of studying simultaneously the French and Spanish states.

5. To equalize all differences as subaltern, as it has been proposed by the Indian Subaltern Studies Group, runs the risk of not analyzing historically the specificity of each difference. To propose, following Gramsci, that non-hegemonic subjects can be all considered subaltern does not solve the inherent negative equality granted to all subaltern groups *qua* different.

that founds history and reality—and at the same time remains beyond history as nation. Furthermore, in modern states, indifference is organized along legal, commercial, scientific, and aesthetic institutions.

Against post-Marxist theories of state interpellation and Foucaultian theories of state power (pastoral, disciplinary, etc.), I want to propose a radical understanding of history that cannot be reduced to a single discourse or institution. Against the prevalence given respectively to discourse by post-Marxism and to the institution by Foucaultian theory, I want to underscore the specific historicity of difference, which dictates the specific form of indifference that the State deploys, without fully ever foreclosing difference's historicity. In short, in the following I will argue that state indifference is a reactive movement, which already includes difference within itself, and only produces in-difference in a retroactive way. Against the post-Marxist tendency to reduce any historical reality to a single discursive reality or Foucault's tendency to reduce history to single institutional flows of power, I want to emphasize that such reductive and monologic uses of Discourse and Power are secondary or reactive formations whose main goal is precisely to reduce history to the indifference of the State. In short, post-Marxism and Foucaultian discourses are ultimately *state theories*. In post-Marxism and Foucaultian theory, the condition of an exterior difference to discourse or power is almost sublime or inexistent and, as a result, is reduced to the status of an unknowable "Real" or "marginal". In this article, instead, this exterior reality is the departure point of my historical analysis. To turn Lacanian theory on its head, I would propose that the subject is not the difference between two signifiers, but rather, the signifier is the difference between two subjects, which become traumatic, the Real, to each other⁶. In other words, my analysis aims to step outside discourse-based ontological critiques and proposes a theory of interfaces, interactions, and un/mis/translations between historical differences and subjects, which captures their irreducible heterogeneous historical differences and the violence that is constitutive of any subject. In short, rather than concepts such as "repression, trauma, the uncanny, or the Real", which always end up referring to a single master discourse or symbolic order, here I defend that the conflict between different discourses, symbolic orders, historical differences and subjects cannot be reduced to a single discourse, institution, or symbolic order in which conflict and violence are relegated to a sublime Real or unconscious—this approach always forces Basque difference into the uncanny/Real position of the Spanish state's symbolic order, thus, foreclosing any possibility for Basque agency and subjectivity.

Here, even the State is a historical interface between historical differences, not a given ahistorical order or institution. In short, the State and its structuring indifference towards any historical difference is not the primary, master signifier that gives meaning to the history of differences. Rather the opposite:

6. This position would be closer to Deleuze and Guattari's "body without organs" of their *Anti-Oedipus*.

it is the intersection of all these historical differences that dictates the specific indifference with which the State constitutes itself as sovereign subject of power.

Therefore, here the word ‘indifference’ has a double meaning. On the one hand, it conveys the ordinary meaning of “lack of responsibility and attentiveness”. On the other hand, it has a more theoretical or philosophical meaning, which would speak to the terror that the negation of difference generates. But unlike in the case of philosophers such as Levinas or Derrida, “difference” here is not understood as ultimately ontological. Rather difference is always historical—at least if a radical historicism can avoid the ontologization of history itself.

1. LITERARY DIFFERENCE

If we take into consideration the Spanish national prize that Kirmen Uribe received in 2009 for his novel, *NY—Bilbao—NY*, one would have to conclude that the Spanish state shows respect, recognition, and validation towards Basque literature and difference. If we add that the *lehendakari* of the Basque Autonomous Community, Patxi Lopez, in his inauguration ceremony, recited one of Uribe’s poems, one could only conclude that the aforementioned respect and recognition is also duplicated at the autonomous level, and therefore my so-called “state indifference towards difference” lacks any empirical validity. Moreover, if we also take into consideration the fact that Bernardo Atxaga (*Obabakoak*, 1988) and Unai Elorriaga (*Streetcar to SP*, 2001) have received similar prizes in the last two decades, as well as several Catalan and Galician writers, we would have to conclude that difference is valued and awarded in and by the Spanish state. Only one Basque writer writing in Castilian has received the same recognition: Ramiro Pinilla was also awarded the National Prize of Narrative for his novel *The Ashes of Steel* (*Las cenizas del hierro*), the last volume of his trilogy *Green Valleys, Red Hills* (*Verdes valles, colinas rojas*, 2004-2005). With the exception of Unai Elorriaga, most of the above writers have also received the Euskadi Prize, the most prestigious literary prize awarded in the Basque Country⁷.

In France, although Basque writers writing in Basque receive no recognition, and the fourth article of the French constitution establishes that French is the only national language of the state, at least in the case of francophone literature, and more specifically francophone-postcolonial literature, one must admit that the French state acknowledges, validates, and/or awards postcolonial difference. From Sartre’s endorsement of Léopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire and the first African francophone writers who receive French literary prizes, such as Camara Laye (*The Dark Child*, 1953; Charles Veillon Award) and Yambo Ouologuem (*Bound to Violence*, 1968; Renaudot Award),

7. Although it is awarded by the government of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, it is given to any writer writing in Basque, including French and Navarran writers.

to contemporary writers such as Tahar Ben Jelloun, the awards given to postcolonial literature are numerous (Serrano), even though linguistic difference within the state (Basque, Occitan, etc.) remains still unacknowledged.

Yet, the French reaction to difference, in its asymmetrical dynamics vis-à-vis its Spanish counterpart, could shed some light on the situation of difference in the Spanish state. One could argue that, following the French example, “the postcolonial literature of Spain” is Latin American literature since the nineteenth century (1825 for most Latin America and 1898 for Cuba and Puerto Rico). Yet, since the Spanish state and its culture lost its international prestige after the Golden Age, the possibility of a “postcolonial, Hispanophone literature”, symmetrical to that of the French state, is impossible. Latin American states and writers would be the first ones to oppose such a category or construct. Only in recent years, and a result of the neoliberal globalization of the Spanish industry in the 1990s, or “Golden Decade”, the Spanish editorial market has expanded in a neoimperialist fashion in Latin America and has taken over the majority of the editorial industry. As a result, some Latin American writers have moved to Spain and the Spanish editorial industry and their promotional apparatus have launched them, as in its most egregious case, Roberto Bolaño. Similarly other canonical writers, such as Carlos Fuentes, have retaken the old Hispanist rhetoric of the “mother tongue” and the “original geography” of all Spanish speakers: Castile and La Mancha, the birthplace of *El Quijote*⁸. Yet, these global developments have not altered, at least for the moment, the independence and predominance of Latin American literature vis-à-vis its Spanish counterpart.

Only in the 1990s and 2000s, and especially in the USA, has a “postcolonial, Hispanic literature” been constructed around the literature of Equatorial Guinea, especially after the publication of its foundational novel: Donato Ndongo's *Shadows of Your Black Memory* (1987). So far Equatorial Guinean literature has been studied with progressive goals in order to explore the ways in which a dictatorship has enforced a neocolonial regime whereby any dissenting voice has been forced into exile (N'gom, Ndongo and N'gom, Ugarte). However, this formation runs the risk of being absorbed by the most traditional trend of Spanish studies: Hispanism, which celebrates the “postcolonial harmony” of all literatures written in Spanish.

Therefore, one could argue that, among many other historical factors, one of the reasons for the Spanish state to admit internal differences, such as the Basque, has to do with a postimperialist compensation for the loss of a putative “postcolonial, Hispanophone literature,” which is then followed by the internal loss of a unified, national literature. This second loss, unlike the first one, can still be controlled and compensated by the Spanish state through the postnational regulation of its other internal literatures and cultures, that is, Basque, Catalan, etc.

8. Carlos Fuentes: “Todos los libros, sean españoles o hispanoamericanos, pertenecen a un sólo territorio. Es lo que yo llamo el territorio de La Mancha. Todos venimos de esa geografía, no sólo manchega, sino manchada, es decir, mestiza, itinerante, del futuro” (Dueñas 7).

Ironically, it must be noted that Unamuno, next to Menendez Pelayo, was the first one articulating the idea of a postcolonial, Hispanophone literature and culture, which led, at the beginning of the twentieth century, to the formation of Hispanism, and its major celebration: “Día de la Raza, del Descubrimiento, etc.” (Day of the Race, of the Discovery, etc.; Gabilondo “Genealogía”). This first postcolonial, Hispanic articulation was consolidated with the complicity of the Latin American elites. Yet, it must be emphasized that the backdrop for the articulation of “postcolonial, Hispanophone literature”, was the repression and liquidation of internal historical differences, such as Basque or Catalan languages and cultures, which were being mobilized by the local, bourgeois elites of the Spanish periphery through nationalism in order to defend their economic interests.

Similarly, one could advance the hypothesis that “French transcendental chauvinism”, to use Saint-Beuve’s coinage (Hollier; xxiii), has determined French cultural life till recently, and, as a result, has made possible for the French state to negate completely internal differences. Instead, only those differences that are already lost, such as postcolonial differences, have been admitted for lack of another choice but loss. At least, according to Freud, loss can be retained as loss through the structure of melancholia—in this case, postimperial-postcolonial melancholia. Several authors have already denounced the neocolonial potential of postcolonial studies in French (Coursil and Perret). Still in 2005, Dominic Thomas emphasized

France’s own failure to adequately incorporate the literatures of the francophone world in their institutional frameworks precisely because of their complicated origins in colonial histories—racial/ethnic contexts and mind-sets—with which France has yet to come to terms (246).

Yet, as French culture continues to lose international prestige at the beginning of the twenty-first century, one could argue that other internal differences, such as the linguistic ones, will have to be admitted eventually by the French state in its constitution. France’s resistance to sign the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) already represents an example of this changing situation whereby France is pitted against the rest of Europe, rather than leading it (Nature).

The very English-centered nature of postcolonial studies also points to a more general conflict between English and minority languages in a global scale. As Karin Barber explains for Africa, postcolonial studies have promoted:

[...] a binarized, generalized model of the world which has had the effect of eliminating African-language expression from view. This model has produced an impoverished and distorted picture of “the colonial experience” and the place of language in that experience. It has maintained a center-periphery polarity which both exaggerates and simplifies the effects of the colonial imposition of European languages. It turns the colonizing countries into unchanging monoliths, and the colonized subject into a homogenized token: “that most tedious, generic hold-all,

‘the post-colonial Other’” as Anne McClintock puts it (293)—an Other whose experience is determined so overwhelmingly by his or her relation to the metropolitan center that class, gender, and other local and historical and social pressures are elided. Despite intermittent claims to specificity, this model blocks a properly historical, localized understanding of any scene of colonial and post-Independence literary production in Africa. Instead it selects and overemphasizes one sliver of literary and cultural production—written literature in the English language—and treats this as all there is, representative of a whole culture or even a whole global “colonial experience” (2)⁹.

Therefore, if one tentatively accepts the above comparative hypothesis about the Spanish and French states (as well as the North American), one could also conclude that differences, such as the postnational or the postcolonial, are actively and passionately sought and engaged by these states. The admission of these differences ultimately has to do with the loss of global political and cultural power. Only when differences are lost are then retroactively admitted by these states, as a reactive maneuver of retention.

Although this would require a lengthy sociological analysis, if one considers institutions such as Instituto Cervantes or Alliance Française as well as the central universities of the respective state capitals, Universidad Complutense and Université de Paris/Sorbonne, one can conclude that these states do not foster and promote cultural difference. Instituto Cervantes has invited Bernardo Atxaga to lecture in the late 2000s, while Alliance Française has never promoted a Basque writer. Similarly, one can study languages such as Hittite (an ancient Anatolian language spoken in the Hittite empire around the 18-14th centuries BC) or Norwegian in the central Spanish university, Universidad Complutense, but cannot study Basque language, just an introductory class on “Basque culture and civilization”¹⁰.

Therefore, even though Kirmen Uribe wins the national prize of literature or Tahar Ben Jelloun (*The Sacred Night*, 1987) does the same with the Goncourt, a glance at the markets and cultural institutions would prove that these awards are not signs of acceptance and these literatures have little impact in the institutional and commercial reality of the State. More theoretically, one could claim that they do not enter, they do not join, the cultural and institutional body of the State. These literatures and cultures are not signs of “national identity”. In short, these awards and prizes respond to a different logic. And this logic is not one of difference, but rather of indifference. These awards represent the guarantee and security that the State does not need to change its identity and logic.

9. For the case of Homi Bhabha’s canonical work, *The Location of Culture*, and its predominantly English-centered criticism see my “On the European Intersection”.

10. These are facts collected from the website of the University in March of 2010.

2. THEORIES OF STATE INDIFFERENCE

In his *Homo Sacer*, Agamben analyzes the political logic of externalizing inner differences, that is to say, he analyzes how the logic of exceptionalism justifies the concentration camp and ethnic cleansing in Europe, not as evil or monstrous exemptions but rather as the political and historical telos of modernity. According to Agamben, the act of excluding and exterminating the Jew crowns the political logic of the European state and modernity. As the title of his essay already states, this excluding structure of exceptionalism responds to the religious logic of the sacred, and therefore does not simply explain the systematic ethnic cleansing of the Jew; it also explains the logic of the political status of the king. Indeed, the king is also the *homo sacer*: a sacred man, an exceptional body that embodies the political structure of the State as political exception. In short, the structure of the *homo sacer* explains the internal and external logic of the modern European state, in a Möbius-like band that encompasses the King and the Jew, as its ultimate sacred differences.

The logic of the abject developed by Julia Kristeva would also work when explaining this logic of indifferent exceptionalism. In last instance, the logic of indifference ousts difference while retaining it as outside. In so far as this exclusion structures the internal body of the State, it also guarantees the lack of difference within the national State. Therefore the ousted or expelled difference is not abolished or annihilated; it is the border upon which the interiority and exteriority, the subject and the object of the State are defined, and in this sense, the ousting predates the State. This is the logic of expelling difference, of abjecting (throwing out) difference without allowing it to become completely exterior or object. In short, it is the logic of state indifference towards difference.

Moreover, theorists such as Žižek and Badiou clearly state that this logic of indifference towards difference is very much European. Moreover, and according to Žižek, this logic structures politics and culture in Europe. If compared with the biopolitics of the USA—wherein difference is accepted and internalized in order to regulate and administer it politically afterwards—the modern, European indifference towards difference is the only site of real politics, rather than a simulacrum of politics. In his own words:

European civilisation finds it easier to *tolerate different ways* of life precisely on account of what its critics usually denounce as its weakness and failure, namely the alienation of social life. One of the things alienation means is that distance is woven into the very social texture of everyday life. Even if I live side by side with others, *in my normal state* I ignore them. I am allowed not to get too close to others. I move in a social space where I interact with others obeying certain external “mechanical” rules, without sharing their inner world. Perhaps the lesson to be learned is that sometimes a *dose of alienation* is indispensable for peaceful coexistence. Sometimes alienation is not a problem but a *solution*. (*Violence* 59, my emphasis).

Even though in the above quote, the expression “in my normal state” means “in a normal situation”, it is quite clear that, in the indifferent body of the European state, normalcy can only be experienced inside its national body—the illegal immigrant being the most “abnormal” subject. That is, today, indifference is a “a dose” (of medicine) or “solution” for peaceful coexistence, only if the subject positions itself within the national body of the State, inside the State: “in my normal state”. It is also important to notice that Žižek duplicates the inside/outside dynamic at the individual level, when he differentiates between “certain external ‘mechanical’ rules”, and “inner world”. Here “inner world” assumes that all individuals share a similar interiority, void of any historical or political traces of violence and discrimination.

In other words, Žižek defends that indifference towards others is always a solution for oneself, for the legal, neoliberal, European citizen. But others’ indifference towards oneself, i.e. when I experience or suffer the indifference of others towards me, is no solution (in my normal state). Žižek’s distinction between external rules and inner world loses its ahistorical character and becomes historical and political—as when the European state, the normal state, denies an individual entry, certain services, or political rights. In short, indifference is not a symmetrical, democratic structure, but rather an asymmetrical relation on behalf of the State, wherein difference is expelled from the body of the State, from the nation, in the name of indifference¹¹. Therefore, indifference is the logic of the State, the obscene structure that secures the homogeneous, national identity and body of the State: the external rules and the inner world of which Žižek speaks. Ultimately, the political fantasy that any individual “in a normal state”, in a European state, can tell differences and act accordingly with indifference is the founding political moment of the State. The examples of this type of indifferent fantasy are endless:

[...] she is a Basque person who does want to share her wealth with the rest of the Spanish state and thus seeks independence as excuse; he’s an illegal immigrant who is going to abuse our social services, etc.

That is why certain fetishistic moments and items suddenly acquire an immense political and fantastic value in Europe today: the prohibition of minarets in Switzerland, the interdiction to wear the burka in France, the enforcement of the Spanish flag in the Basque Autonomous Community, etc.

Although Badiou presents a very sophisticated approach to multiplicity, difference, and ontology, ultimately he also upholds that indifference towards difference is the founding moment of philosophy and, by extension, politics. In short, Badiou also dismisses difference as irrelevant:

11. This reality cannot be addressed by invoking the Lacanian difference between the symbolic order and the Real. It is not “the lack” (of the Other), but rather “the lack of lack” that defines culture and literature in the Basque Country (abjection). Here, the symbolic order collapses with the imaginary order, and therefore the Real does not constitute simply a stain or a leftover of the symbolic order but rather a non-symbolic order of violence through indifference. In this sense, the theorization of Žižek and Badiou are, ultimately, state theories.

Contemporary ethics kicks up a big fuss about ‘cultural’ differences. Its conception of the ‘other’ is informed mainly by this kind of differences... But what we must recognize is that these differences hold no interest for thought, that they amount to nothing more than the infinite and self-evident multiplicity of human-kind... Philosophically, if the other doesn’t matter it is indeed because the difficulty lies on the side of the Same. The Same, in effect, is not what is (i.e. the infinite multiplicity of differences) but what *comes to be*. I have already named that in regard to which only the advent of the Same occurs: it is a *truth*. Only a truth is, as such, *indifferent to differences*. This is something we have always known, even if shopists of every age have always attempted to obscure its certainty: a truth is *the same for all*. (*Ethics* 27-28, emphasis mine).

Although his understanding of history and political action as event would require more space, it is important to emphasize that his mathematical approach forces him to collapse the empirical and the historical. Moreover, he claims that truth can be achieved in the realms of science, politics, art, and love by events that, in their historicity, create new truths. Here, he is using a four-fold separation of human spheres of interaction that ultimately are directly inherited from the European bourgeois formation of the public and private spheres as well as the romantic idea of the “genius”. He has acknowledged this problem (“Philosophy and Mathematics”), but ultimately his irresolution highlights the historically European origin of his approach to truth and difference.

Carl Schmitt defends that the major concepts of modern state theory are borrowed from theology, whereby their secularization hides and legitimizes their systemic structure. Moreover, Schmitt analyzes the changes undergone by the State and its theories, from medieval feudalism to modernity, and underscores the phantasmatic power that their theological origin retains, i.e. the haunting or spectral power of a past that cannot be completely forgotten:

All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development—in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver—but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts. The exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology. Only by being aware of this analogy can we appreciate the manner in which the philosophical ideas of the state developed in the last centuries (37).

Badiou borrows directly from religion when attempting to define many aspects of his philosophy. Nevertheless, I would take Schmitt’s theorization further, since one could isolate another break, a second split within modernity. After all, the concepts of the democratic State and its theory are borrowed and secularized by the bourgeoisie (French revolution) from the enlightened despotic State, in their systemic structure. Therefore, the despotic, enlightened State also becomes the ghost, the haunting specter of the romantic, liberal, democratic State, which is endowed with the returning logic

of the forgotten and the repressed¹². Badiou and Žižek's thinking about the concepts of "event, passion, master signifier, and subject", as well as the idea of "indifference towards difference", emerge from a further secularization of the political ideas of this second moment of modernity, via Lacan. As Justin Clemens defends, the trace of romanticism is central to understanding the theories of both authors, in a way that situates them in Europe and European history in a way that is not accidental but constitutive of their theories.

In short, I would posit that the contemporary, democratic European state treats its internal differences with the indifference of the despotic, enlightened state, which oscillates between symbolic and physical terror. Therefore, the origin of the indifference of the democratic European state that Žižek and Badiou do not historicize would have to be located in the indifference of the despotic, enlightened State, for the state treats despotically any difference that does not enter the body of the king from which the enlightened institutions of the State emanate¹³.

3. THE SPANISH LITERARY CANON OF INDIFFERENCE

Although at first it would appear that state indifference does not affect literature and, more generally, does not have any violent effects, let alone effects of terror, a closer examination yields a very different picture. Even if the Basque clash between terrorism and State violence is accounted for, one could conclude that this violent clash is ultimately historical and political, and does not have any direct effect in the field of literature. At most, this violence could constitute the object of literary re-presentation: the literary presentation of a violence that takes place outside the field of literature in the intersection of State and civil society. In short, one would have to conclude that there is no literary terror or terrorism, just some literature about violence, just literary representations of violence. After all, my analysis has only presented so far the factual reality of State recognition towards differential literatures such as the Basque—at least in the Spanish state.

However, if the above analysis is applied to the field of Basque literature, that is, if the logic of indifference analyzed above is taken into literary consideration, some of the truths held by Basque literary and cultural criticism would have to be reconsidered and, more generally, Basque, French

12. This could also explain why multiculturalism has taken root mainly in postcolonial states such as Canada, Australia and the USA where there is not a history of an enlightened, despotic State.

13. In this respect, against Althusser's theory of state interpellation and Žižek's reformulation of the former, I would propose a third, and probably, most important form of interpellation: the no-interpellation. That is to say, the State interpellates subjects (Althusser, Žižek) and, as a result, the lack of interpellation of other differences and subjects becomes a very powerful form of interpellation: no interpellation or interpellation by indifference.

and Spanish literary *doxa* would have to be challenged. For starters, one would have to argue that the logic of indifference structures Basque literature in ways that have not been studied so far, beginning with the Basque literature that the Spanish state has recognized and awarded: the novels of Bernardo Atxaga, Unai Elorriaga, Ramiro Pinilla, and Kirmen Uribe. Moreover, one would have to demonstrate that this canonical literature is not written from within Basque difference, but rather, from without, from a logic that enforces and legitimizes State indifference.

If today the literature of Uribe, for example, is popular and successful among readers and state institutions, it is not because his literature “represents the Basque Country”, in the broader sense of re-presentation, but rather because it actively seeks *not to represent it while claiming to represent it*. Moreover, I would like to defend that all rewarded literature, from Atxaga to Uribe, has been written with the purpose of *not re-presenting* the Basque Country, for they have followed the logic of state indifference and have been rewarded precisely because they have forgone difference—because they have become indifferent. Unlike other literatures written in Spanish—mainly by heteronormative Spanish speaking writers—the literature of Atxaga, Uribe, etc. cannot be dissociated from their Basque difference; their literature is never written, discussed or read as “literature”, but rather as Basque literature. Moreover, it is literature written by heteronormative Basque writers, so that any other difference (gender, race, class) is also subsumed or eliminated; this literature is also indifferent towards other differences. Therefore, Basque difference is central to their literature. Yet, as I will analyze for the case of Uribe, it is the indifferent way in which this literature structures Basque difference, as well as other differences, that makes it canonical.

In order to conduct a short analysis of Uribe’s work, I will state that his poem book, *Meanwhile Take My Hand* (*Bitartean heldu eskutik*, 2001), as well as his novel, *Bilbao – NY – Bilbao*, resort to the affective mechanisms of nostalgia and melancholia, so that the reader can enjoy the life of a fishing, Biscayan village, void of any historical conflict, without state terror or terrorism, in which the masculine lineage between non-immigrant fathers and sons becomes its central subject. Uribe, especially in his novel, narrates through the deployment of self-contained fragments or stories. This fragmentary logic creates strategic ellipses that allow the novel to avoid direct references to traumatic and violent events such as the Civil War and ETA there are only anecdotal references. Yet, at the same time, Uribe resorts to Basque history as the central axis that structures his literature. In his novel, the reader can observe from the perspective of globalization, from New York, a traditional, patriarchal, fishing, small-village Basque Country void of conflict. Ultimately, the world of Kirmen Uribe could be extracted from the costume novel *Saltpeter* (Kresala 1902-05) of Txomin Agirre, a nostalgic, ahistorical, costume-based world. Yet, the global, metropolitan perspective creates a suture between the local and the global, the rural and the metropolitan, so that historical conflict is ousted from the narrative.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in the case of Bernardo Atxaga’s late-modernist, magic-realist *Obabakoak*. In this case, a different Basque

Country—an othered, rural, magic Basque Country—appears. The last short story of the book deals with interiorization (the magic story of individual madness induced by a lizard slipping into the protagonist's head) and literaturization (the modernist search for the last word). This narrative closure guarantees that the history and violence present in the Basque Country become magic-natural phenomena connected to a larger modernist tradition, so that they have no bearing on the Spanish or French states.

The new more global writing that Atxaga has adopted in his latest novels shows a more traditional, costume style (*costumbrismo*). In his *The Son of the Accordion Player* (*Soinujolearen semea*, 2003), he narrates an Atlantic story between California and the European Basque Country. Yet, even here historical conflict is moved to a rural environment and given a romantic-modernist twist by reducing it to the literary trope of the *doppelgänger* and/or treacherous friend. His latest modernist recreation of Conrad's African colonial novel in *Seven Houses in France* (*Zazpi etxe Frantzian*, 2009), moves the action to an enclosed, rural environment, where the development of characters remains bound to costume style (*costumbrismo*). Ultimately, the novel lacks any historical meaning beyond that of a literary recreation of an older genre, which, by default, repeats the same colonial discursive structures. Rather than a denunciation or exploration of colonialist violence, Atxaga's novel ends up being a contemporary, literary glorification of European colonialism: the African characters are secondary to the colonial structure of the novel and remain bound, like many characters of Obaba, by their connection to nature. Moreover, for a novel so aware of its literary precedents, any lack of reference to the African anti-colonial narrative tradition that goes back at least to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and could also include, for example, the work of Congolese novelist Sony Labou Tansi—in so far as Atxaga's novel is situated in the Congo—also amounts to European literary neocolonialism¹⁴. In short, this neocolonial recreation of Europe's colonial history in times of globalization can only be read as a neoliberal refashioning of the European subject of colonialism, which still leaves African history and subjects at the margin—even if European violence is explored in the novel.

Atxaga's last two novels repeat once again the same rural, costume-like dynamics present in Uribe's work. They guarantee a rural, idealic Basque Country from a global point of view: even Africa and California end up being more global versions of the Basque town of Obaba whose ultimate reader is still the Spanish state—or in the best case, a global Spanish state aware of the importance of North America's imperial indifference (via New York in Uribe's novel)¹⁵.

14. Atxaga acknowledged not visiting the Congo.

15. Ur Apalategi, with a different language, has expressed similar criticisms. He claims that the novels of Atxaga and Uribe are written for an outside reader or gaze: "if we write for an outside gaze, we are doomed to a self-devaluation" (Arbelbide).

The case of Unai Elorriaga merits a separate analysis as the award came as a surprise to most readers and critics and there was wide debate as to the merits of the book.

The fact that Atxaga and Uribe's heteronormative, costume-style novels reduce all differences (from African to woman) to a single Basque difference, while at the same time, announcing the indifference towards Basque difference by excluding the Spanish and French states from their representations, ultimately makes them the perfect object of representation for the State: they announce Basque difference as ultimately indifferent, as ultimately worth of state indifference. The literary violence—the discursive terror—that these novels exert is precisely due to the violent maneuvers by which most differences are reduced to a single Basque difference and, then, this sole difference is turned into indifference. In short, these novels exert a literary violence that can be read not in the text itself, but rather in what the text has left out, has eliminated, has made indifferent.

In so far as state indifference rewards Basque indifferent literature, the State forces the rest of Basque literature into historical exile, outside history. Moreover, in so far as state indifference only rewards very exceptional, “indifferent” writers with prizes and a place in the institutions, thus guaranteeing their economic survival, the State is creating a neoliberal literary structure. As a result, only indifferent writers can survive; the rest are excluded because of their difference. In short, the State guarantees that only writers who are indifferent to difference are rewarded and, thus, the majority of writers defined by the same historical differences are denied, exploited, and suppressed. This economic literary structure is neoliberal and ultimately responds to the terror exerted by the State towards difference. The State guarantees the existence of a literary elite that accumulates and monopolizes cultural and economic capital.

In this new global-local harmony, in this new synchronization of neoliberalism and costume-style indifference re-presented by this indifferent Basque literature, the Spanish (and French) state, as absent subject, can look once again at Basque literature with indifference. Because this literature re-presents difference with indifference for the State, the latter can reward and celebrate the former. In other words, these literary works and writers guarantee the indifference of the Spanish (and French) state and its institutions.

In this sense, there is not a canon per se in Basque literature, but rather an exceptional canon, a canon of the exception, of indifference: a negative canon in last instance, which, one could even argue, is not Basque but rather Spanish or French.

4. LITERATURE OF DIFFERENCE: THE TURN TO HISTORY

One must admit that the most popular and successful, truly successful literature among readers, does not receive any prize or award and, moreover, it is written against indifference. Today, the most successful writer in the Basque Country, as far as sales and readers are concerned, is Toti Martínez de Lezea who writes her novels in Spanish. Moreover, and if the editor of the Basque translations of her novels is to be credited, she is one of the top

best-sellers even in Basque with her Basque translations au par with other popular authors such as Atxaga or Uribe¹⁶.

It is important to highlight that the primary reading community of Martínez de Lezea is in the Basque Country and, therefore, she must be approached first and foremost as a Basque writer, not as a regional Spanish writer. Today, the center of the literary market in the Basque Country is constituted by literature written in Basque and, thus, Basque literature in Spanish is another extension of this Basque market and reading community¹⁷. Even though any Basque writer who uses Spanish as his or her literary language contributes to the diglossia that the Spanish state still enforces, a counter-diglossic reading might address this issue: Basque writers in Spanish are situated as secondary to a local Basque literary community in Basque language that makes those writers Basque, rather than regional and Spanish¹⁸.

Martínez de Lezea's literature presents a historical logic: one of historical difference. The majority of her novels take place in the Basque Middle Ages or the Renaissance; they narrate fictional or historical characters and events centered on minorities such as Jews, women, witches, etc. Behind this differential tendency there is also an impossibility or lack: the impossibility of telling the stories of a modern or global Basque Country, for, indeed, the reality and violence of our present history cannot be narrated without falling in the trap of indifference. A contemporary Basque literature that aimed at representing the logic of difference would have to face the problem of contemporary violence and, as a result, such violence would overwhelm and subsume any difference. I will explore this problem in more detail at the end.

Instead, by resorting to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Martínez de Lezea creates a space and time that is outside or beyond the power of the Spanish state. The Middle Ages and the Renaissance are the historical periods in which the French and Spanish state have not yet fully consolidated: they are still being formed. In this new chronotope, Martínez de Lezea can explore other biopolitical differences outside the indifference generated by the Spanish state and contemporary violence. This is precisely the reason for her incredible success and importance. Her literature asserts the fact that even the Basque readership seeks a literature of differences that escapes state indifference and national identity. It must be emphasized that, unlike in

16. Personal communication of Iñaki Aldekoa. She has sold, in all languages, an approximate total of 900.000 copies.

17. Global best sellers in Spanish and Basque translation, of course, dominate the local market and reading communities.

18. An even more provocative and productive reading, would situate the literature of Toti Martínez de Lezea as a literature written in Basque and translated into Spanish in a palimpsestic way that only leaves the traces of Basque in the Spanish text that is imposed upon the original Basque text. The traces of Basque are present in most of Martínez de Lezea's texts and point to the impossibility of their texts being originally Spanish: they are Basque in Spanish translation. Even factually, most of her pre-modern characters would have spoken Basque in reality.

the case of the canonical literature of indifference studied earlier, Martínez de Lezea's position against state indifference allows her to explore not just Basque difference, as the only difference that negates other differences, but a varied array of geopolitical and biopolitical differences.

Martínez de Lezea follows a genre that is well rooted in the Basque literature of the nineteenth century: the historical legend, which later also becomes historical novel. In this respect, rather than a break or sudden novelty, Martínez de Lezea's novels are a continuation of Navarro Villoslada's *Amaya* and its Jewish, Basque-pagan, Gothic, and Muslim characters¹⁹. Given that the historical legend was developed as a genre precisely at a time in which the Spanish state unsuccessfully attempted to consolidate itself as nation, in the mist of the Carlist civil wars and colonial loss, one could also conclude that the legend was also written from without state difference. Therefore, the narrative genre itself is, historically speaking, a genre developed against state indifference²⁰.

19. The novels of Joan Mari Irigoien, although similar in their historical bent, would require a separate detailed analysis as they usually narrate the Carlist wars and their aftermath.

20. Martínez de Lezea's literature is part of a larger trend of historical narrative whose most popular representative would be Dan Brown (*The Da Vinci Code*, 2003) and could be characterized as "the historical thriller" or "the historical mystery novel". All these narratives aim at showing an "other" global reality whose alternative origin and history predates modernity and, yet, it radically alters modernity so that the latter also becomes "other". In short, they are narratives of an "other" globalization endowed with an "other" modernity.

In ideological and psychoanalytical terms, these narratives of "the other side" seek precisely to forge a global symbolic order endowed with a master signifier or Other, which is revealed in their historical narratives: now that we have mundane globalization and its mysterious alternative, we know that there is a larger order, a global symbolic order, which structures globalization and its inner logic. Yet, the Other or master signifier that structures such a globalization remains hidden; it is only accessible as mystery. None of these narratives imply that the mystery revealed in the text is the definitive and final truth: rather they imply that there is another mystery that is even greater than the one just revealed; hence the compulsion to buy another novel, another "hidden truth" about globalization, which further hides the ultimate meaning/master signifier of globalization.

In the case of *The Da Vinci Code*, the Illuminati and Jesus' female genealogy, although rooted in pre-modern history, have the potential of altering contemporary global reality, hence the historical thriller/mystery-detective structure the novel adopts. In the case of Martínez de Lezea, the narrative itself is a mystery by which hidden parts of Basque history are discovered by the reader in ways that they alter the contemporary Basque present in globalization. Ultimately the pleasure of reading these narratives derives from connecting historical signifiers (texts, subjects, groups, events...) of which the reader has an incomplete knowledge and seeing them come together narratively as a complete, coherent total history. In short, reading each material is a narrative exercise of pleasure in becoming closer to a complete coherent organization of signifiers, which, nevertheless guarantee that the master signifier that structures the totality of signifiers becomes progressively more unreadable, more mysterious.

These narratives that provide an "other" pre-modern reality as the origin of an "other" modernity and globalization always revert back to older pre-modern imperialist formations with global reach, such as the Catholic church or Spanish imperialism. These pre-modern imperialist formations with a global reach serve as mirrors of contemporary globalization and thus form part of what I would call the "mirror stage" of globalization (Lacan). Spanish imperialism in particular is used as global mirror where the Black Legend is hybridized with more romantic and orientalist discourses.

...

Probably the majority of writers that are gathered around the publication *Volgako batelariak* (*literatur noizkari kosakoa*) would have to be included in this new neohistorical trend of which Martínez de Lezea is the most successful practitioner. The neoclassicist poetry of Rikardo Arregi and Angel Erro, Iban Zaldua's novella *The Motherland of All the Basques* (*Euskaldun guztion aberria*, 2008), Juanjo Olasagarre's novels *Impossible Luggage* (*Ezinezko maletak*, 2004), and *T* (2008) as well as the collective manifesto entitled "*Postindependence (A postponed manifesto)*" ("*Postindependentzia: (A postponed manifesto)*", 2008) would have to be included in this trend. However, the genres and styles these writers use, unlike Martínez de Lezea's, are innovative and unprecedented in many cases and, thus, do not receive the automatic reception and success of the latter. Aitziber Etxeberria's *31 Baioneta* (*31 Baionets*, 2007) follows a similar approach. Similarly, Aingeru Epaltza's unfinished historical trilogy, which begins with *The Blood of Mailu* (*Mailuaren odola*, 2006), mixes references to Axular with other historical characters of the kingdom of Navarre, not in order to create an indifferent literature, but rather in order to recreate a geography across the kingdoms of France, Navarre and Castile-Aragon that counters the nationalist history of Spain and France. Yet, the trilogy will have to be evaluated after the last volume is published in a near future.

At the edge of this neohistorical trend, we have literature that attempts to represent historical violence in the twentieth century in the Basque Country. Given the fact that ETA's terrorism has not yet ceased, any attempt to represent this violence in a historical fashion always runs the risk of falling prey to both state terror and separatist terrorism. ETA's violence is still a traumatic kernel for the State; it is the reminder that State terror fails to enforce indifference, thus triggering direct police violence. Hence, state indifference and Basque difference collapse in a traumatic site of violence that has no historical meaning for any subject and, therefore, cannot be represented as such.

In the 1990s, there were initial attempts to narrate indirectly ETA's violence as the return of repressed history of the Franco dictatorship by

...

Moreover, it is important to emphasize that the high-brow, late-modernist literature, which would have Borges as one of its central canonical figures, continues in globalization with writers such as Roberto Bolaño or Enrique Vila-Matas in the Hispanic world. This literature follows the same strategy of creating an alternative global symbolic order and master signifier or Other. In this case, however, the global symbolic order is not structured through a pre-modern historical narrative of otherness with global consequences but, rather, through a historical inquiry into modernist literature itself: from French symbolism to late Latin-American modernism. In works such as Vila-Matas' *Montano's Malady* or Bolaño's *The Savage Detectives*, the search of a hidden literature (an obscure, lost poet) or literary order (literary disease and decadence as the ultimate inner meaning of literature), set usually in a Hispanic-Atlantic geography, creates the same symbolic order or historical totality. Here, thus, rather than revealing a pre-modern secret, the reader is initiated as a member of a very selective and cult-like literary, modernist group. The fact that Vila-Matas is a founding member of the Order of Finnegans, whose members are required to venerate the novel *Ulysses* and its author, James Joyce, also points to this cult-like structure that this literature takes.

canonical writers such as Atxaga (*The Lone Man*, 1993) or Saizarbitoria (*Countless Steps/ Hamaika Pauso*, 1995) through subjects that are indirectly connected to ETA—they had stopped helping ETA after the end of the dictatorship. However, in the 2000s, most attempts to represent contemporary Basque history slip from ETA's terrorism to the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. Jokin Muñoz's *Antzararen bidea* (*The Way of the Goose*, 2007) best exemplifies the way in which an initial story about ETA's violence slips into a narrative of the Civil War. This slippage from contemporary history and ETA to the Civil War is not a coincidence; it is the sign of the irrepresentability of contemporary State terror and Basque difference *qua* terrorism; it is a traumatic reminder of the failure of state indifference. This violence is not the action of a subject, but rather the manifestation of the impossibility of a historical subject, Spanish or Basque²¹. Yet, although contemporary violence cannot be represented in its double nature, as collapse of State terror and historical continuation of terrorism, it is of the outmost importance to emphasize that this traumatic event becomes the site that masks the ongoing terror that the State exerts through its institutions in areas of civil society and the public sphere that are not deemed "politically charged or marked", as it is literature. In short, in its traumatic nature, terrorism contributes to mask State terror and vice versa.

There is a fourth type of literature, which I will call the literature of the *spleen* and the *ennui*. This literature also aims to escape the indifference and violence of the State, but rather than giving preference to history, it only explores contemporary situations and realities. In order to do so, it selects the only logic that can counterpose to state indifference: indifference towards state indifference. This literature is the discourse of a double indifference: beginning with Lourdes Oñederra's *And the Snake Told the Woman* (*Eta sugeak esan zion emakumeari*, 1999) and ending with the early work of Jasone Osoro—just to cite two popular writers—this double indifference has as its structuring affect the spectrum formed by boredom, *ennui* and *spleen*. Among younger writers, Katixa Agirre's *We Don't Have a Light* (*Sua falta zaigu*, 2007), is also part of this trend. It is important to note this literature is many times connected to escapes and trips to northern European countries and has a heteronormative, non-immigrant woman as its subject. I have explored elsewhere the relation between gender and indifference elsewhere (*Nazioaren* 279-302).

Close to the above literature, but centered around the political project of the nationalist radical left, which, nevertheless, does not have a direct literary reflection on ETA's violence—this would amount to acknowledging a violence that the State represses directly as indifference fails. This left-oriented literature, which came out in 2007 with the manifesto "Out with the Euskadi Awards" (*Utikan Euskadi Sariak*) also resorts to the indifference of indifference,

21. Iñigo Aranbarri's *A Whole in the Water* (*Zulo bat uretan*) would be the most extreme form of this historical dissemination, whereby the Spanish Civil War is also connected with the Argentinean dictatorship of the 1970s and German fascism of the 1940s.

even though in this case, it attempts to give a positive or upbeat irrational sense to this double indifference (Zubiri et al.). From Joseba Sarrionaindia to Xabier Montoia, their writing takes a surrealist or psychotic logic, whereby the most optimistic and libidinal fantasies (Koldo Izaguirre, even in his latest *Need a Light Mr. Churchill/Sua nahi Mr. Churchill*, 2005) coexist with the most sadistic tendencies (Montoia, *The Basque City in Flames/Euskal Hiria sutan*, 2006). Perhaps, Harkaitz Cano represents the most surrealist tendency in this group (*The Grass' Mouth/Belarraren ahoa*, 2004). The latest Saizarbitoria too, when he represents the problem of violence in his latest narrative, *Keep Me Under The Ground (Gorde nazazue lurpean*, 2000), also enters this irrational surrealist tendency and mixes in a very fantastic scenario the severed limbs of Civil War Basque nationalist combatants with the bones of Sabino Arana—thus also displacing contemporary violence to the past.

5. TO CONCLUDE

From the above analysis, we can draw now some general conclusions about state politics. First of all, Basque terrorism is a result and product of the indifference of the Spanish (and French) states, a product of the violence of indifference. Secondly, Basque terrorism does not have a historical meaning or subject, or even a utopian content; it has not sprung from a national identity nor will ever produce a national subject; it is rather a traumatic consequence of state indifference's terror. Third, the Spanish state is, historically speaking, an incomplete project that, in globalization, is suffering further erosion of its incomplete sovereignty. Fourth, the solution of violence in the Basque Country and its surrounding states, France and Spain, requires a condition that is unthinkable these days: that these states change their logic of indifference and make room for a non-indifferent relation towards difference—thus admitting Basque independence and self-determination as political possibilities. Finally, and more importantly, the State itself is the institution and subject that must be theorized, criticized, and eventually replaced by less indifferent institutions. If my analysis is correct, the State is constitutively indifferent—and a Basque state, for example, would exert its own terror.

Yet, as long as theorists such as Žižek, and more generally many European intellectuals, legitimize and celebrate the indifference of the “European civilization” and its State, the situation will only escalate towards more violence against any form of difference.

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