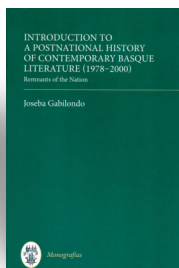


mendiren esperientziak espainoltasunarekiko edo kultura unibertsalarekiko nahitaez izango dira gazteagoenetatik desberdinak. Dena dela, diferentzia hori modu irekian hartzen baita, belaualdi berrie ere gogoetarako abiapuntu bat ematen die liburuak, ikusteko zertan balio dieten garatutako ideiek eta zertan ez. Sentsazioa ematen du, horregatik, liburua den ispi-luak (metafora errekkurrentea idazki osoan) isla interesgarriak itzuliko dizkiola, ohiko Azurmendiren irakurleez gain, euskarazko pentsamendura heldu diren, eta posmodernitatera igaro baino posmodernitatera jaio diren, azken-azken belaualdiei ere.

Azurmendi, Haritz



**GABILONDO ALBERDI, Joseba**  
**Introduction to a Postnational History**  
**of Contemporary Basque Literature**  
**(1978-2000). Remnants of the**  
**Nation**

Woodbridge : Tamesis, 2019  
 338 p. ; 24 cm  
 ISBN: 978-1-85566-332-9

The stereotypical notion of diaspora is often associated with tradition and reluctance to change. Joseba Gabilondo's research, produced at Michigan State University, from the distance of diaspora, is diametrically opposed to such an image: many of his publications are synonymous with innovation and has brought a breath of fresh air into Basque Studies. His recently published book, *Introduction to a Postnational History of Contemporary Basque Literature (1978-2000). Remnants of the Nation* (Tamesis, 2019), is not an exception to this: Gabilondo's brilliant work provides an exciting new insight into history of Basque literature(s). Moreover, presenting the Basque case as a "model of a future postnational Europe and, more generally, of a radically multicultural globalized world" (13), Gabilondo's book proves also to be of great value for literary criticism in general; as a matter of fact, it develops a critical theory of postnationalism and is an inspiring resource for research on dynamics between minority literatures and major literatures.

Even if the book is presented as an English translation of *Nazioaren hondarrak*, which appeared originally in 2006 and which collected mainly articles written before 2000, the re-reading of it continues to be stimulating and challenging, not only for English readers, who seldom have access to literary studies on Basque literature, but also for Basque readers, as the book reaffirms the interest of bringing poststructuralist theory to Basque literary criticism, which is still too often immersed in "an old-fashioned positivist philological and sociological tradition" (vii). Furthermore, the author has modified the original version in a few places, updated the bibliography, added in the footnotes more substantial reconsiderations and discussions of recent works, and wrote a brief but powerful epilogue plenty of suggestive observations about developments in latest basque literatures from 2001 to 2018.

The book is organized in three sections. In the first one, entitled "Postnational Theory and History", Joseba Gabilondo relies on post-Marxism, psychoanalysis, feminism, post-

colonialism, cultural studies and queer theory, in order to advance a theoretical approach to postnationalism, which differs radically from Habermas's proposal, whose formulation he qualifies with absolute certainty as neonationalist rather than postnationalist. Gabilondo aims to capture and analyze the historical and geopolitical complexity of the Basque reality that does not fit any (neo)nationalist theory (18). His postnational theory uses linguistic and national heterogeneity to question the literature and literary institutions created by the imperialist nation-state. By doing so, he complexifies and enriches the concept of Basque literature, defining postnational Basque literature(s) as "constituted by all the literatures written by Basques in all their languages across several states" (3), and therefore including literatures written in Basque, French, Spanish, English,... as well as migration and diasporic literatures and literatures produced by other political and social minorities defined by race, gender, sexuality, and class; that is to say, literary spaces that exceed the nationalist-philological imaginary. According to Gabilondo, "Basque literature must be approached as a multilingual reality at the core of which lies the historical realities of diglossia and political oppression, sometimes enforced by the surrounding states and other times legitimized by the Basque elites themselves against their subaltern classes" (10). Despite the multilingual opening up, in the theoretical part of the book, most of the chapters that follow only focus on authors who write in Basque. For a more complex analysis of Basque literatures, the reader will need to rely on Gabilondo's other masterpiece, *Before Babel* (2016), a postnational history of Basque literatures from the Middle Ages to the year 2016.

The second chapter of the first section, which analyzes the relation between minority and majority literatures from a postnational perspective, exemplifies why it can be so interesting to focus on "small" literatures. Not for exotic reasons, but because it lead us to shed new light on well-know - or not so well-known - dominating literatures. This chapter is, indeed, a "Basque attempt to deconstruct other national European literatures - mainly French and Spanish - as minority literatures in globalization in order to show that they are comparable to Basque literature in their status of global 'minorities'" (27). Consequently, scholars doing research on majority literatures in the age of globalization could learn a lot from research on minority literatures, even if the traditional binary distinction between minority and majority literatures has lost its *raison d'être*.

The finishing part of the first section ends with a postnational survey of Basque literature from 1898 to 2000. According to Gabilondo, the transition from national to postnational literature occurred in the early 1990s, when Basque literatures ceased to respond to the imaginary of Basque nationalism, and became global. Instead of attempting to write allegories that would legitimize them as a nation, instead of responding to a nationalist goal, they started responding to an individual and non-nationalist desire, "the reader's desire to see themselves represented within the Basque public sphere(s)" (51).

In the two remaining sections of the book, Gabilondo explores in detail the literary struggles that took place during the 1975-2000 period. In the first one, he centers on the work of Bernardo Atxaga, the most canonical contemporary author in Basque literature, and argues that Atxaga's work is both "the final achievement of the attempt to represent the nation through national allegory and the harbinger of the crisis of such national literature". In the second one, Gabilondo explores the changes brought by globalization and the new and heterogeneous reality of Basque literatures in the early 1990s, after the crisis of the allegorical representation of the nation.

Gabilondo shows how Atxaga's literature played a key role in the construction of a Basque discursive identity and in the process of institutionalization and canonization of Basque literature. He examines in detail and from different perspectives Atxaga's production, especially the poetry book *Ethiopia* and the book of short stories *Obabakoak*, what he refers to as "topological allegories of the nation" (146). Worthy of a special mention are the pages in which Joseba Gabilondo focus on the global interferences in Atxaga's worlding process and tries to answer intriguing questions such as: "Why this global interest in minority literatures? Why bother with them at all [...]? Could it be that the First World and its new global culture

need minority literatures? What is the libidinal, symbolic, and politico-economic power of these literatures?” (63). In the case of Atxaga, his mysterious, exotic and realist-magic discursive construction of the Basque Country seems to have amply fulfilled the expectations of the First-World literary institutions.

With the advent of globalization, however, the autonomous canonical model of Basque literature, of which Atxaga was the central subject, encountered serious difficulties in maintaining its “nationalist sublimation of internal contradictions” (116) and became “increasingly unable to respond” to the “contradictions of a much more *complex and hybrid reality*” (154), according to Gabilondo. Alternative responses to these contradictions would come from postnational hybridization of literature, and from women’s literature in particular, as the author demonstrates in the last section. Five chapters analyze the work of Bernardo Atxaga and Ramon Saizarbitoria in the 1990s, explore the work of many younger (female) writers and give an account of the repositioning of the Basque Country in front of the global Babel, of how Basque authors embrace the hybridity brought by globalization.

Despite its brevity, the epilogue deserves a special mention, as it contains highly suggestive observations about the most recent Basque literature(s) and about how they face the new challenges of the market-oriented model of culture imposed by neoliberalism and global capitalism (297), observations that make us wish for more articles and books written from a postnational point of view. A wish that can be satisfied easily, as the English publication of *New York-Martutene: On Basque Postnationalist Utopia and the Crisis of Neoliberal Globalization* is in progress, a book with Gabilondo’s research about the most recent Basque literature (2000-12) and, in particular, Ramon Saizarbitoria’s *Martutene* (2012), “the most important novel” of what Gabilondo calls “the long Basque twentieth century”. To this can be added the aforementioned *Before Babel: A History of Basque Literatures* (2016), which has been published in English as an open-access book on paper and online and which is only the beginning of a more complete, exhaustive and promising multivolume history of Basque literatures. Although a lack of critical works and essays in English on Basque literature(s) might be regretted, the lack of quantity is largely compensated by the quality...

### Works cited:

Gabilondo, Joseba (2016). *Before Babel: A History of Basque Literatures*, Lansing: Barbaroak, [www.barbaroak.com](http://www.barbaroak.com)

Gabilondo, Joseba (2019). *Introduction to a Postnational History of Contemporary Basque Literature (1978-2000). Remnants of the Nation*. Woodbridge: Tamesis.

Verbeke, Frederik