

Introduction: Sighting Euskal Herria

In the introduction to *The Chan's great continent*, his brilliant book on Western views of China, Jonathan Spence claims to deal with a series of 'sightings' of that country. He explains the several meanings of that term. Two of those meanings are of particular interest to us now (Spence, 1999: xi-xii). The first comes from the history of navigation and exploration: a sighting is the moment when earth is seen or thought to be seen from a ship, after what has probably been a long voyage. Sighting, then, implies the first contact with a sought-after coast, the arrival to a longed-for destiny; it is the moment when our ideas and expectations are about to come face to face with the land whose imagined presence had originally stimulated those ideas. Still, a sighting is something we do from afar; as Spence points out, the land is sensed in the distance, rather than properly seen, as when Christopher Columbus sensed he was in front of China, of the Chan's great continent, while really arriving at America. This example underlines the extent to which our own preconceptions shape our encounters with the partially unknown. Columbus's sighting of the American coast was illuminated by his hopes and expectations as much as by the dawn.

In this sense, the term underscores particularly well the complexity of travellers' experience, of their engagement with the land which they have heard of, read and talked about, or even dreamt of, and which they have finally come to visit. That visit is not a mere testing ground for the accuracy of all that they know or think they know about a place: in our case, the Basque Country. What they find and see is also conditioned by all the previous knowledge they have brought along with them. Up to a certain degree, then, we could say that what the travellers find and see is what they have chosen to find and see. But at the same time, this does not explain entirely what happens at the encounter between traveller and place. What travellers see, the people they meet and the things those people tell them may also help to change the ideas formed at home. That is what makes the travellers' texts so interesting; the fact that they are a complex, multilayered ground in which many different elements come together. And sighting may be a good term to try to summarize all that complexity.

The term has, however, another, more aggressive meaning to it. As Spence explains, in gunnery a sighting was the act "of finding the range, of getting a balance or a bracketing effect so that one's own shots would hit the target". This military dimension to the word could easily be applied to travel-writing on the Basque

Country, if we consider that much of the attention paid to the Basques during the 19th century was due to the Carlist Wars fought out on its soil. In fact, a considerable number of travel-accounts were produced by soldiers who came to fight for or against the Carlists (there was, nevertheless, a good deal of writing on the Basques in times of peace too, as Sánchez-Prieto's paper makes clear).

In a more general way, the rather hostile attitude suggested by this second meaning of 'sighting' may also be relevant to our present purpose, even if from a more oblique angle. For it has been, and it still is, common in Spain to deny the existence of the Basque Country on the basis of its lack of political unity throughout history. Furthermore, due to the ongoing political problems and discussions about Basque nationalism (and terrorism), those who choose to talk of the Basques as a people have sometimes been charged with distorting the truth and forging history. According to this hostile interpretation, the Basques do not exist; they are really an invented people.

We think the travellers' experience and testimony discussed and analysed in this book may act as a corrective to this hostile kind of sightings. First of all, not just because the travellers show the Basques and the Basque Country to be a proper object for study and discussion, but also because their travel accounts show the Basques in the process of being imagined, of being put, so to speak, into the conceptual map of Europe. The Basques are, then, an imagined community, to use Benedict Anderson's helpful phrase (Anderson, 1983); however, and this is a key point, they are imagined not only by themselves but also by others. The visions, images, and descriptions, in other words, the complex, diverse imaging of the Basques left by those foreign others, mainly during the 19th century but also during the 20th century, constitutes the subject matter of this book's analyses. We thus see the Basque Country as the result of its relations with others; and we therefore reject the (still common) tendency of viewing the Basque Country as an isolated whole already constituted since the dawn of times. Instead of this outdated isolationist approach, we see the Basque Country as the evolving product which emerges from the continuing intercourse of Basques with outsiders (Clifford, 1999).

In response, then, to hostile sightings of the Basques by their critics, we have to state that we do not deny the imaginary character of the Basques, their invented nature. On the contrary, it is partly (but still precisely) because foreigners have perceived and underlined the supposed differences and peculiarities of the Basques that they can claim to exist.

In May 2003 we jointly held a workshop entitled "Imaging the Basques. Foreign Views on the Basque Country" at the European Studies Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford. We were five historians, one anthropologist, one literary critic and one writer. What the reader will find in the pages that follow are revised and enlarged versions of what we presented at that workshop. We have been unable to include one paper and have added another, written since the meeting.

Our overall aim was to stage a multidisciplinary debate on the topic, and to see what might emerge from our border-crossing discussion. Our work can be

seen as relevant to two key academic contexts. First, within Basque studies, we wished to advance a critical understanding of the topic and to further the argument that Basque identity is not fixed or decided definitively by particular parties. It is not a thing coasting in time but a negotiated process moored in history, in which both Basques and non-Basques play their respective roles. Secondly, we wished to assert the place of Basque studies within the emerging field of travel literature. Over the last fifteen years the study of travel-writing has established itself as a worthy scholarly subject in its own right, and is today a lively multidisciplinary field to which academics from anthropology, history, literature and cultural studies contribute (Hulme & Youngs, 2002). Up until now, however, the potential role of Basque studies to the Anglophone branch of this new subject had gone either unacknowledged or just unrecognised. It was high time for a change. Perhaps this book will produce it.

But first, a quick review of earlier commentators on non-Basque outsiders, then a brief introduction to the chapters.

1. PREDECESSORS

We are not the first to show an interest in the accounts left by those visitors who ventured into the Basque Country. Throughout the twentieth century a number of scholars and amateurs have devoted time and work to those texts. Justo Garate (1900-1994) was the first and probably the most important of these scholars. A physician by profession, he very soon showed an interest in foreigners' attitudes towards the Basques; his earliest (1927) work on the topic is an article in Eusko Ikaskuntza's journal, the *Revista Internacional de los Estudios Vascos* (hereafter *RIEV*), devoted to Houston Steward Chamberlain and the Basques; his last is a translation of twelve letters by the Humboldts, published in the same journal in 1993 (Garate, 1927, 1993).¹ Over this 66-year period he dedicated himself to the study of travel-accounts, producing numerous articles both in the daily press and in learned journals, as well as whole books, in which he concentrated on particular writers or dealt with the topic in a general way, e.g. *Viajeros extranjeros en Vasconia* (Garate, 1942), a book encompassing travellers from all over Europe from the Middle Ages up to the 20th century. Wilhelm von Humboldt was a particular favourite of his, and his *Guillermo de Humboldt* (Garate, 1933) contains his translation into Spanish of some pieces still unpublished in German.² Garate also translated the historically important work by the proto-nationalist Joseph Augustin Chaho, *Voyage en Navarre pendant l'insurrection des Basques* (Garate, 1933). Moreover, he frequently contributed to *RIEV* and other scholarly journals translations of, or comments about those parts of travel-accounts relative to the Basque Country: e.g. the chapter on the Basque language in George Borrow's *The*

1. We take both references from Ascunce & San Miguel 2000. On Garate's career and importance, see *Lankidetzan*, 2000.

2. See Hurch 2002: 10, n. 3. Hurch points out that Garate's translations are not always as accurate as one might wish.

Bible in Spain, Victor Hugo's Basque quotations or Christian August Fischer's description of Bilbao in 1797 (Garate, 1929, 1935, 1973, 1978). It is therefore no exaggeration to say that Garate is a fundamental figure for anyone interested in the topic of the European travellers to the Basque Country.

During the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s a variety of others also worked on the subject. The relevant books of this period tend to concentrate on a single province or city rather than in the Basque Country as a whole, the only exception being Fausto Arocena's *El País Vasco visto desde fuera* (Arocena, 1949). Good examples of this geographically focussed approach include José M^a Iribarren's books on foreign views of Vitoria and Pamplona (Iribarren, 1950, 1957), and José Berruezo's work on romantic travellers in San Sebastian (Berruezo, 1951). These authors show a marked preference for the picturesque and the anecdotal. Their books are not aimed at the erudite, but try to offer light reading in a rather impressionistic style; as a result, these works are usually a collection of more or less funny, even extravagant opinions of travellers from all times, though most often from the nineteenth century. For instance Iribarren, in the chapter on Humboldt in his book about Vitoria, digresses to comment on the quality of the sweets sold in the town; later he bothers to tell us about Alexandre Dumas' hunger and the fried eggs he ordered there. However, his book does end with a valuable list of references. In this rather paltry sense, the main worth of these books to researchers may be the guidance they give to texts which might have otherwise been missed.

Among the relevant books published during this period, one stands out for the sheer amount of information it provides: Jaime del Burgo's *La aventura hispánica de los viajeros extranjeros* (Del Burgo, 1963). In this book, Del Burgo assembled most of the titles written by nineteenth-century travellers, and also offers information about their translations into Spanish, English, German and French. In addition, he avoids the pitfall of repeating any amusing or peculiar anecdotes to be found in the travellers' books. However, his comments do usually take on a more ideological tone: he tends to criticize or even condemn liberal travellers, while he appears always ready to emphasize the viewpoints of those travellers whose opinions coincided with his own (he was a supporter and beneficiary of Franco's regime).³ Despite this bias which is easy to take into account because it is usually so obvious, Del Burgo's work offers a very valuable bibliographic guide to nineteenth-century travellers to Spain, especially with respect to the Basque Country.

In the three decades following publication of Del Burgo's book, the best work on perceptions of particular cities would include: Julio-César Santoyo's books on the British Legion in Vitoria and more generally on travellers' impressions of Alava (Santoyo, 1972a, 1972b), Beatriz Monreal's work on Guipuzcoa (Monreal, 1983), and Esteban Orta's on Tudela (Orta, 1993). For the same period, the

3. To give but one example: John Francis Bacon's *Six Years in Biscay* (Bacon, 1838), is described as a "tendentious and Jacobinic" work (Del Burgo, 1963: 50).

best general account of travellers' writing about the Basque Country would be Ángel Martínez Salazar's *Aquellos ojos extraños* (Martínez Salazar, 1995).

During the last decade scholars have paid renewed attention to the topic of travellers' and, more generally, foreigners' views, opinions, impressions and writings about the Basque Country. Examples of this new interest would include: Juan M^a Sánchez-Prieto's monumental *El imaginario vasco* (Sánchez-Prieto, 1993); Francisco J. Caspistegui's and Coro Rubio's articles on the Basques' image as reflected in foreigners' writings (Caspistegui, 1994, 1996; Rubio 2000); the special issue of *RIEV* dedicated to Wilhelm von Humboldt (*RIEV* 1996) – “the first among the Basques' friends”, as Fausto Arocena called him –; the symposium on “Travel and Travellers in Bilbao”, held in 2002 in Bilbao and whose proceedings were published the following year (*Bidebarrieta*, 2003). Rafael López Velasco's *Navarra shall be...*, which concentrates on British travellers from all times, must be added to this list (López Velasco, 2004).

2. THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOK

In contrast with the earlier, rather amateurish works on outsiders' images of the Basques, this revived interest in the subject is marked by more scholarly methods and approaches. It is within this increasingly academic trend that we would like to place the Workshop we staged.

Alex Drace-Francis opens our discussion by analysing the evolving uses of one pair of grand geographical terms – ‘the North’ and ‘the South’ – within which the peoples of Europe, including the Basques, have been variously sited at different times over the last two thousand years. The Basques have often been described in terms of Northernness. Depending on the writer, they were industrious, fierce, austere, simple, separately or all at the same time. Still, in whatever particular ways they were detailed at these times, the point remained the same: they served to supply, together with the Catalans, a stark contrast to other groups of the Iberian Peninsula, who were described in terms of Southernness. Unlike exemplary Northerners, these Southerners were to be viewed as lazy, cowardly, ostentatious, or scheming. On other occasions, Basques have been depicted in terms of Southernness, as opposed to the life-style of Europe's more northern regions. On these occasions, Basques were to be seen as a cheerful people, fond of dancing, eating and drinking. For us, the great value of Drace-Francis's contribution is twofold: first, he reminds us that our understanding of any particular European people has to be placed into a broader geographical setting; second, that the geographical terms used may shift as much as the perceptions of the peoples themselves. On his reading, there are no fixed poles. Our job then becomes not just to study others' perceptions and their evolution, but the various ways the contextual terms within which those perceptions are framed evolve as well.

Jeremy MacClancy, in an exploratory chapter, strives to exploit a resolutely social anthropological approach in his tack at the topic. His concern is to draw out and evaluate the senses of culture, the modes of identity, and the forms of

explanations for those employed by Anglophone writers on the Basques over the last hundred and fifty years. In the belief that canonical Hispanophile writers such as Richard Ford and George Borrow have been given overdue emphasis, he chooses to examine the work of lesser-known authors. Perhaps his most controversial claim is that the Anglophone image of the Basques has, to a great extent, remained essentially unchanged since the mid-nineteenth century. He suggests that this is because the function of the image remains unchanged since that period: to provide an exotic but nearby Other to Britishness.

The core of the book is formed by the four essays on nineteenth-century travel literature about the Basques. Santiago Leoné focuses on the impact the First Carlist war had on foreign images about the Basques and the way these changed before and after that struggle. If eighteenth-century travellers tended to focus on the Basques' political institutions, he argues that this focus shifted during the early nineteenth century to include other aspects such as their customs or language. The travel-accounts produced during (and partially thanks to) the Carlist war delineate the image of the Basques as a distinct people. Later, in the 1840s, other travellers will discuss the problem posed by the existence of such a people, reaching very different and sometimes conflicting conclusions. Juan M^a Sánchez-Prieto, in his turn, leaves aside the war-time literature in favour of the images and views of the Basques produced in times of peace. His paper is attentive to foreign and local texts and to the interaction between both. If the Basques were presented as a sort of *unfamiliar neighbours*, this image was mostly due to foreign writers, those *familiar strangers*, who propagated this picture with the acquiescence of the Basque political and intellectual elites. It is, however, a picture which would be disrupted as a result of the Second Carlist war and its consequences, i.e. the definitive abolition of the Basque Fueros by the Spanish government. Sánchez-Prieto has thus unearthed for us an image whose contours had been distorted and made hazy by later events. Coro Rubio too is attentive to the interaction between foreign and local views and pays particular attention to the contribution of travel accounts to the making of the Basque identity in the nineteenth century. In her paper, she examines some little-known travellers; particularly intriguing is the case of Léon de Rosny, who in 1894 could perceive that the situation in the Basque Country was ripe for the appearance of a nationalist leader. Finally, Francisco J. Caspistegui encompasses both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries in his essay, which focuses on one particular ideological movement, Carlism, as seen by foreign observers. He takes us to a tour through the variety of forms that interest in Carlism has taken, from the very engaged, militant attitude of some romantic writers up to the academic and in principle more distant approach of today's scholars.

Joseba Gabilondo ends our collection with a fiery piece where he first argues that the Basques have been a constitutive element in the European and American imagination since at least the Renaissance, with Basques and non-Basques mutually and repeatedly marking each other's imaginations. According to him, the Basques are characterized by a 'double otherness', as both oriental and originally European at the same time. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was French writers, working within an imperialist period, who promoted this view; a hundred years later, that baton was taken up by American writers,

working within the new context of a single superpower pitted against global terrorism. Nineteenth-century nationalist leaders incorporated this French romanticism in their essentialized version of 'Basque identity', while their successors have had to take on board the transatlantic input to modern versions of it. Thus, on Gabilondo's reading of his material, any study of Basqueness has to be Janus-faced: it has to look at the ways the extra-Basque context has framed local attempts to define Basque identity, and at the ways images of the Basques have fed outsiders' images of themselves.

It will be fascinating to see whether further analysis will corroborate the empirical generalizations Gabilondo so boldly makes. One question arises immediately: MacClancy finds only one slight example of an outsider viewing the Basques in orientalist terms; Gabilondo finds many and makes them central to his concept of 'double otherness'. Is this difference a consequence above all of the fact that MacClancy attends mainly to English writers while Gabilondo focuses on French and American authors? Perhaps what is needed is for us to pay finer attention to composition of 'the Orient' and the ways it is used in Hispanic contexts.

We do not provide a conclusion, because there is not one, simply a series of suggestive points: the importance of recognizing the relativity of geographical terms (e.g. 'North', 'South'); the need to extricate the models of culture underlying writers' images; the necessity of attending to both foreign and local writers and how they interacted; the tension between (a) the persistent exoticizing function of much writing about the Basques, and (b) the particular inflections given to Basqueness at different historical moments; the broader socio-political contexts within which images of others fit. If we want to do any further work in this field and to assure the place of Basque research within travel-writing studies, it will be points such as these that we will need to develop.

Santiago Leoné

Geronimo de Ustaritz Institutua

Jeremy MacClancy

Oxford Brookes Univ. School of Social Sciences and Law

3. REFERENCES

- ANDERSON, Benedict (1983). *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- AROCENA, Fausto (1949). *El País Vasco visto desde fuera*. San Sebastián: Biblioteca Vascongada de los Amigos del País.
- ASCUNCE, José Ángel & SAN MIGUEL M^a Luisa (2000). "Estudio bibliográfico: Justo Garate", in *Lankidetzan* (2000), pp. 135-161.
- BACON, John Francis (1838). *Six Years in Biscay: Comprising A Personal Narrative of the Sieges of Bilbao in June 1835 and Oct. to Dec. 1836. And of the principal events which occurred in that City and the Basque Provinces during the Years 1830 to 1837*. London: Smith, Elder & Co.
- BERRUEZO, José (1951). *Viajeros románticos en San Sebastián*. San Sebastián.
- Bidebarrieta* (2003). issue on "Bidaiak eta bidaiariak Bilbon barrena – Viajes y viajeros en Bilbao", *Bidebarrieta*, XIV.
- CASPISTEGUI, Francisco Javier (1994). "¿Bárbaros o hidalgos? Los navarros vistos por los extranjeros". In: Ana Zabalza et alii, *Navarra 1500-1850 (Trayectoria de una sociedad olvidada)*. Pamplona: Ediciones y Libros, pp. 215-223.
- CASPISTEGUI, Francisco Javier (1996). "Entre la curiosidad y la aprensión: las otras miradas", in Ángel J. Martín Duque (ed.), *Signos de identidad histórica para Navarra*. Pamplona: CAN, vol. II, pp. 483-494.
- CLIFFORD, James (1999). "Prologue: In Medias Res". In: *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge (Mass.) & London: Harvard University Press, pp. 1-13.
- DEL BURGO, Jaime (1963). *La aventura hispánica de los viajeros extranjeros. La España desconocida de Cenac Moncaut*. Pamplona: Editorial Gómez.
- GARATE, Justo (1927). "Houston Steward Chamberlain y los vascos". In: *RIEV*, XVIII, pp. 644-646.
- GARATE, Justo (1929). "La Biblia en España. Por George Borrow". In: *RIEV*, XX, pp. 293-305.
- GARATE, Justo (1933). *Guillermo de Humboldt. Estudio de sus trabajos sobre Vasconia*. Bilbao: Imprenta Provincial de Vizcaya.
- GARATE, Justo (1935). "Las citas vascas de Victor Hugo y el vasco-celtismo". In: *RIEV*, XXVI, pp. 633-639.
- GARATE, Justo (1942). *Viajeros extranjeros en Vasconia*. Buenos Aires: Ekin (a second edition, enlarged and corrected, was released in 1989).
- GARATE, Justo (1973). "Descripción de Bilbao en el verano de 1797. Por Fischer, Christian August". In: *Estudios Vizcaínos*, 7-8, pp. 229-250.
- GARATE, Justo (1978). "Relato del viaje de Bilbao a Burgos por Christian August Fischer". In: *Boletín de la Institución Sancho el Sabio*, XXII, pp. 409-418.
- GARATE, Justo (1993). "Doce cartas nuevas de los esposos Humboldt escritas en España (1799-1800)". In: *RIEV*, XXXVIII, 1, pp. 47-71.
- HULME, Peter & YOUNGS Tim (2002). "Introduction". In: Hulme & Youngs (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 1-13.

- HURCH, Bernhard (ed.) (2002). *Die baskischen Materialien aus dem Nachlass Wilhelm von Humboldts. Astarloa, Charpentier, Fréret, Aizpitarte und anderes*. Paderborn: Schöningh.
- IRIBARREN, José M^a (1950). *Vitoria y los viajeros del siglo romántico*. Vitoria: Caja de Ahorros de Vitoria.
- IRIBARREN, José M^a (1957). *Pamplona y los viajeros de otros siglos*. Pamplona: Institución Príncipe de Viana.
- LÓPEZ VELASCO, Rafael (2004). *Navarra shall be..La Tierra del Euskera y las Islas Británicas*. Pamplona: Pamiela.
- MARTÍNEZ SALAZAR, Ángel (1995). *Aquellos ojos extraños. Euskal Herria en los libros de viajes*. Vitoria: Papeles de Zabalanda.
- MONREAL, Beatriz (1983). *Guipúzcoa en escritores y viajeros*. San Sebastián: Caja de Ahorros Provincial.
- ORTA, Esteban (1993). *Tudela y la Ribera tudelana a través de los viajeros*. Tudela.
- RIEV (1996). Special issue on Wilhelm von Humboldt. In: *RIEV*, XLI:2.
- RUBIO, Coro (2000). "La imagen de los vascos en los viajeros europeos del siglo XIX". In: *Oihenart*, 18, pp. 95-125
- SÁNCHEZ-PRIETO, Juan M^a (1993). *El imaginario vasco. Representaciones de una conciencia histórica, nacional y política en el escenario europeo, 1833-1876*. Barcelona: EIUNSA.
- SANTOYO, Julio-César (1972a). *La Legión Británica en Vitoria*. Vitoria: Biblioteca Alavesa "Luis de Ajuria".
- SANTOYO, Julio-César (1972b). *Viajeros por Álava. Siglos XV a XVIII*. Vitoria: Biblioteca Alavesa "Luis de Ajuria".
- SPENCE, Jonathan (1999). *The Chan's great continent. China in Western minds*. Harmondsworth: Allen Lane The Penguin Press.
- VV. AA. (2000). *Justo Garate*. Donostia: Eusko Ikaskuntza.