

Familiar strangers: the reflective gaze on the Basque Country between the two Carlist Wars

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Espainiak eta Euskal Herriak, Independentzia Gerran eta Lehen Karlistaldian moldaturiko Espainiaren mitoak lagundurik, behatzaile ugariren begiratua erakarri zuten. Horiek irudi parrasta bat eman zuten euskal berezitasunari buruz; irudi horiek, oro har, aurreko ikuspenean eta Bigarren Karlistaldian sortu zirenen desberdinak ziren, batez ere 1876az geroztikakoekin, hau da, espainiar estatuan euskal foruak behin betiko ezeztatu ondokoekin alderatuz gero.

Giltza-Hitzak: Historiografia. Oroimena. Nortasuna. Euskal Herria. Europa. XIX. mendea.

España y el País Vasco, favorecidos por el mito de España forjado durante la Guerra de Independencia y la Primera Guerra Carlista, consiguieron atraer la mirada de gran número de observadores. Éstos produjeron un torrente de imágenes de la singularidad vasca; unas imágenes que, en su conjunto, difieren tanto de visiones anteriores como de las que se elaboraron en la Segunda Guerra Carlista y sobre todo después de 1876, es decir, cuando los Fueros vascos fueron definitivamente abolidos por el Estado español.

Palabras Clave: Historiografía. Memoria. Identidad. País Vasco. Europa. Siglo XIX.

L'Espagne et le Pays Basque, gagnés par le mythe de l'Espagne forgé durant la Guerre d'Indépendance et la Première Guerre Carlisle, réussirent à attirer le regard d'un grand nombre d'observateurs. Ceux-ci produisirent un flux d'images de la singularité basque ; des images qui, dans leur ensemble, diffèrent autant des points de vue précédents que de ceux qui furent élaborés au cours de la Seconde Guerre Carlisle et surtout après 1876, c'est-à-dire, lorsque les Fueros basques furent définitivement abolis par l'Etat espagnol.

Mots Clés: Historiographie. Mémoire. Identité. Pays Basque. Europe. XIX^{ème} siècle.

A renewed romantic impetus, perceptible in Europe around 1830 and mostly linked to the progress of Liberalism, gave rise to a new way of seeing and of judging the relations between the old and the new. Spain and the Basque Country, favoured in their turn by the *myth of Spain* which had been forged during the Peninsular War and the First Carlist War, were able to attract the eyes of a multitude of observers. These would bring forth a flood of images of the Basque singularity (a singularity visible in the Basques' language, customs, laws and political regime, which were still alive giving shape to ideas and collective feelings); and these images, taken as a whole, differ from earlier visions as well as from those elaborated during the Second Carlist War and, above all, after 1876, i.e., once the Basque *Fueros* were definitely abolished by the Spanish State. Every image results from a particular look, but there are many ways of looking, depending on who looks, on his or her standpoint, on the weight of the circumstances surrounding him or her, and, in short, on the observer's own experience. The resulting image reflects inevitably all these elements. Romantic travellers differ from tourists, as Alain Corbin has pointed out, in that they are not mere cultural pilgrims, ready to take up the pleasure of recognition and to acknowledge difference when necessary (Corbin, 1988: 207 and 250). Incessantly questioning the aim and sense of their voyage, they travel in search of their own identity and, therefore, they describe their inner sensations rather than the external objects they encounter. The romantic travellers' gaze, whether attentive or contemplative, is always a gaze out of the soul, an introspective gaze, naturally directed towards the depths of history; it takes delight in the multiplicity of historical times, imagining and reconstructing the links mediating between the present and the origins. This way of looking, however, is only possible in times of peace. As a matter of fact, this is the main distinguishing trait of the looks on the Basque Country between the two Carlist Wars.

1. THE INVITATION OF PEACE

The end of the First Carlist War brought genuine relief. In the name of peace, acting as ambassador, Basque writer Iza Zamacola made a formal invitation from the pages of the Madrid-based weekly *Semanario pintoresco español* to get to know the country and its customs. Without further precisions, he included the "kingdom of Navarre" among the number of the "Basque provinces" (Zamacola, 1839). The writer was a son of Juan Antonio Zamacola's, a former *afrancesado* ("frenchified") and author of a *Historia de las Naciones Bascas*, written under Herder's influence and published in 1818 (and later again in 1898), a book Iza Zamacola made ample use of in his articles, though without crediting it most of the time. Iza was convinced that these provinces were more unknown for the inhabitants of the Peninsula themselves than the remote regions of the Pole. Peace offered now the opportunity of grasping their original character, "not unravelled until now" partly because of "our historians' indolent apathy". The Basque-Navarrese territory was thus a "virgin mine which has hardly suffered yet the first blow of the scholars' working". Nevertheless, it comprised enough elements – patriarchal customs, old usages, poetic language, warlike spirit – to deserve the attention of everyone: of lawyers, politicians, military men or writers, of freedom lovers and even of freedom's enemies, those who had dared to tread

on Basque liberties. Peace excluded no one and offered a chance to know the Basques' real character. The Basques are, in general, frank and big-hearted by nature, faithful friends and trustworthy in their dealings. The Navarrese, adds Iza, show a manner of "character somewhat obscure at first, but so resolute and generous afterwards that those who are able to gain their friendship will be much honoured by it". Their noble pride and their honesty result from an education based on their uses and customs, and their energy forms a central part of their character. "The obligation of sacrificing oneself for one's country is considered as a family legacy" (Zamacola, 1839: 307-308 and 349).

The Vergara peace was hailed unanimously. "Under Europe's eyes peace has been made", celebrated Iztueta (Iztueta, 1840). Modesto Lafuente – who would years later become a respected historian as well as the best exponent of Spanish liberal nationalism – evoked that peace at the beginning of his *Viajes de Fray Gerundio* (1842), precisely as the starting-point of a new way of looking towards Europe. That miraculous event "changed Spain's visage and offered the world a surprising testimony of Spanish chivalry". The field of Vergara, where generals Espartero and Maroto had embraced each other, invited to be quiet and at the same time to understand that

whenever we want to reproach foreigners their calculated sparseness in the publishing of our glories and of our high qualities, we should take the blame ourselves (Lafuente, 1842: 28-29).

The newly reached peace invited to look forwards, but the feeling of anger, nourished by the memory of the war's horror, made oblivion selective sometimes. Fernández de los Ríos's *Itinerario descriptivo*, from Madrid to Paris, contributed to strengthening the myth of the barbarian. His aim was to emulate those men who, "longing for instruction, started on long voyages in order to examine different countries and study fully their inhabitants' customs". Passing through the Basque Country, this progressive fighter, director of the *Semanario pintoresco español* at the time, is overwhelmed by the memory of the Carlist war and of the "always terrible nature of an intestine fight". However, he remembers exclusively the "atrocities and cruel vengeance" committed by the Carlist faction; those "wretched rebels", few at first, sheltered behind inaccessible mountains and "having the country's support", had been able to build up a numerous army and to face successfully the liberal troops. The Carlists' fierceness belonged in "times of pitiful memory for humanity and were not to be expected in a civilized century" (Fernández de los Ríos, 1848: 2 and 13). Victor Hugo's understanding effort to place Carlism within European parameters was more acceptable abroad than in Spain. Peace had still much work to do.

The invitation of peace attracted a series of new views on the Basque Country, quite different from those brought forth during the war. Wars, their tensions and fears, fabricate heroes and ghosts, friends and enemies, producing a dynamic which has resentment as its only basis. They create a tragic atmosphere, in which the urgent need for solutions makes it impossible to think about the problems with the necessary calm. Peace, on the contrary, brings fresh air into human relationships, allows room for relaxation and enjoyment, and provides the serenity needed for a

better interaction with those around. Others can then be viewed under a more sympathetic, permissive light. And out of that light a new string of images is revealed, not less daring sometimes, but substantially different from the war-time images.

2. A FAMILY APART

Peace makes it possible to appreciate better what unites and what splits apart, what is owned and what may be lost. The memories that enlarge the hearts of the Basques and their love for their fatherland are nourished under the shadow of their *Fueros*, affirmed Iza Zamacola. That “patriotic enthusiasm” they fought with in defence of freedom and for the keeping of their ancient customs is a constant trait “since the arrival of the first foreign nations”. It would look like a figment of the imagination, he says, if the country’s inhabitants were not able to show they have retained the laws and customs their ancestors enjoyed. The present gives legitimacy to the memory of the past, such is the Basque conviction expressed by Iza (Zamacola 1839: 318 and 323). *The Revue de Paris* selected in 1841 some pages from Dembowski’s *Deux ans en Espagne et Portugal pendant la guerre civile (1838-1840)*; they were judged of particular interest at the precise moment Espartero had temporarily suspended the *Fueros* (the 1841-1844 crisis), because the author had had the opportunity of studying on the spot the Basque institutions’ “singular mechanism”. The image of a “genuine republican federation” without a capital resulted from the description of the Basque political system: the *three Basque sisters*, with the motto *Irurac bat*, i.e. the three are one, formed “a family apart within the big Spanish family”. The myth of Basque provincial republicanism (well elaborated already in the 18th century by such native thinkers as Fontecha or Larramendi) is now established as a fact of observation from abroad. Language, customs, traditions, institutions, “everything contributes to that difference, to that isolation”, writes the Polish Baron; he did also not forget to mention the existence of customs houses on the Ebro, which would be finally moved to the Pyrenees in 1844, and the prohibition the Basques provinces had of trading directly with America (Dembowski, 1841). At the same time, regarding the other side of the Pyrenees, former French Consul Barrère drew attention to Basque emigration towards America, an “illness which impoverishes and depopulates the Country” since 1830, according to the Department’s authority. This emigration was motivated by the Basques’ adventurous spirit as well as by a feeling of malaise and destitution provoking an “ardent thirst for riches”. It was launched by the view of a prosperous and happy future, as depicted not only by those relatives who had already migrated but also by the “unexpected presence of agents in charge of something like a white-slave trade”, who described the other side of the Atlantic Ocean as a promised land. The spreading out of that giddy sensation, dragging along young men and women, was the real cause of Basque expatriation and its resulting evils: the loss of family feeling, of morality, of the country’s customs. “Is this not too much to lose?”. Barrère was not addressing only the Basques. He was much more worried that the trend might affect all of France in the same measure (Barrère, 1842: 5-6, 13, 18-19, 38-39, 46-47).

Richard Ford stands out among the legion of travellers who, attracted to Spain under the spell of the *myth of Spain* which had been forged amidst the thunder of

the Peninsular War and the First Carlist War, came suddenly across the Basque singularity upon their entering the Iberian Peninsula. A traveller himself and a guide to other English travellers, he presents the Basque Provinces, the *Cantabria* of the ancients (a name, he adds, derived from *Kent-Aber*, meaning “the Corner of the Water”), as a remote area in the peninsular North-West which “like our Wales, is the home of the remnant of the aboriginal inhabitants”, sticking stubbornly to their condition as “an unadulterated primitive race” in “language and nationality”. Navarre, in its turn, corresponds to the former *Vasconia*. The secret of these provinces’ union (“the one thing wanting to unamalgamating sectional Spain”) lies in “a common alliance against all that is not Basque”. Accustomed to feigning obedience (*obedecido pero no cumplido*, “obeyed but not carried out”,¹ was the formula attending the King’s laws deemed to be contrary to the *Fueros*), the Basques are always vigilant and afraid of the modern centralising doctrines opposing local liberties. That was what threw them into Carlism’s arms. The Basques’ worldview is ethnocentric. Being the head of the Iberian family predisposes them naturally in favour of their country and of themselves. Parochial in the extreme, the Basques manifest a lack of perspective and proportion. The narrow region of the self occupies such a big scale that “every thing and person beyond this boundary appears too diminutive and subordinate”. Ford notes down that “the Basques call themselves *Euscaldunac*, their country *Escualeria*, and their language *Euscara*”. But despite that strong feeling of their own identity “sooner or later, however, the Basque *fueros* must be abolished whenever a really strong government can be formed”, affirms Ford looking at the Spanish political scene, when *moderado* politics were still in the making and much was to be done before Cánovas undertook really the State’s centralization (Ford, 1845: II, 921-927 and 997).

The peculiarities of this corner of the water, contemplated from the French border, enclosed an ethnologic problem. Brigham translated the enigma for the Americans, intent on the conquest of their own frontier. Who are “these strange peasants, in grotesque dress, half Greek, half Gaelic”, displaying their muscular legs and “awkward stalking”, in such fashionable places as Biarritz, where the ladies of the aristocracy enjoy watching an Empress bathing with her wide-winged hat? The answer he offers is a comparative one.

The southwestern corner of every land seems to retain the longest its original rudeness, and to keep a rough and unsubdued people when the other races have been incorporated and accustomed to civilized habits.

The rule was fulfilled even in America. “Texas is our Basque province, with a fame for lawless rangers and eccentric dialect”. And he reminds that in the Senate of Massachusetts the “Boston Corner” had been described as a place inhabited by people who did not keep their word, did not pay taxes, “and were fit only to be cut off from the State and left to vegetable isolation”. For Brigham the Basques, the “Southwestern corner”, were but a cul-de-sac. The praise of their history and tradition, making an idyllic race of them, overlooked “that part of the Basque life which is coarse, crude, and repulsive” (Brigham, 1858).

1. In Spanish in Ford’s original. The translation into English is Ford’s too.

3. LANDSCAPE AND POETRY

The reality of the Basque Country dawned upon many through a sudden discovery of the landscape. Antonio Flores, a veteran Madrid journalist, editor of *América* and of *Época*, and director of *El Laberinto*, where he published in instalments *Un viaje a las Provincias Vascongadas asomando las narices en Francia* (Flores, 1844-1845), the account of a trip which took him to Bordeaux, did not observe anything worth remarking on in Vitoria. He described it as a provincial capital staying at which “was not more profitable than staying anywhere else”. At the Vitoria social club people read, play and chat harmlessly or they gossip like at any other club, “but innocently, without second thoughts”. Some of its rooms, though, drew his attention by comparison with those of the Madrid club, like the reading room, where “all the national newspapers, many foreign ones and some books” were to be found. Things changed on his way to Guipuzcoa. “I do confess, gentlemen” – he pointed out to his readers –

that I do nothing but change my pen, brought out new pieces of paper, open up my eyes and raise my brows, not knowing how to give an idea of the Basque country to those who have not seen it, or how to prove the inhabitants of Guipuzcoa that my eyes were not open in vain when I visited its mountains.

The landscape discovered through the coach windows made one leave all possible laziness aside and listen to its call. “What has man done in comparison with the smallest beauty of this brilliant landscape?”. He has laid waste the fields, set fire to the woods, razed the crops, treated his fellow men with cruelty, conquered places he is bound to abandon to his enemies the following day. Self-satisfied with his progress, man’s resentful pride leads him to destroy what he cannot understand; and perhaps he tries to excuse his ignorance by setting limits to his imagination. Flores would be later astonished when he remembered these “desolate reflections” made while crossing the river Deva, meandering through those cliffs “like mercury flowing through silver fountains to get rid of the impurities it carries with it”. The approach to the Basque Country demanded, according to this journalist,

having recourse to philosophy and mixing it with some drops of observation, so that nothing could escape that may contribute to the careful, precise exam of the peoples’ customs, thus subjected to critical analysis in philosophy’s crucible (Flores, 1844-1845: 44, 56-57, 68).

Landscape was thus put at the service of reflection. Modesto Lafuente and his *Fray Gerundio* had that same experience when, endeavouring to unravel the so-called question of the *Fueros*, they contemplated the fog fighting over the Basque Country “a bitter battle with the sun”. The fog defended the *Fueros* stubbornly every morning; the sun, in its turn, tried to extend the rays of constitutional rights to every corner of the Kingdom, not recognising privileges or exceptions. Only during the “lucid intervals” in that fight, when the sun got some advantage over the fog, was it possible to enjoy the view of that delightful landscape and to perceive the hills and the woods heavy with fruit (“like our towns heavy with the weight of taxes”), the smiling valleys of fertile maize fields (“thicker than society’s vices, more sensuous than Quevedo’s erotic poetry”) and the brooks (“more

twisted that the march of our governments and so clear that truth can be seen in them”) moistening the edges (“which had more embroideries than the surplice of a nuns’ chaplain”) of those cultivated lands (“more deeply wrought than a repentant sinner’s heart”) (Lafuente, 1842: 35-36). The pattern of difference can only be appreciated in the clarity of distance.

In addition to the land, the language too is different. The cheerful and feminine Elisabeth Herbert Countess of Pembroke allows herself some jokes on it in when recounting her impressions of a trip made in 1866. The natives’ language was as “hopeless” for foreigners as Gaelic. The Andalusians have a say that one could spend seven years in Bilboa studying the “Basque dialect” and only learn three words (Richard Ford, among others, included this tale in his guide, though not restricting it to the Andalusians and having the devil himself as protagonist: not being a fool at all, he was not able to overcome the language’s difficulty – Ford, 1845: 926-927). “And the pronunciation!”, continues Herbert: the Basques write *Salomon* and pronounces *Nebuchadueztar*. The Countess then recovers and adds:

Be this as it may, they are a contended, happy, prosperous, sober race, rarely leaving their own country, to which they are passionately attached, and deserving, by their independence and self-reliance, their name of *Bayascogak* (Herbert 1867: 3-5).

Iza Zamacola, in his 1839 invitation, had explained that sentence-building distinguished Basque from the rest of European languages, “but not from those of America or those of inland Africa”, he affirmed self-confidently; these made their sentences the same way as Basque (putting the object first, then the function, the quality or the form, and thirdly the action or movement necessary to carry out the thing) because they all came from one primitive language characterised by the “harmonious and philosophical building of its words”. The Latin countries, by forgetting these rules, had fallen into the confusing hotchpotch of the *style of writing*. Iza does not trace the Basque language’s origins back to the earthly paradise, with Adam and Eve as its first speakers (as Erro had still done at the beginning of the 19th century), even though it is of an antiquity “unknown in history”, belonging to the “first age of the world” (Zamacola, 1839: 350-351). However, Richard Ford, following Perochegui, did spread the old myths: that Adam was “the first gentleman” to speak Basque “as being the language of angels, which seems strange”; that the Basque language was “brought pure into Spain, by Tubal”, much earlier than the confusion of Babel. Whether or not it was spoken by the angels, its grammar, “as may be supposed”, is very complex; it is, in any case, a language different from Irish, Celtic or Welsh, “with which it has been often supposed to be a sister idiom”. Ford leans here on Borrow’s authority, friend of his and “one of the Polyglots of the day”, who maintained that Basque was “of a Tartar origin, resembling in structure the Manchou and the Mongolian, with a decided Sanscrit element” (Ford, 1845: 927). The mystery of the Basque language admitted any kind of explanation.

For Brigham the mystery lay in the fact that it had not yet disappeared.

Both the French and Spanish governments have for some centuries steadily discouraged the use of this language, and tried by every possible method to root it out,

he states. In Spain numerous schools were established where modern languages were assiduously taught, with intent to exclude the old one, "and the powerful influence of the priesthood has been enlisted for the same object". This "work of extirpating the former language" has gone on within the present century with increasing vigour, so that in the province of Spanish Navarre "it has almost disappeared, and is not known to the younger generation". The mountainous regions had stubbornly opposed the change and it was plausible to think the *escuara* would still survive there for some generations not only because of the scattered nature of the population, but also and above all because of "the patriotic pride of a people whose glory is their history". The Basque is as proud of his lineage "as a Bedouin or an Hungarian noble", says Brigham, going on to comment the myth of Basque original independence. The Basques were the only ones in Iberia and in Gaul to have resisted Caesar's troops; the land they inhabited was never subjected to foreign domination and was rarely occupied by a conquering army; the "untamable Cantabrians", real "wild beasts" according to Strabo's description, have honoured their reputation

by transmitting the spirit of freedom". The Basques like to proclaim that "they alone remain to represent the spirit and blood of the first inhabitants of the land (Brigham, 1858: 215).

In his 1857 description of the Basque Country, Francisque Michel underscores emphatically the musical qualities of Basque, which, he thought, contained and expressed all natural sounds: the whispers of the woods, the echoes of the valleys, the grave and melancholy wail of the sea breaking on the beach (Michel, 1857). Through language, landscape is blended with poetry. The Altabiscar Song, published in 1835 by the Bayonne-born writer Garay de Monglave as a pendant and rival to the Song of Roland (Garay de Monglave 1835), was for Michel full of a fiery spirit and rhythm. Auriac, reviewing the Basque ballads published a little later by Michel (Michel, 1859a), did not hesitate to name him the Basque Macpherson, "though an honest and serious one, exclusively preoccupied by accuracy and truth", he added. He could not tell whether any scholar would doubt the authenticity of those ballads (as it actually happened with the Altabiscar Song), but that was of little concern to the critic. Despite not speaking Basque, "I humbly confess that the existence of these Basque poems seems indisputable to me". The translator could have at some points softened the original's roughness and have filled some gaps with passages of his own making, but who, Auriac wonders, could censure him when he discovers for us songs unknown so far, which exhale "the wild perfume of the mountains" (Auriac, 1860).

Land and language, then, appear in the Other's eyes as the founding elements of Basque identity. It is that foreign gaze the one that can and does actually fix the image of the Basques as a distinct people. In his 1850 examination and re-elaboration of the materials on Basque history sent to the Paris *Institut historique* by Polydore Labadie, Renzi stopped to signal his readers the value of the typical traits and of the customs or "national usages" of the "*escualdunacs* or Basques" (Renzi, 1850). At the end of his analysis, he drew attention to the function filled by the legend in the interweaving of times. Renzi recreates the

image of the white-haired old man who, at the dining table, captivates his guests' attention with the "tale of an ancient legend from the traditional history of the Basque nation", a way of recalling the past among the living "which serves to transmit its memories to posterity". That memory, particularly alive in the rural world, keeps customs intact and provides "a colour full of charm and originality", Renzi observes (Renzi, 1850: 183-184). That unwritten culture, said Iza Zamacola in 1839, did not consecrate the existence of an archaic world but guaranteed the keeping of peace. The Basque writer's explanation was put at the service of this more primary aim of his. The Basques had never needed to write in order to communicate their ideas and thoughts to each other. They wrote no more than what was absolutely necessary to present for approval at the general assemblies.

All other writings, about annals, fueros, usages, customs, religious ritual, history, law, politics, medicine, astronomy, and whatever fell under the censure of those fathers of the country, if not approved, all were burned and torn on the spot, so that the inhabitants' peace and quiet was never disturbed.

That way the Basques had managed to maintain a long-lasting peace in the governments of their different republics and federations, not incurring once in the feverish delusions of those who had "devastated the human kind either as conquerors or as fanatic sectarians" (Zamacola, 1839: 350-351). It was obviously a political explanation without much historical rigour.

4. ON THE FAMILY WORLD

At the starting-point of Iza Zamacola's reflections there lies the idea that Basque society is a society founded on the respect for custom. Few laws and many customs, that is the secret of a legal system approaching man to the original source of happiness. That is the Basques' maxim too, and whoever tries to alter it will be banished *out of the fatherland*, "just like the old Spartans banished Timotheus because he gave the lyre a fifth cord". Upbringing is the first of customs and the most respectable of institutions among the Basques. That is why hospitality is almost a duty for them ("one could hardly find another nation in the world where foreigners are more warmly welcomed") and the ultimate consequence of a perfect social equality, because there are no "family distinctions or pretensions of a better blood, the destitute being as destitute and noble as the powerful" (Zamacola, 1839: 323-324). Iza is here discreetly pointing to the old myth of Basque egalitarianism.

In the exam of Basque customs Renzi made, the first thing to strike the observer was the outward demeanour. The famous Basque pride was reflected in their gaze, in their highly-marked features and in their attitude, friendly and haughty at the same time. Of an average stature but well-built, they walk with their head high and their shoulders low, always carrying with them a stick which serves them both "as an inseparable companion and as a heavy weapon if necessary". The Basques are not usually the first to address a foreigner; if they do, their gesture will always express a sense of being equal to the person saluted: "that

noble feeling [of egalitarianism] is among the Basques as strong as that of their nationality”, observes Renzi. The myth of universal nobility is thus reworked by linking it to the existence of a Basque national conscience, and this reworking takes place not so much in the Basque Country itself as in Paris, with the scholarly intention of solving an “only seeming contradiction”. The Basques, Renzi added,

are immensely proud of their nobility, that is to say, of their collective nobility as a nation and not of that individual nobility known by every one and for which they have nothing but the greatest contempt.

In general, the *escualdunacs* of both sides of the Pyrenees are, according to the traits Renzi takes from Labadie, active, restless, supple, tumultuous, “firm in front of menace or coercion”, but easy to calm down and soften through persuasiveness and smoothness of character. That made magnificent soldiers of them (“above all when they have to defend their fatherland’s hills”, they are “like the North wind chasing the thunder and the storm away from the heart of the Pyrenees”: the myth of Basque immemorial independence turns up again under the spell of landscape), even though they were not apt to be subjected to military discipline (Renzi, 1850: 173-174).

But despite their apparent fierceness, our Parisian author points out, the Basques were really fond of family life and of the enjoyments of leisure, as evidenced by their casual and more or less elegant clothes. From a local perspective, however, Iza Zamacola considered the Basques used a large variety of clothes. That made it impossible to choose one as typical or to describe them in a general way, because the Alavese and particularly the Navarrese had admitted some novelties. Only the Biscayans had kept their clothes “since time immemorial”, adds Iza before detailing the elements of the peasant’s clothing: black breeches tied around the knees, a waistcoat; stockings, shoes and buttons or long leggings; a silken tie; a half tall hat of wide wing, turned up at the back; hair untied; and a earthen pipe of short stem and long stick. It struck a remarkable contrast with the peasant women’s clothing, of little elegance, much less so from the time they married and directed their efforts to the good keeping of their houses, appearing before their husbands without any kind of adornment (Zamacola, 1839: 324).

In Renzi’s view, the same passion the Basques feel for public assemblies attracted them naturally to all kind of meetings having to do with playing or dancing. He goes on to quote literally the paragraphs Labadie had devoted to the “national dance”; its diverse, precise and well-measured cadences had “a lively character, a joyful rhythm, a wild and primitive personification and a both original and varied expression”, and all put together it was something extraordinary. The so-called pastorals constituted another real spectacle. The name – Renzi explains – relates to the shepherds and the peasants who play the parts in this theatrical diversion, which usually takes place either before or after the dance. The topic is taken from the Bible or from old legends; it is adapted to the Basque language and then acted in several scenes of different duration. Some pieces of wood supported on simple barrels form the stage; there is no scenery at all and actors who cannot read perform their roles “with admirable intelligence”, showing off a prodigious memory and excellent reciting abilities.

This taste for theatre affects too some aspects of everyday life and of the family world the Basques are rather sensitive to. Authority, very respectable and much respected among them, is one of those aspects. Hence, it is not strange that those who wield it show great zeal in keeping it. The father's authority over his children and the husband's over his wife is enormous among the Basques, explains Renzi. Therefore, if a husband lets his wife dominate him he becomes the laughing stock of the place, the more so if she is prone to use violence against him. The *atusterca* or donkey's tour is then staged. This old custom consists in having a puppet riding a donkey shown around the whole village; at a certain point, the quarrel between the weak husband and his wife is acted out with all manner of details; a tribunal is then chosen to judge the case, as well as a public prosecutor and a lawyer who must discuss the plea until a sentence is pronounced among the laughter and mockery of everyone present (Renzi, 1850: 175-178).

Journalist Flores thought of this aspect from another point of view. He valued the "fraternal" preoccupation the Basques showed among themselves and the not less natural respect they had for civil authority "and even more for their elders' authority". He understood this in a liberal sense, as the best praise one could make of Basque culture and enlightenment (by contrast, Renzi, from a French point of view, considered the Basques a stagnant people, left aside the civilising process because of the "invincible repugnance" they felt towards the education the government offered, something that could only be excused by taking into account the difficulty the Basques had in substituting French for their mother tongue, which they believed to be the "most beautiful in the world"). Flores's point was that this was an example of the benefits the study of the "philosophical history of peoples" might bring to law-makers. "Forget about theories, my dear politicians, and inspect the laws made by real men!", was this Madrid journalist's cry (Flores, 1844-1845: 68).

From Iza Zamacola's point of view, pilgrimages were without any doubt the most striking thing as far as Basque interests and likings went. "Camacho's wedding party, as told by the unique Cervantes, is hardly comparable to many of these diversions". Huge bonfires and a multitude of poultry and beef and mutton legs roasting, together with large baskets full of sausages; salads, cheese, bread and fruit spread over gleaming cloths; and big bottles of lemon juice and wine jars supporting the ends of the tables; it all formed the animated picture of these rural parties, where they eat, drink, sing and dance happily and without point of comparison "among the recreations of the human kind".

Exemplary loyalty and morality are another essential trait of the Basque people, affirmed Renzi rereading Labadie. If a young man abused a girl's innocence or credulity he would not be allowed to remain undisturbed in the country; he would soon have to confront the avengers of the victim's honour. And she, on the other hand, would soon find a generous man to offer her help and make her forget her past weakness, though this sort of marriages are the exception rather than the rule. Regarding this, the image presented by Iza Zamacola insisted on the contrasts by pointing out there had been a time when women who had had a slip used to wear a white headscarf with black or green lists, signalling both the stain and the hope to restore their reputation (maidens, on the contrary, wore,

bareheaded, a long tress with a coloured silken ribbon at the end, as a sign of virginity). "This custom has not entirely disappeared", assured Iza. In any case, prostitution has never been harboured or supported by the Basques in their territory, so much so that in antiquity whores had their hair cropped and were thrown out of the fatherland (as if out of paradise); this made, they celebrated a "dance and bacchanal for having got rid of those beasts who devoured their good old customs and usages". Deprivation excites impure desires, and these have hardly any effect on the Basques – says Iza –

because you can see there both young men and young women fight hand-to-hand to test their strength and till the earth almost naked without being provoked to any kind of indecency.

Iza does not conceal his sources. The Basques' innocence and original purity was similar to that of the Spartans, who used to force the youth of both sexes to wear clothes open on both sides, and women to do the same physical exercises as men "in order to accustom them to seeing each other without feeling the low affections of sensuality" (Zamocola, 1839: 325).

On the other hand, the young Basques, according to Renzi, also stick to their ancestors' customs during the courtship and wedding time. Being allowed to woo at her window at night is the first love-token a suitor obtains from his beloved. He announces his arriving with the indefinable cry called *irincina*, that is, forerunner of joy. If the young man's intentions are accepted by the bride's parents, he can enter the house even at night and can meet her freely and alone, usually in a room adjacent that of her parents'. The day before the wedding a merry procession comes at the sound of the flute and the small drum to the bride's house, accompanied by a choir formed by the sheep's bells and their incessant bleats. The ancient melody of the mountains is played while the cup of hospitality is being emptied and the groom's goods are moved into the house. When the procession retires, the ram is kept by the bride as a token. That way, Labadie points out, the owner's prosperity would be compromised if the engagement were not to be carried out. The wedding, then, is as important for the couple's happiness as for the cattle's fecundity. The same procession attends the ceremony the following day. Curiously enough, the groom does not wear his feasting dress but his mourning dress, the one used at funerals, a dress, by the way, of a French style and which Paris fashion-designers have copied from the Basques, giving it another name (Renzi, 1850: 180-182).

5. ON VACATION

From the family world we jump now to the vacation world. The sea and the beaches attract the travellers' gaze. The romantics make of the seaside a privileged place for the discovery of the self and its particular vibration. In contact with air, sea and earth one experiences the dream of being one with the elemental forces of nature; in front of the ocean's vastness, indifferent to historical change, the self is pervaded by an objectless sensation and reveals itself as the supreme example of fleetingness. The conscience of the passing of time, triggered by the spectacle of the seaside, is associated with the intense sexual

charge of the place. The trembling of the naked foot when feeling the touch of the sand, the insistent caress of the wind, the whipping of the water, the penetration into the sea, the searching route through the rock's nooks and cavities, all make the beach a place implicitly erotic, full of images of femininity, menacing and redeeming at the same time (in the 19th century, the beach is not a theatre for the displaying of sensuousness but above all the domain of modesty and its codes – Corbin, 1988: 188-189, 191, 195-196). Journalist Flores, strolling on the beach of Deva in the early morning hours, could see some young women (“pretty Madrid women” and “pleasant Guipuscoans”, he specifies) swimming and doing their *toilette* among the rocks sheltering the beach.

They lodged generally in twos in the capricious grottoes the ebbing waves had left more than wet; and within those improvised cabinets they took off their simple dresses, exposing the interesting mysteries of their underwear, which was soon replaced by a percale beach wrap (Flores, 1844-1845: 68)

Like many other romantic travellers, Fernández de los Ríos resorted to a legend (that of the *Chambre d'Amour* at Biarritz) in order to evoke some, often tragic, love games; more precisely, he echoed that legend when evoking the story of two lovers who found death within a cave where they were surprised, tenderly embraced, by the rising tide (Fernández de los Ríos, 1848: 18).

The terrors of the sea serve in their turn to excite memories of shipwrecks and catastrophes; they offer an unparalleled occasion to observe the excesses nature and to enact the drama of feelings. The romantic obsession with shipwrecks paved the way for discovering Basque legends such as that of Preio, *the fisherman from Ciboure*, included by Francisque Michel in his book of Basque ballads. Soaked the whole day through, on the alert at night, the fisherman would be all the happier if he threw his nets to the stars. The sea shatters his boat and carries away his nets, but it means to tell him that he does not need them anymore; and Preio embarks on a solid new ship, which he wishes to fill with gold to enrich everybody. The visit to a harbour, however, does not serve to disclose the hardship of work, the sadness of parting, the figures of nostalgia, the collective awaiting for the return of the ships or the tragedy of shipwreck. On the contrary, it is, like the visit to a beach, another form of escapism typical of any trip or holiday time. For Taine (who in his formative years appears quite far from his stereotypical later image as a devoted positivist – Léger, 1980) the visit to the harbour of Bayonne was absolutely necessary to get rid of “the rapture and feverish memories” sparked by his previous visit to the cathedral; there, through the transfigured rays of its stained glass windows, he could see, like in a fire or a halo, the spectre of the Middle Age, “so remote from modern life's security and abundance”. The sombre vaults and the bleeding rose windows brought back to life dreams and gloomy emotions from the past (dirty, miserable lives, filthy sewers, leprosy, brutish minds, wars, cruel laws, witch craze) which “we cannot keep on having”. One needs to go out and feel that man works and progresses and that “nature is here as fortunate as man” (Taine, 1858: 11-13).

Women are the country's first and foremost beauties. That was Flores's perception and, after his first experience at Deva, he had an appreciation of

Guipuscoan women's charms. There was *nothing* to see at Tolosa except Paulina, a most beautiful girl he met at the inn he was lodging in; he makes a full description of her (her plaited hair; her wide, eloquent eyes; her purple lips; her marble neck; her ivory fingers; her smile's ineffable grace; and her angel's voice, able to move even a stone), ready to believe that only Tolosa could be the setting to the *thousand and one nights* (Flores, 1844-1845: 89). Patricio de la Escosura, who had refined his aesthetic sensitivity in Paris before carving himself a notable place in Spanish liberal politics, tried to explain the Basque Country's strikingly scarce number of monuments on grounds "as obvious as they are irrefutable". In the first place, the nature of the land itself. The Pyrenees made of the Basque Country a "topographic labyrinth", where "every inch of tilled land is a conquest wrenched from the rocks"; and a people which must devote their entire resources and energy to agriculture "seldom applies themselves to the liberal arts, and that only in times of higher civilization". A second reason lay on the political constitution and economic administration of the Basque Provinces: precisely because those were "eminently popular" and gave much importance to the local interests, they thwarted "the erection of purely monumental buildings". If the works of art were scarce, those of "immediate and positive utility" (roads, bridges), and those devoted to "comfort" (inns, taverns, lodging houses) and to "rural leisure" (excellent country houses) abounded more than in any other Spanish region. Flores's perception was not unfounded. But Escosura did not seem to mind the lack of monuments. "Everything is connected, everything is in harmony in the Basque country", he considers:

the same spirit presiding the legal assemblies, reigns over the commercial transactions, governs the family, exerts its influence on everyone's life and colours the picture as a whole (Escosura, 1865: III, 55).

Escosura, who was a member of the Spanish Parliament at the time he published the volumes of his *España artística y monumental*, offers a vision of the Basque Country as an abode of culture beyond the realm of art. He was interested not in the artistic monuments, but rather in the values a society thinks are linked with its territory; they are traces of education and, therefore, open to other notions and feelings which are historically defined by the relations between man and his environment. And these are the ones directly underlined by Escosura when dealing with the Basque case.

6. THE MEMORY OF HISTORY

"What a country...! What mountains...! What women!"; these are the first things that come to Francisco Mellado's mind when writing about the Basque Country in his *Recuerdos de un viaje por España*. A forthright contact with the environment invites at once to refigure history. Using the device of a fellow traveller's company and conversation, common in many travel accounts because it often allowed to put in the companion's mouth things the author thinks or has heard (or read) but does not want to state directly, Mellado observes and invites to observe ("this is paradise, my friend added... this people are not at all like those we have left back at home"; "the customs are very different, I replied, and, in general, bet-

ter than ours, as you will observe little by little”) while evoking the past and giving voice to the old 16th- and 17th-century Basque historians, the creators of the so-called *matter of Vasconia* (Juaristi 1998: 48-58). The memory of the Carlist war at Achorroz is mixed with Garibay’s account of the fights among nobility factions which took place on that same spot four centuries earlier. A visit to Tolosa carries him further back, to the 14th century, to the battle of Beotibar as told by Henao. And in order to show the antiquity and difficulty of the Basque language Larramendi’s etymologies are also quoted (Mellado, 1849-1851: II, 1, 4, 12, 16, 29, 48-49).

Watching a *pelota* game in San Sebastian he sees “the most notable families from the four provinces and from Bayonne” sitting at the rows. Curiosity makes him to multiply the historical allusions. Mellado goes back to the remotest times. Identifying the ancient Cantabria with the “Basque country” and Vasconia with Navarre, he defends emphatically the myth of the Basques’ primitive independence. The Carthaginians, “whatever some authors may have said to the contrary, never tread this classic soil of independence”. Rome could not subject them either. Mellado refers to Augustus’s war, “a war of extermination, in which thousands of Cantabrians perished; but they did not surrender to the Romans”. The Roman emperor

had to offer finally peace to the Cantabrians, who accepted it only under the condition of living independently; and their exemptions, their privileges and their famous *fueros*, which they have so forcibly maintained up to the present day, date from that time.

This recognition of their personality is combined with the effort to establish the basis of the Basques’ orientation towards Spain. Mellado arranges a simple story. What military strength could not do was achieved by religion. Like the Romans, the Visigoths could not conquer the country despite their efforts and had to content themselves with fortifying its borders. However,

Cantabrians and Goths were united by the link of religion, since both had embraced Christianity, and that way the Basque Provinces were added to the vast empire which fell down on the banks of the Guadalete.

The *vast empire*: that is Spain, Spain in its roots, without naming it to avoid committing an anachronism. And after that statement there come the continuation of the story and a proposition:

All historians agree the Moors never entered the Basque territory and, though nothing is known with certainty of the history of this country in the early years of the Saracen domination, there are firm reasons to believe that it made part of the kingdom that was born at Covadonga.

Mellado also praises the battle at Roncesvaux against Charlemagne, a battle that should have won “Vasconia, that is, Navarre, a privileged place in Spanish history”. There were “thousands of ballads” describing the “very famous site” of the battle of Roncesvaux and Roland’s death, but Mellado choose to mention only the Altabiscar Song, whose authenticity he never doubts (“the original in Euskarian or Basque language can be seen in Francisque Michel’s collection, p. 226”). Among the kings of Navarre, he identifies Iñigo Arista (whose identity is being questioned

today) as “born in the County of Bigorre”. On the other hand, Sancho the Great, who made “Navarre attain the summit of its glory broadening its territory on both sides of the Pyrenees”, was the “most powerful among the kings of Spain” (this time Mellado could not circumvent the term). Sancho the Strong’s presence at the battle of Navas de Tolosa and the reunion of the two Navarres are the facts Mellado underlines prior to the 1512 conquest (“Navarre surrendered to the Catholic Kings in 1512, though it did so under the condition of its *fueros* and ancient laws being preserved”) and the 1521 defeat at Noain of the army which had come from the French side to support the cause of the Albret dynasty.

When he is approaching Bilbao, he evokes several aspects of the history of Biscay: the integration of Alava and Guipuscoa into Castile in 1200, after being segregated from Navarre; the peculiarity of the Lords of Biscay (“a title considered to come from the famous duchy of Cantabria”) and the concession of the “command of the joint Christian forces” to Don Diego López de Haro; the wedding links with Castile; the integration of the Lordship into the Crown in the 14th century and the services rendered; the Basque navy’s splendour (what “began to make the English nation jealous”, leading to a conflict that was solved through a “treaty between the Basques, the French and the English”); the 1804 popular movement known as the Zamacolada; and lastly, the “Lord of Biscay’s brave resistance against Napoleon”. Mellado’s interest was genuine and could not but deplore that “the limits set to his work” did not allow him to expand on the history of Biscay,

(...) which can be said to be that of the whole Basque country, since nobody ignores the three sister provinces have always thought of themselves as one because of their identity in character, laws, usages and customs, and even their topographic similarity.

The differences among them were like those

among the sons of one and the same father; but this difference being hardly perceptible without a thorough examination, it is even less so when one looks at their history.

Regarding Navarre, a perceptive Mellado remarks a

(...) notable difference between the character and customs of the inhabitants of the South and those of the North. The first, like their neighbours in the surrounding provinces, have rough manners and are somewhat inclined to drink alcohol and eat in excess; the second are more frugal, sweet and pleasant, and they partake of French civility.

These are also different “in their language, because they speak Basque, and in their clothes”. In these pages of history not a word is breathed about more recent events (“contemporary events do not offer any interest whatsoever unless they are described minutely, and that is completely impossible here”). The work’s limits favoured silence (Mellado, 1849-1851: II, 60-65; III, 132-135, 162). Mellado’s gaze appears, somehow, as a *permitted gaze*.

Biscay; the three provinces; the four provinces and Bayonne; the ancient Cantabria and Vasconia; Navarre. A territory between France and Spain, both

precise and imprecise at the same time. The Basques on both sides of the Pyrenees. Lafuente underlined the fence between them. The landscape had on the French side the physiognomy of the Basque Provinces, though the hills and the paths were smoother. The same happened to the inhabitants.

Skinny children of the great Pyrenees, they do not look like offspring of such robust father anymore; they are like the descendants of our Spanish grandes: if they did not keep their family name, nobody would say they are the children of such brave parents.

This was the contrary of the impression obtained by observing the two frontier guards: the Spaniard wearing “a patched jacket and a humble cap of faded colour” and the French showing off his “new coat and his gala morion” in his “solid and comfortable sentry-box”, a contrast “the (Spanish) government could and should avoid easily for the national honour’s sake” (Lafuente, 1842: 41-42). But apparently this first impression had less weight than the second one: at least, the terms of the description were inverted as far as the Basques of one and the other side of the frontier were concerned. Fernández de los Ríos did not share that impression when he crossed the frontier through that same bridge of Behovia. Through his contact with the inhabitants of the Department then called of the Basses-Pyrénées, he valued the contribution of its different components: “the union of the old provinces of Béarn, Low Navarre, the Basque countries and small pieces of other provinces” (Fernández de los Ríos, 1848: 18).

7. THE LOCAL VIEWS

The description of the land, the characterization of its inhabitants according to their idiosyncratic traits and the refiguring of history, all seem to have been left by the Basque elite into the Other’s hands. The invitation launched by Iza Zamacola in 1839 had been successful. Sensing a general lack of knowledge about the Basque Country, his intention had been to break “the absolute silence of the naturals of those lands, who were otherwise so interested in their glories” (Zamacola, 1839: 351). Nevertheless, his pages were not the only native voice to speak in that sense. Juan E. Delmas, who combined an Italian family origin with a French education (he had been Alberto Lista’s disciple and had lived in Paris between 1843 and 1846, where he studied law), published in 1846 a *Viaje pintoresco por las Provincias Vascongadas*. Despite its title, the book dealt only with his native Biscay; the illustrations showing Biscay’s monuments, made by Delmas himself, form the work’s main interest (Delmas, 1846). It was as if he wanted to offer the foreign traveller a sort of souvenir. This kind of travel-guide will reach its summit in a *Guía histórico-descriptiva del viajero en el Señorío de Vizcaya*, published in 1864 for the first time and reprinted several times later. This *Guide* had been preceded by a *Manual del viajero en las provincias vascongadas*, published anonymously, which served in a general way as a sort of native guide in times of peace. Using a generous number of different fonts, it offered, for a reasonable price,

a complete picture of that hardly known country, briefly telling its history and leading the reader from village to valley and from valley to mountain, not forgetting anything worthy of attention.

A full service, which made the writer hope the book would be welcome. The vacations offered a matchless chance for all those who, attracted by the climate and the landscape, were “in the middle of the Basque people”, to get to know more about the Basques’ origin

and still more about the means they have used to keep through the centuries their original character, their language, so unfairly despised, their patriarchal customs, their fairly tempered freedom, and their enviable, economic administration.

The author’s resolution to become the *traveller’s inseparable companion* was disinterested, according to him. It was inspired exclusively by a desire to welcome the visitors and wander with them through that soil “so rich in natural prodigies, [...] rich too in virtues and in true patriotism” (Vascongado, 1847: 1-4).

The sites of memory are not absent in the way. A visit to Guernica could not be missed. Situated in Biscay’s clearest and most colourful place, this village, formed by seven streets and a square, gave shelter to the symbol of the Basque laws, the venerable oak under which the Biscayans have met since time immemorial to have their assemblies and where their lords have sworn to keep the *Fueros*. The tree was next to the hermitage of Santa María la Antigua (“believed, not entirely without reason, to date from the 3rd century of the Church and from the 1st since the introduction of Christianity among the Basques”, the author comments); that hermitage had been the see of the assemblies since its rebuilding in the 15th century, though it had been reformed several times later. The guide dwells on the inner and outer description of the building; and, in particular, on that of the throne situated right under the tree, with its twenty-two columns, its five rows, and its seven marble seats supported by lions. The tree is nothing special in itself; it is replaced by another as soon as it dies. But “under the shadow of that oak many generations have been truly free, that freedom having cost neither blood nor tears”. And that freedom, identified with the Basques’ character and closely linked with monarchy and religion, had been “religiously respected by the most powerful kings”, as Tirso de Molina’s lines, duly quoted, affirmed.² The spectacle of the meeting of the Juntas Generales or General Assembly was worth seeing. Guernica’s houses get filled with the representatives sent from the villages of the Lordship, with people interested in the matters to be discussed and solved, and with “foreigners merely coming to see the lively picture”. The assembly lasted about ten days; some hours were devoted to discussing different matters,

and the rest of the time was spent in feasting, watching bull-fights, dancing and in other public entertainments with which Biscayans usually solemnize the exercise of their disputable rights.

The author calls this sort of *Basque political festivity* an “interesting scene” that, in his opinion, could only excite the reader’s admiration.

2. “El árbol de Guernica ha conservado / la antigüedad que ilustra a sus señores / sin que tiranos le hayan despojado / ni haga sombra a rendidos ni a traidores. / En su tronco, no en silla real sentado / nobles puesto que pobres electores / tan sólo un señor juran, cuyas leyes / libres conservan de tiranos reyes”.

A particular historical episode was, however, worthy of special treatment in this book: the battle of Beotibar (1321), or Guipuzcoa against Navarre. The anonymous Basque writer preferred to deal with “such an important event” separately, without including it in the general historical overview “to avoid repetitions”. This separate explanation was both rambling and ambiguous. The battle’s origin lay in the Navarrese resentment against the Guipuscoans since these latter’s integration into Castile in 1200.

The hostilities between both peoples became so unremitting, so bloody and devastating, according to Henao, that more destruction would have not been wrought if they had carried out a formal war (this sentence, by the way, appears literally in Mellado’s *Recuerdos*, published in 1849-1851, and, not being a direct quotation from Henao, it shows the Madrid writer did borrow some things from this *Manual del viajero*).

The outcome of these disasters took place on the plains of Beotibar, when the Guipuscoans, “suddenly united”, defeated in a bloody battle an army made up of “Navarrese, Gascons and French” (Vascongado 1847: 12-15, 115-120, 187-190; this approach differs from that Francisque Michel will offer later, presenting the battle of Beotibar as “the *Basques*’ heroic defence against their *Guipuscoan neighbours*”).

Leaving aside some points of detail, it is hard to find in the native views any marked preoccupation for clearly delimiting or underlining the differences. Not that they were not conscious of those differences, but what we fundamentally find is a desire to teach how to look, to show where to fix the eyes, so that it is the Other the one to appreciate the Basques’ idiosyncratic character or their historical singularities. Somewhat dramatically sometimes, as Goizueta showed when evoking some Basque ballads. In 1851, presenting his *Leyendas vascongadas*, he interpreted these popular legends as the fruit of a poetical imagination stimulated by the landscape (Goizueta, 1851; Juaristi, 1998: 111-112), thus anticipating an idea Francisque Michel would later popularise. A few years later, calling on science and on the spirit of observation the discovery of tradition rests on, Goizueta offered the audience three Basque ballads (those of Altabiscar, Aníbal and Lekobide), “in all their primitive simplicity”, as the example of the sensitivity of a “heroic people firmly anchored on a rock in the middle of the seas, resisting the wild fury of two stormy oceans”. A people who had “and still do have”, emphasizes Goizueta, bards to sing their glorious feats, or their simple loves, or the sadness caused by absence, in a very old language, a “historical monument” practically unknown and vanishing little by little in front of the linguists’ unmoved eyes; a century or two more and it will disappear for ever. “Those who can and must help this language to survive and, however, try with all their strength to make it disappear will have a grave responsibility before science” (Goizueta, despite his words’ solemnity, was echoing the opinions Brigham had recently put forward). Goizueta’s brief and somewhat enigmatic introduction presented the Altabiscar Song as the perfect example of how to summarize a big event in an easy, uncomplicated way, an event that today would require “whole volumes” to be described – Goizueta 1859 – (it is not impossible, though there is no way to prove it, that Goizueta might have had notice of the works and com-

ments about the primitive Basque poetry published in Paris or London at the time he was writing his own work;³ anyway, he could not have imagined the controversy this topic and, more concretely, the Altobiscar Song's authenticity would cause some years later).⁴

In his *Tradiciones vasco-cántabras* (1866), Guipuscoan writer Araquistain reflected on tradition's meaning and value. Songs, tales and legends mirror the past generations' beliefs and faithfully echo their feelings. If they had been disdained before, now they were "the object of attention and study of deep thinkers" as the only means to enter the mysteries of past societies. Popular songs and traditions are the *people's archives*, he agreed with Herder. For the Basques, who had known how to maintain "their nationality, their institutions, their language and customs" in the middle of many storms, collecting and studying the "thousands of scattered fragments" of their traditions was worth the effort, because "the few truths to be found in them" would make up for "the medley of gross fables they are littered with". The same happened in all disciplines. It is not easy to establish what is true and what is not in any branch of human knowledge, Araquistain invites us to consider. Science progresses through mistakes, leaving one behind only to accept what is probably yet another. History itself, in whose name the fictions of tradition are supposed to be sacrificed, has its fair amount of uncertainties and contradictions, a fact underlining the need for fiction (for myth, in other words) as another form of knowledge. Human intelligence does not rest quietly watching phenomena take place. "If science does not offer an explanation, our intelligence will make up one. It will be rational or fantastic, true or absurd, but it will be an explanation and it will serve to quench its anxiety". The imagination needs "to clothe and embellish everything", but that impulse is not in itself opposed to scientific truth. The explicit references to Herder or Vico do not place Araquistain within the boundaries of Traditionalism (Juaristi 1998: 156-157), but within those of the romantic Liberalism that was triumphant in 1830 (what, on the other hand, is consistent with his political militancy in the so-called moderate party); this triumph is inseparably linked with the rise of *philosophical history* as the main trend in the renewal and institutionalization of history in the mid-19th century, as exemplified by the works of Niebuhr, Guizot or Michelet (Crossley, 1993; Kniebiehler, 1973).

Araquistain makes his own the idea that the "fullest history" would be that of the nation to have assembled the most complete collection of popular traditions, songs and legends. The Guipuscoan writer points to the efforts carried out in this sense in Germany or France ("in France, the government itself had taken charge of the task, deeming it of national importance", he notes, alluding to the whole organization of historical works set in motion by Guizot). The example of the great nations leading the historiographical movement had to "inspire a country like

3. F. Michel's work (Michel 1857), paying much attention to Basque literature and language, was introduced to the English public in October 1858, in the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine*; it immediately gave rise to a quick exchange of opinions: Abbadie 1859; Michel 1859b.

4. Bladé 1866, later collected in Bladé 1869 : chapter VI; Cénac-Moncaut 1869; Webster 1883a; 1883b. On this controversy, see Sánchez-Prieto, 1993: 374-388.

ours, lacking chronicles, archives and inscriptions”, he emphasizes. “Therefore, there is only one way left for us, that of our people’s memory”. Araquistain insists on the need to collect the necessary materials, and to do it quick: “hurry up, hurry up, the Gods are departing” (his cry will be taken up on the other side of the Pyrenees by Jean Sallaberry, a French Basque, who published his collection of Basque popular poetry in 1870 – Sallaberry, 1870). The history of that collective memory had to be rescued before it was lost in the wake of the transformations “the century’s levelling winds” had brought about. The fondness for the Basque oral tradition must not be identified with traditionalism, Araquistain pointed out, but with the need to preserve “this poor people’s” identity and idiosyncrasy (love of peace combined with courage before any danger; respect of authority mixed with the spirit of freedom; simplicity, with the aspiration to do great things), which are at the basis of their well-being (Araquistain, 1866: 3-17). The dramatic overtones already present in Goizueta’s and Araquistain’s texts reached their climax and a wider audience in Réclus’s article, “Les Basques, un peuple qui s’en va”, published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1867 (Reclus, 1867). They would become tragic in 1876, after the abolition of the Basque *Fueros*.

8. THE WORKS OF HISTORY

Poets and historians are, so to speak, the midwives of collective identity in the 19th century. A Basque historiography written by Basque historians, historical overviews and the critical sense necessary to judge those native works are not lacking in the Basque Country. Chaho-Belsunce’s work in three volumes (1847), a Basque history done by Basques, a narrative including up to the First Carlist war, deserved an ample review by Alavese historian Ayala. He judged it under the light of the new turn taken by the historical studies at that time and acknowledging the controversial character of the previous Basque historiography. In this sense, he censures that Chaho still resorts to Tubal for explaining the Basques’ origin, “but Mr. Chaho is not one of those fanatically passionate pro-Basques ready to use fables to extol the Basque country”, Ayala quickly adds. He equally notes deficiencies in the structure of Belsunce’s volumes and objects to several statements and criticizes the approach used for some historical moments. Belsunce ends up talking much about the general historical context and little about the Basques. If

this people occupy today the provinces of Biscay, Guipuscoa and Alava and the kingdom of Navarre in Spain, and the valleys of Soule, Labourd and Basse-Navarre,

Ayala can not understand why instead of “focusing only on these seven territories to write the history of the Basques”, the approach used, for example, for the period of Arab domination is “rather that of a general history of Spain”. He judged the chronological limits equally inadequate. The history of the Basque Provinces seemed to come to an end in the 14th century and that of Navarre in the 16th century, apparently because they lost in political importance. Ayala thought, however, that “a people’s history lasts as long as this is in existence and neither their vicissitudes nor a change in their state can destroy that history”. In that sense, Chaho-Belsunce’s history had “very much” disappointed the readers’ expectations.

Belsunce's work concludes mentioning the 1841 crisis of the Basque *Fueros* under Espartero's regency. "Here he forgets he is a historian and appears as a true Basque", says Ayala, and, "inflamed, he reviles the impious hand that attacked the Euscarian liberties". The Alavese critic excused those "fiery outbursts of patriotism" of Belsunce's. But he did not alter his judgment. The work's execution was not consistent with the idea presiding over it. The flaws in the form could easily be mended in any further edition, but not those affecting the content, "because it would necessary to write it anew". The parts devoted to Navarre were, no doubt, the best in the book; but, regarding the three provinces,

their history has been left as it was and as it will probably be for a long time; it is still to be properly written, sentences Ayala (Ayala, 1847).

The task was taken up by other, more careless writers. Baudrimont's *Histoire des Basques ou Escualdunais primitifs*, published in Paris in 1854, stood out among the foreign contributions to a general Basque history. This work raised a certain amount of expectation, its author being a physician, "that is, an observer", and member of numerous scientific societies, "a cultivated man" from whom a rational approach to the Basque mystery was to be expected; those were at least Swiss philologist Adolphe Pictet's words in a critical review of the book, only to signal his disappointment at finding "all the old absurdities enriched by many new absurdities". Paraphrasing Lessing, Pictet estimated that in the book under review *what is good is not new, and what is new is not good*. The importance of philology to throw light on the origin of peoples was discredited by the strange use that instrument had been subjected to. Baudrimont's method of historical research (a "curious mix of true and false principles it would be useless to discuss in full detail") allowed him to find Basque names "everywhere, even in America", from the Orinoco to the Andes, reaching extraordinary conclusions and solving problems that "genuine science hardly dares to tackle". In Pictet's view, the fantastic nature of Baudrimont's ethnologic ideas was sufficiently shown by his comment on the resemblance between the inhabitants of Toulouse and the "ancient Babylonians!!!" (Pictet, 1854).

Despite the severity the Swiss philologist had shown and despite the warnings against Baudrimont's excesses (the Basques were not the first inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula, but of the world), his history kept being read: "constantly quoted by ignorant or slipshod writers, it is still accepted as a serious and reliable work by certain parts of the public", wrote Bladé in 1865, who precisely because of that insisted on and intensified the criticism against it in order to dispel its "dangerous illusions" (Bladé, 1865-1866). Baudrimont did not remain quiet. In the prologue to his history's second edition, he charged against those critics "who do not care about science and pour scorn on those who try to serve it"; he then came out in defence of his method (from the study of language to the observation of today's Basques' ethnological traits, customs, habits and usages, in order to consider the social evolution of peoples from a comparative point of view), certainly full of positivism (Baudrimont, 1867: 5-11). In a somewhat paradoxical way, the reaction in the name of science, but sprung from a fundamentally idealist and romantic position (as shown, for example, in Pictet's education: he was intellectually indebted to Schlegel, Schelling, Hegel, Cousin),

to the scientific and positivist position represented by Baudrimont would in the end carry the strengthening of the Basque myths.

In Spain, during these years, the volumes from the *Crónica General de España*, coordinated by Rosell, devoted to the four provinces are also important. Rodríguez García, writing the Biscay volume, considered the Basque Provinces and their inhabitants ("so jealous of their liberty and independence, so resolute, determined, and firm in their decisions") as the "most brilliant instance of the rich variety within our fatherland's national unity". Example of a "provincial self-rule unique in Spain", they were "the last and precious Spanish remnants of an ancient nation perched on the rugged rocks of the Western and Central Pyrenees, and whose history if full of great, memorable deeds". That nation had a name. "This nation was Vasconia, whose origin is lost in the night of time". The author comments ("under the light of reason, not that of a narrow, deceitful patriotism, exaggerated to the point of fanaticism", he warns) on the problem of the relations between *Vasconia* and *Iberia*. He discusses Polybius, who limited Iberia to the Mediterranean coast, distinguishing it from the Peninsula's Atlantic portion; and, following Strabo, he differentiates between Iberia, encompassing the Peninsula's Western parts and stretching up to the Rhone through Gallic lands, and Hispania, to the south of the Ebro River, even though Roman writers used both names interchangeably. In any case, "all the Northern regions were taken in under the name of Iberia", and the term "Iberians", stemming from the Ebro River, is more properly applied to those regions' inhabitants than to any other. From there, the author maintains, the name Iberia was later taken to refer to the whole of the Peninsula (Rodríguez García, 1865: 7-8). Rodríguez García made a firm defence of the Basque-Iberian hypothesis.

In the volume regarding Guipuscoa, Fulgosio remembers "with affection" in 1868 the pleasant hours spent in those valleys, "now when political passions are tearing the heart of Spain apart". The political crisis of the time invited to turn the eyes to the North, like our fathers did, "since their blood's wellspring was there". Spain had been lost on the banks of the Guadalete at the time of the Arab invasion, and restored seven centuries later "wielding the sword in the right hand and placing hope in the North", where freedom had found a refuge. The "Northern lands" were "always considered the fatherland of the good Spaniards". One can not forget one's "original fatherland", and neither Fray Luis de Granada, nor Cervantes, nor Lope de Vega, nor Calderón had forgotten it. The impulse of every Spaniard to remind his Northern origin, be it Asturian, Cantabrian, Basque, or Galician, was not mere vanity. Fulgosio's discourse tries to overcome and leave behind the division between the two Spains. "Unfortunately, there are *two Spains*, ignoring each other". The origin of those two Spains is not ideological, but geographical and historical: Northern Spain and Southern Spain; this latter, still under the effects of the conquest, looks down, "often with ill-restrained rancour", on the former. Possessing but a very recent tradition, those living in the centre and south of Spain try "to level everything"; and those living in the north reply "not without reason", invoking "very old customs, and rights which are sacred indeed".

Fulgosio, a fully professional historian belonging to the Spanish department of archivists, librarians and archaeologists since 1866, accepted without suspicion the legend of Aitor (considered by Ayala as an instance of Chaho's erudition

and “brilliant imagination”). Aitor, “father of the eskualdunac”, hidden with his partner in an inaccessible cavern, could see at his feet fire and water fighting for mastery over the earth; terror made him forget everything and he invented a new language. Aitor’s children came down to the plains and multiplied themselves, forming great peoples which kept faithfully their original language and their monotheistic religion. In Fulgosio’s opinion, it can not be said that the Basques have stolen Spanish primitive history “if, as it seems, most if not all Spaniards were Basques in the past”. Fulgosio grants certain historical value to legends. Even admitting that in the legend of Aitor “modern invention may have had more than its fair share”, says Fulgosio,

the point is that such somewhat bold hypotheses on the part of Basque historians have been more than once proved to be true or, at least, have induced eminent scholars to work still harder in the search of truth.

One can hardly be more benevolent than Fulgosio. There is of course room for the *Fueros* (“no friend of the Basque Provinces will be a sincere friend if he opposes to their old laws, good usages and customs”; and Fulgosio was a *sincere friend*), because

the children of the three provinces found on them with all reason their reputation as faithful keepers of the ancient Spanish liberty (Fulgosio, 1868: 7-8, 24, 72).

Freedom comes from the North. The old campaign launched by the Royal Academy of History against the *Fueros*’ historical and legal basis; that “sort of official crusade” against the Basque Provinces and Navarre dating from the time of Godoy, and which gave rise to, among other books, the first volumes of the *Diccionario histórico-geográfico de España* (1802), where

everything that is most precious to the Basques is denied and fought against at all costs: their Cantabrisism, the legitimacy of their liberties, their old independence, and the originality and antiquity of their language;

all this, Bisso reminded in the volume of the *Crónica* devoted to Alava, is now a story that can be told (Bisso, 1868: 8-9). The overcoming or the explicit refusal of that enlightened reaction against the old myths paves the way for the welcoming given to the new myths, which were really the old ones transformed in the new romantic atmosphere. The same as in travel-accounts, the new impulse and vigour of foreign eyes within Basque historiography is not entirely unrelated to the local scholars’ guide or advice. In the pages devoted to the history of Navarre, Julio Nombela, after commending the region’s organization and its relation with the Spanish State, acknowledged that his task would have been impossible despite his direct and deep knowledge of the Navarrese milieu, “if good, cultivated friends born and living there” had not provided him “with their data, with their studies and, sometimes, with whole paragraphs”. In Nombela’s chronicle an important place is kept for Roncesvaux and the Altabiscar Song, of which Nombela himself offers a translation into Spanish (Nombela, 1868: 7-8, 96-98) of genuine poetic value (as was to be expected from someone who had learnt to feel with Lamartine in Paris – Nombela, 1976: 664).

Inviting to know, teaching to look. The Basque attitude towards history is the same as towards language or territory. Perhaps that is why there is not a *great Basque history* in the mid-decades of the 19th century. Not because Basque-Navarrese historians of repute were lacking, or because they had no conscience of their singularity, but, more simply, because the writing of history is left in the hands of the *Other*. The Other is potentially the best *friend*, most certainly so if he has previously been given *advice*. There is no apathy on the part of the Basque intellectual elite, nor is this latter intent on feeding the tension present in a not-so-distant time of war or of institutional crisis. The need of a vision in step with the Basques' particular conditions and characteristics is more stringently demanded of the natives than of the foreigners. They are much more permissive when judging foreign gazes, these latter being inclined right from the start to get fixed on what is unusual or different. If there is no lack of sensitivity towards a *Basque history* (as shown by Ayala's critical review, more *patriotic* than Chaho-Belsunce), the concern is still bigger regarding those passages of Basque history included within the histories of Spain, particularly if those texts were meant for the school system. The controversy Biscayan historian Delmas had with Orodea (an old Castilian professor of history at the Vitoria's High School) is revealing in this sense.

Orodea's *Lecciones de Historia de España* (1867), in their quest for "untainted truth", had ended up questioning Basque history's most central tenets (the Iberians' primitive language had been Hebrew-Phoenician, not the one used today by the Euskarians, affirms Orodea; in the same vein, the Basques, despite appearances, had not been independent from Castile, quite the contrary, as the posts held by the Lords of Biscay in the Castilian court or the punishments carried out by the Castilian kings on Biscayan land did in his opinion prove – Orodea, 1872: 7-9, 171-172). In his long reply Delmas, concentrating on Biscay, tried to straighten things out, the more so considering his opponent "avoids confronting matters directly" and "hardly dwells on the main points of his theories". Concerning the Lordship's independence, a document or written history are not enough evidence to prove whether Biscay was a fief of Castile. Before the pen set down "facts which had been admitted as irrefutable", the history of Biscay was "religiously kept through oral tradition". The singularity of Basque tradition and race are the best evidence of its independence. The battle of Arrigorriaga and the election of Jaun Zuria as the new Lord of Biscay, described by Biscayan historian Lope García de Salazar in the 15th century, did confirm "this people's freedom and independence" (Delmas, 1868).

All these concepts, however, do not have the same meaning they will take up at the end of the century in Sabino Arana's work. Eventually, the Basque intellectuals' attitude between the two Carlist wars is well summed up in some Antonio Trueba's works, as well as in the Delmas-Orodea controversy. In his *Capítulos de un libro, sentidos y pensados viajando por las Provincias Vascongadas* (1864), Trueba highlighted "patriotism" (the "love for the land they were born in") as one of the Basques' most distinctive traits, making it extensive to all "the children of the mountains" (including there the inhabitants of the Spanish north coast, as well as the Galicians and the Catalans). He depicts Spain as "the common fatherland of everyone born on either side of the Ebro"; and Madrid as the *melt-*

ing pot of the Spains.⁵ Even though for him Madrid was Europe's most cheerful capital, it conveyed a sickness called "nostalgia". There was a reason for that. "Everyone there is a foreigner", explains Trueba, everyone speaks there about his or her homeland, and the young Basques look for each other prompted by "the recollection of the fatherland" (Trueba, 1864).

The Basques, irrespective of whether they are within or far from their native land, are presented as a kind of unfamiliar neighbours. But that distinctive image is due to the perception of some familiar strangers (travellers or, more generally, foreigners who had had direct contact with the Basques), rather than to a self-complacent look of the native elite. This is really a *sign of normality*: common traits and differences are always best perceived from outside. The Basque *imaginary* between the two Carlist wars, with its capacity to mix old and new myths, is fundamentally the consequence of the Other's gaze. If often permissive, it is neither an unreflective nor an uncritical gaze. The beginning of the Second Carlist war will, by bringing images and memories of the First war back to the fore, give the false impression of continuity between both. That and the outcome of the struggle will bring about a change in attitudes and, naturally, in collective representations.

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