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The International Location of Basque Studies

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"A BASQUE MAP OF THE WORLD"

One of the international bestsellers about the Basques, *The Basque History of the World* (1999) by the American journalist and writer Mark Kurlansky, recalls a very well-known joke about *bilbainos* and their excessive proudness.[2] "According to a popular Bilbao joke, a bilbaino walks into a store and asks for a "World map of Bilbao". The shop owner unflinchingly answers "Left bank or right?" (Kurlansky 1999, 4). I do not know whether we Basques, as Kurlansky says, have ever thought of ourselves as being at the center of the world or that the world revolves around us, or whether the supposed "atavism" of Basques might explain, as contended by the academic Pierre Lhande (1910), the extensive Basque emigration to places such as the Americas from the nineteenth century onward. If we consider the list of personalities (e.g., Elcano, Ignatius of Loyola), artists (e.g., Oteiza, Chillida), arts (e.g., gastronomy), or festivals (e.g., the International Film Festival of San Sebastian) in which the adjective "Basque" goes hand in hand with that of "universal," few initiatives have such an international (or profitable?) repercussion as that of the inauguration of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao on October 18, 1997. The data concerning the appeal and profitability of what has been termed the first global museum are beyond any doubt: it had one million visitors in 2012, and the museum is nowadays one of the world's top ranked culture infrastructures for self-financing.

In fact, the success of this world famous museum has conditioned the Basque government's international publicity campaigns in recent years (cf. www.euskadi.net/turismo). The successful

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[2] Bilbainos is Spanish for "residents of Bilbao" or the largest city of the Basque Country.

refrain “Zatoz eta konta ezazu/ Ven y cuéntalo” (Come and spread the word) in the late 1990s gave way to the slogan “Euskadi, atsegin handiz/ Euskadi, con mucho gusto” (Euskadi, with pleasure) in the early 2000s, in which an image of the museum was combined with that of a dolmen, with both symbols representing modernity and tradition. Later there were slogans such as “Euskadi, sekulako hiria/ Euskadi, un país incredible” (Euskadi, an incredible country) with a clearly dreamlike quality and the sensual “Euskadi, goza ezazu/ Euskadi, saboréala” (Euskadi, taste it) with an obvious allusion to the renowned Basque cuisine. Meanwhile, the “Euskadi, Basque Country” brand (http://www.basquecountry.eust32-basque/eu), unveiled by the current Basque government in June 2013, seeks to showcase the positive values associated with the Basque Country with the eventual aim of reactivating the economy and creating employment. The ad that heads the campaign (cf. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcN4K5WqO3o) shows a Basque rowing boat with a mixed male and female crew and, with each stroke of the oars, an off-screen voice mentions economic data about the Basque Autonomous Community – especially its per capita income, the third highest in the EU behind Luxembourg and Holland.

The Basque Country brand is associated with a country whose economic and social indicators (with a high level of university graduates in the sciences and technology and a leading position in human development rankings) distance it from the serious crisis in the Spanish economy. The strength and coordination of the rowing crew in the ad, together with the typography used for the logo of the Basque Country brand—which is made up of typographical characters considered typical of Basque writing—symbolize values traditionally associated with the Basque collectivity such as *indarra* (strength, force) and *sendotasuna* (physical prowess, strength of character), These were also key elements in the successful image and good reputation of Basque emigrants in the Americas as hard workers (Douglass & Bilbao 1975, 407-409). The ad states that, “we are there to help you, in seventy countries, to achieve your goals” and displays a crew that is rowing along with us, a crew that moves forward, looking toward the future, as rowers do in traditional Basque competitive regattas. This is a team, a Basque collectivity, which is presented as traditionally accustomed to collaborating in communal projects, a form of *auzolan* or the system that is supposedly at the root of Basque cooperativism (Douglass & Zulaika 2007, 335), a term that is still fully applicable today as one can see in the strategic agenda of the current Basque government Department of Education, Language Policy, and Culture, which has in fact termed its cultural plan for the 2014-2015 period “Kultura Auzolanean” (cf. kulturauzolanean.net/eu).

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We can thus see that the internationalization strategy of the Basque government, with its "Euskadi, Basque Country" brand, clearly differs from that used by the Spanish government for decades, in which, following Elena Delgado´s diagnosis, culture has been the main exportable asset and the principal element of national cohesion. This official Spanish culture has not been understood as an expression of diverse, complex, and contradictory social realities but has instead functioned as a kind of "glue", and has been based "on the 'myth of the universal language' and the resulting assumption that, through Spanish, the culture transmitted in that language enjoys a worldwide projection". The dissolving of cultural specificity into the universal has made the heterogeneity of the diverse cultures in the Spanish state invisible. This is the case of Basque-speaking culture, whose language, Euskara, is currently spoken by almost a million people on both sides of the Pyrenees. Thanks to language policies in the Basque Country as a whole during recent decades, there are at present 318,000 more Basque speakers than thirty years ago, some 200,000 through the educational system. The positive figures about the Basque language recovery in the Spanish Basque Country and the worrying decrease of Basque speakers in the French Basque Country, where the Basque language is not official, serve as a basis for demanding, as the current Basque government has also just done through its *Euskararen Agenda Estrategikoa, 2013-2016* (Strategic Agenda for Euskara), active policies in favor of the language. As regards an international projection, those that stand out include objectives that seek to encourage collaboration with institutions that are not just located in the Basque Country but also those in the wider Iberian framework as well as collaboration with the Basque Cooperation Agency for Development. The UPV/EHU UNESCO Chair of World Language Heritage (http://www.mho-unesco-katedra.org/w/about.html) and the agreements between the UPV/EHU (University of the Basque Country) and Latin American universities to offer graduate studies on language planning and policy (http://www.ehu.es/en/web/masterpoliticaslinguisticas/aurkezpena), among other things, are similarly important steps in a linguistic cooperation intended to preserve minoritized and threatened languages. As we can see, then, the cultural and political logic that governs the international projection of the Basque language inevitably differs from that regarding the Spanish language. Words and phrases such as "linguistic rights," "preservation," "aid," and "cooperation," as noted in the aforementioned strategic agenda, call for a place in the world for minoritized languages like the Basque language.

"BASQUE LANGUAGE: SET OUT INTO THE WORLD!" (Bernard Etxepare)

The book of poems, *Linguae Vasconum Primitiae* (1545), by Bernard Etxepare, marks the beginning of Basque Literature. It is a collection of poems whose title already makes clear the international ambition of the poet: the use of Latin for the title and the declaration that it is a work of *primitiae*, first fruits, support this evaluation. Encouraged by the benefits that he saw in the invention of the printing press for the diffusion of a small literature like ours, Etxepare exhorted, "*Euskara, jalgi hadi mundura!*" ("Basque language, set out into the world!"), declaring his strong desire that our language should hold a place in the Republic of Letters. Thus, poetry not only became the founding genre of our literature, but also the genre that would lead to the establishment of Basque literature, around 1950, as an autonomous activity within Basque society (Olaziregi 2012, 152).

Bernard Etxepare's verses have inspired public institutions such as the Instituto Vasco Etxepare/ Etxepare Euskal Institutua/ Etxepare Basque Institute (cf. www.etxepare.eus), created by the Basque government in 2007 and functioning since 2010, with the goal of promoting and diffusing the Basque language and culture internationally. When it comes to the task of promoting the Basque language, the Etxepare Basque Institute encourages spaces of interaction with other languages and communities, and sets up international programs to better understand and research the Basque language and culture**.** This work involves a network of university lecturers, grants for students on these courses, chairs of Basque Studies for visiting professors and education focused on training Basque language lecturers. Furthermore, the Institute participates in top-level international language fairs, such as, Expolangues in Paris or the Language Show in London, and organizes numerous events related to the language, approaching and informing foreign institutions and individuals about the Basque language and its reality.

The Etxepare Basque Institute now has agreements with thirty-eight international universities in seventeen countries (including twelve in the Americas; twenty-three in Europe, and one in Asia) and there are twenty-nine Basque language and culture lecturers at universities all over the world. Around 2,800 students were enrolled in Basque language and culture courses in the 2014-

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2015 academic years. Furthermore, the Etxepare Basque Institute has to date created five international university-chairs, all of which undertake annual academic programs on Basque Studies, mainly at the postgraduate level. Research fields such as Basque Literature and Linguistics (cf. the Bernardo Atxaga Chair at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York), Basque Studies (cf. the Koldo Mitxelena Chair at the University of Chicago), Basque Arts (cf. the Eduardo Chillida Chair at the Goethe University of Frankfurt), Basque Politics (cf. the Manuel de Irujo Chair at the University of Liverpool, UK), and the Basque Diaspora (cf. the Jon Bilbao Chair at the Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, Reno), are those that have, to date, been covered by these agreements.

What´s the goal of these Chairs and Fellowship? We are constantly asked this question. The Etxepare Institute created these positions in order to give an opportunity to professors from the field of Basque Studies to stay as Visiting Professors during a semester in those universities. I personally find the dialogue, the *joan-etorri*, as we say in Basque, crucial when it comes to research in Basque Studies, so the professors that were invited to those positions, such as Bernardo Atxaga himself, Miren Azkarate, Joseba Zulaika, Xabier Irujo, Rob Stone and Pilar Rodriguez… taught at the graduate level in those universities and shared their latest research in fields such as Language Policy, Basque Filmography, Basque Exile, Basque Anthropology, etc.

It was with great pleasure to announce the creation of the latest new position at our institute will sign a new agreement with BSU to create a new tenure-track position and a Chair named after Eloise Garmendia Bieter, both initiatives with the idea of strengthening the Basque Studies Program at Boise State University, a program that has, as you may know, a very successful Minor in Basque Studies, with an amazing enrollment of around 550 students, and that in the near future will offer the first MA in Basque Studies in the USA. But, as you might imagine, the name of the Chair we are announcing here, in Boise, has to do with a clear intention of paying homage to the tremendous contribution--indeed crucial I would say--that women made to the settlement and development of a Basque community in these lands. I recently had the opportunity to be a PhD committee member at my university, the University of the Basque Country. The title of the dissertation was really interesting: “Literary portraits of Basque-American Women: From Shadow to Presence,” as was the profile of its author, Doctor Victoria Bañales, a Basque from Barakaldo who lives here, in Boise. The conclusion of her interesting research, after having analyzed novels by Mirim

Isasi, Robert Laxalt, Monique Laxalt, Gregory Martin, and Inma Errea, goes hand in hand with the perception that we have about the role of Basque women in the American West: "It is no longer the lonely Basque shepherd who personifies the essence of a Basque literary character. Basque American Women have earned the attention of writers and have reached a level of literary portrayal that elevates them to protagonists in their own right" (p. 265). The same could be said when it comes to research on the contribution that Basque women made to the Diaspora.

WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE TALK ABOUT BASQUE STUDIES?

You may probably know that I am an Associate Professor at the University of the Basque Country, and that my field of expertise is contemporary Basque Literature. I have not been able to resist quoting one of my favorite American writers, Raymond Carver, when introducing the last part of this presentation. I guess that my stay in Reno, as a tenure-track Assistant Professor for two academic years back in 2007, and my appointment as the Director for the Promotion and Diffusion of the Basque Language at the Etxepare Basque Institute in 2010 have marked my life in recent years. I honestly think that my stay in Reno gave me a perspective about the importance of having a solid international presence in the field of Basque Studies. In fact, what has always surprised me is the gap between, on the one hand, the conception that the field of Basque Studies is or should be both outside and inside the Basque university system, and, on the other, the minimal presence of the field at international universities, which has recently conditioned my own job.

With the exception of the Center for Basque Studies at the University of Nevada, Reno, in the United States, founded (as the Basque Studies Program) in 1967 (www.basque.unr.edu), the remaining Basque Studies centers, such as IKER (Centre de recherche sur la langue et les textes basques; UMR 5478), which is based in Baiona (Bayonne) in the Department of the Atlantic Pyrenees, Aquitaine, France, are located in Basque-speaking territory. We are now negotiating with the Ateneo de Manila University to create a Basque Heritage Program at that university. This program aims to promote research and teaching both at the undergraduate and graduate level. And what is more, a glance at the cartography of the international teaching of Basque Studies outside the Basque-speaking territory reveals that, to date, only five universities in Spain (Salamanca, Complutense, UNED, the Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona, and the U. de Barcelona) and two in France (the U. de Bordeaux-Montaigne and Université de Pau and the Pays de l'Adour) have tenured professors in Basque Studies. To these one should add the tenure-track position at the University of Liverpool created with our help in 2014, and the four faculty members at the CBS, plus the three faculty members at BSU. Thereafter, while we possess some data on over forty professors who teach

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subjects that incorporate some element of Basque Studies, in truth there is at present no verified up-to-date database about this reality of tenured professors in foreign universities. This outlook unquestionably places Basque Studies at the tail end of the international expansion in foreign university teaching of and research into all the official languages within, for example, the Iberian framework. The case of how Catalan Studies came to be implemented at an international level, in this regard, is truly noteworthy. According to the data of the Ramon Llull Institute's Academic Office, 157 universities all over the world offer courses in Catalan Studies, 88 of which receive financial aid from the Ramon Llull Institute and 69 of which do not.

The extremely limited presence that the study of diverse Iberian languages and literatures enjoys in undergraduate and graduate programs in Spanish universities clearly contrasts with the enthusiastic reception these studies have enjoyed outside Spain's borders. The numbers speak for themselves. If, for example, we take the case of Basque Studies, in the Iberian sphere this can only be studied, as noted above, in five universities outside the peninsular Basque Country, and in four of them (Complutense, UNED, Universidad de Barcelona and the Universitat Autónoma de Barcelona) the Etxepare Basque Institute has lectureships to reinforce/complement those positions. The conclusions are obvious: as regards the situation of teaching the Basque language and culture at a university level within the Spanish system, interest is not very high and is mainly on the part of the Basque autonomous government; that is, it is not widely considered an area of "state" study. But we could say the same, too, with regard to Galician or Catalan studies within the Spanish university system. One should clarify, moreover, that currently there is no undergraduate or graduate degree that entails a similar study of Iberian Studies in the Spanish sphere; and that any undergraduate or graduate degree related to any of the cultures or official languages of the Spanish state are mainly studied in their respective autonomous communities. Master programs like the "Master Universitario en Literaturas Hispánicas (Catalana, Gallega y Vasca) en el Contexto Europeo," which has been offered by the UNED since the 2007-2008 academic year, are really scarce or nonexistent.

This outlook clashes with the renovation that traditional Hispanism has been experiencing in recent years at the international level thanks to the gradual introduction of what is called for by a new discipline: Iberian Studies, a discipline whose novelty centers around "its intrinsic relationality and its reorganization of monolingual fields based on nation-states and their postcolonial extensions into a peninsular plurality of cultures and languages pre-existing and coexisting with the official cultures of the state" (Resina 2013, vii), a "subfield of comparative studies" (Resina 2013, 11) that, in contrast to national philologies or national literatures, does "not serve a political entity of legitimize a state" (Resina 2013, 14). Although its epicenter is to be found in United States universities like those pointed out by Santana (2013, 55), and the work in particular of Joan Ramon Resina (2008;

2013) has been fundamental regarding the creation of a theoretical framework for this new direction, it is also true to say that the criticism at the root of this new discipline—specifically, that of the obsolete nature of Hispanism in general and, more particularly, of the dominant Spanish literary historiography until quite recently—has been embraced in recent standout publications such as those by Brad Epps and Fernández Cifuentes (2005), Moraña (2005), and Faber (2008), to mention just a few. All of them welcome a new approach that would overcome the monolingual concept of the Spanish state "by delving into either the place of the so-called peripheral languages and literatures (Catalan, Galician, and Basque) or the place of emigrants and exiles in Spanish literary history" (Epps and Fernández Cifuentes 2005: 20).

Yet how should one approach the study of the interferences, interactions, among the different languages in the Iberian sphere? What is the methodology to do so, and how can we proceed in our analysis of these languages? Does the adjective "Iberian" imply comparing all the different literatures at the same time? How might we implement these studies within the current set-up of university departments of Hispanic Studies? Mario Santana has lucidly outlined the challenges this new paradigm, Iberian Studies, poses when it comes to being incorporated into university curricula (Santana 2013). The three areas that, in his opinion, need developing and updating are, in order of importance: 1) reconfiguring what have come to be understood as "national literatures," with a concomitant questioning of the monolingualism with which such literatures have been addressed, and "rethink[ing] the nature of the interactions among producers and consumers of literature across linguistic and political boundaries" (Santana 2013, 55); 2) linguistic education on the part of professors of Iberian literature, an education that demands a questioning of the ideology of monolingualism, that is, "the notion that everything can be reinscribed and eventually done exclusively in one dominant language" (Santana 2013: 58); and 3) a critical study of the discipline.

The difficulty obviously surrounds the real options that a minoritized language like Euskara has, not just in making itself heard in the World Republic of Letters, but also in establishing itself as one of the literatures that are part of a truly comparative framework that overcomes the ideological-theoretical Spanishcentrism that has reigned among Spanish scholars. One should recall, when considering all the possibilities, that a minoritized literature has to co-opt a comparatist approach. Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak's well-known advice about "resuscitating" comparative literature when she defends the need to embrace the language of the Other, and not just as a "field study" language (quoted in Dominguez 2013, 25), is crucial, despite the fact that she herself points out that such advice goes against the fact that there are few hegemonic European languages and countless languages in the southern hemisphere. The renovation that, for example, comparative European

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literature has experienced in recent years parallels the Europeanization that Europe itself experienced through the creation of political bodies such as the EU. And this same renovation is implying, in turn, the transformation of national cultures through their integration into this new body as a whole. For Dominguez, this is the root cause of the growing strategic importance of culture in the EU when he affirms that, "[l]a Comunidad contribuirá al florecimiento de las culturas de los Estados miembros, dentro del respeto de su diversidad nacional y regional, poniendo de relieve al mismo tiempo el patrimonio cultural común" (Dominguez 2013, 27). The importance of culture and creativity as guarantors of European social cohesion and economic growth has placed EU member states' intercultural promotion policies at the center of current European cultural policy. As far as European literature is concerned, in 2008 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe approved Document 11.527, titled "Promoting the Teaching of European Literature," which contends that knowledge of European literature contributes to the strengthening of a "European citizenry," and it therefore urges EU member states to both promote the learning of European languages in order to access works in their original languages and foment translations (cf. Dominguez 2013, 28). This demonstrates the growing importance of translation grants in recent calls for proposal published under the Creative Europe Programme (http://ec.europa.eu/culture/calls/index_en.htm).

Basque Studies Beyond Iberian Studies

If I have insisted on the importance that Iberian Studies has brought when it comes to breaking the resistance of traditional Hispanism to Iberian languages like ours it is because Hispanism or Romanistik, in countries like Germany, have been traditionally the destination of Basque language and literature lecturers. Bear in mind, for example, that Basque Studies were taught in seven German universities, before the World War II, and at present, only four universities, all of them subsidized by the Etxepare Basque Institute, offer Basque Studies. It should be noted that forty percent of our lectureships are at departments of Hispanic or Iberian Studies. Around thirty percent, at Departments of Linguistics, and the rest, twenty percent, more or less, at departments of Modern Languages or Cultural Studies. As we are talking about positions mainly devoted to undergraduate teaching, the philological orientation of the curricula has been crucial when deciding in what department the position should be created. But this is not surprising if we look at the development of the field of Basque Studies itself. The blossoming of Basque philology with the work of Azkue as well as Julio de Urquijo, the founder of the *Revista Internacional de Estudios Vascos* (*RIEV*) in 1907, was crucial in consolidating the field. Philological studies, as well as Basque archeological and

ethnographic studies (with Telesforo de Aranzadi, J.M. Barandiaran) were at the root of the creation of institutions such as Eusko Ikaskuntza (the Society of Basque Studies) and Euskaltzaindia (the Royal Academy of the Basque Language). Years later, another eminent Basque philologist, Koldo Mitxelena Ellisalt, was going to be in charge of designing the degree of Basque Philology at the Univesrity of the Basque Country, a degree that continues to this day, although its name has been changed to "Degree in Basque Studies," and it is anchored closely around philological studies. For its part, the new Degree of Basque Studies offered at the Univesrity of Deusto will incorporate, from the next academic year onward, topics like Diaspora Studies, Basque Cultural Studies, and so on, a curricula closer to the offer that we find outside the Basque university system.

But the question is clear to me: what kind of Basque Studies should we promote and diffuse in the future in order to be more effective and visible? The examples we have around us show that Basque Studies could be located in other kinds of departments. Look, for example, at the Center for Basque Studies, at the University of Nevada, in Reno, born within the larger and complex reality of the establishment of the Ethnic Studies Project across the country in the late 1960s and 1970s. The CBS is, mainly, a Research Center and the Basque library, without any doubt, one of the jewels of the center. The efforts of Jon Bilbao and, above all, Bill Douglass allowed the center to offer students in the humanities and social sciences an opportunity to pursue doctoral studies emphasizing Basque-related courses and dissertation research. The successful student will be awarded a Doctor of Philosophy in Basque Studies with an emphasis in one of the following disciplines at UNR: anthropology, foreign languages and literatures, geography, political science, or history. When it comes to BSU, the Minor in Basque Studies is, without any doubt, very popular among undergraduate students, but at this point, no graduate studies or MA are offered in Basque Studies, an issue that we will try to resolve in the near future. We could complete the international cartography of Basque Studies outside the Basque Country with the Minor in Basque Studies offered at the Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona, or the Basque Studies track that students at the University of Liverpool can pursue, both of them close to subjects like Basque Cultural Studies.

What does the future hold? Besides language studies, other fields should be developed, thereby creating graduate positions and encouraging visibility for these studies. My impression is that, like the motto of this conference, *Joan-etorri*, there should be more exchange among Basque Studies academics from within and outside the Basque Country. My feeling is that such an exchange could benefit both the academic programs and the faculty members and students, and of course, make the field more visible. We could begin by making a census of the faculty members all over the world that at present offer any topic related to Basque Studies, and creating an association to promote annual meetings or conferences in the field. The idea of strengthening the relations

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between the summer school programs, or of encouraging the exchange of students and teachers, could benefit, for sure, the future of the field.

CONCLUSIONS

The desire of the author of the first book published in Euskara, Bernard Etxepare, expressed in his well-known poems, "*euskara, jalgi hadi mundura*" (Euskara, set out into the world!), has served as a guide in this brief reflection on the logic that the internationalization of the Basque language and culture has had in recent times. I have mainly focused on the internationalization of Basque Studies at the university level and tried to depict a map that, thanks to initiatives like the implementation of Basque language and culture lectureships and chairs, is growing significantly. Nevertheless, if all these efforts are going to become a real JOAN ETORRIKO BIDAIA, exchange among universities from within and outside the Basque Country should be encouraged and interuniversity projects promoted. I should perhaps end by returning to Bernard Etxepare and accepting that, in the case of the Basque language and culture, *debile principium melior fortuna sequatur*. As it should be.

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