



**Basque Radical Rock:
The Punk Ethos in Basque Identity**

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*“Somos los nietos de los obreros que nunca pudisteis matar,
Por eso nunca, nunca votamos para la Alianza Popular,
Ni al PSOE ni a sus traidores ni a ninguno de los demás
Somos los nietos de los que perdieron la Guerra Civil
No somos nada! No somos nada!”*

“We’re the grandchildren of the workers you could never kill,
That’s why we never, ever vote for Alizana Popular,
Nor for the PSOE or its traitors or any of the rest,
We’re the grandchildren of those who lost the Civil War,
We are nothing! We aren’t anything!”

~La Polla Records. “No Somos Nada.” *No Somos Nada*, 1987

Introduction

While writing this paper, I got a call from my father, wondering why I’d been too busy to talk lately. The conversation naturally turned toward my work and I told him I was trying to come up with a historical context for the Basque Radical Rock movement in order to understand its legacy for Basque identity formation. It should have been me who called him. Born in Bilbao and having lived through the 70s and part of the 80s in the Basque Country, he knew of the economic and political crisis firsthand: it had led to his immigration, following my mother, to the United States. He is from Bilbao, first and foremost, and loves the city in an indescribable way, capable of remembering each of its streets, bars, and signposts. Bilbao is still a part of him, even though he has lived in the States far longer than in the city of his birth.

Aita tried to convey to me what the city was like then, the gritty nature of its personality and the abandoned factories at every corner. Young people watched workers' protests against the closure of Astilleros Euskalduna at the Deusto bridge and the harsh Spanish police response as entertainment. Industrial decline and violence as spectacle were the norm. The devastation of the city due to the massive flooding of the Nervion in 1983 during *Aste Nagusia*, Bilbao's big annual week of festivities, brought the city's urban decline to the fore. Destruction abounded, and in his circle of friends, people spoke of politics and mobilization, while young people all around him were revolting against the morals of the previous generation and the lack of future they foresaw for themselves.

Then he began to talk of the musical scene and groups: Eskorbuto, Barrikada, and Las Vulpes, among others. "So and so was my neighbor, he was a nice guy, always drawing comics like the ones on record covers... Those guys played in that txosna, and they vacationed near your mom," etc., etc. Talking to him, I realized the immediacy of the events and people to him, thirty plus years after the fact. He said Bilbao is now transformed, incredible in so many ways, and it makes him proud, but that too many people have forgotten about its past or choose not to remember. Political revolution has been replaced by *txikiteo* and talk of Michelin-star restaurants. Perhaps it is that *Bilbaino* pride—the fact that no matter what the city is or was like—that makes Bilbao more than a place and instead an integral part of symbolic identity for its inhabitants, both near and far. I realized at that point that this paper was more than a look into the past: it was a means for me to understand where I came from and how music intersects with society in ways that no history can relate on its own.

This paper situates Basque Radical Rock within the economic and political context of the late 1970s and 1980s as a way of understanding how and why Basque youth embraced a punk ethos to represent their lives and plight. The director Álex de la Iglesia once recalled: "Bilbao looked like a painting by Bosch. It was a blazing hell. When I asked my mother why the sky was red she would tell me: that is Altos Hornos" (qtd. in: López Aguirre 152). Factories such as this one were in the midst of closing down, and although they had made Bilbao a purgatory for lost souls, they also put food on the table. The myriad of meanings of Basqueness at that time was being grappled with during the transition: what did this identity mean and how would it be represented? Inhabitants of the Basque Country were united by a sense of place, a shared economic downturn, and the instability of the political moment, which led to a new critique of society by those who had been left behind and did not fit in with traditional notions of Basque identity. Sharryn Kashmir states that music can be seen as "an important instance of cultural production that contributes to the making of a nonethnically circumscribed Basque subject" with particular attention paid to Basque Radical Rock (1999, 181). This paper will describe this transformation of Basque

subjecthood with the intention of further understanding the 1980s as an impactful decade for the future of Basque culture and society.

“No somos nada,” by La Polla Records of Agurain-Salvatierra (Araba), came out in 1987, the year of my birth. I remember listening to it as a child, singing along to its catchy chorus without any understanding of what I was chanting. “We’re the grandchildren of the workers...We’re the grandchildren of those who lost the Civil War...We are nothing.” These lyrics reflect not just the recent history of the Basque Country in the 1980s, but the enduring legacy of the bloody Spanish Civil War and its effects on the future of Basque youth. No political party could represent these people, as they had always failed them. Evaristo Páramos Pérez, the singer and songwriter for the group, once remarked: “We are political because it isn’t possible to be anything else. We are not party political...but political in the sense in which politics is life” (qtd. in: Blasco 1985, 21). Evaristo and La Polla Records continue to pack large stadium concerts to this day, and that sentiment has never been lost in their music. Moreover, it reminds us that struggle through music, as reflected in Basque Radical Rock, is still a potent means to reflect reality and reach the people today.

Contextualizing the 1980s in the Basque Country: Economic Crisis, Politics, and Drug Culture

After Franco’s death in 1975, the Basque Country faced the difficult task of political and social reconstruction within a context of economic hardship and political cynicism. By contextualizing the period of the transition from the latter half of the 1970s on within a larger narrative of ongoing economic crisis, the foundations of Basque Radical Rock’s societal critiques and varied messages of identity will be put forth, as well as the drug culture that flourished alongside it.

In short, during this time the Basque Country collapsed economically after a period of consolidated success based on the iron and steel industry as well as banking within the global capitalist system that had begun in the 19th century. The 1960s were a period of economic boom in Spain, but “it is now argued that the expansion of the sixties had been achieved ‘somewhat frivolously’ by the boosting of domestic consumption at all costs” (Carr & Fusi, 78). Before the crisis of the mid-1970s, 46.3 percent of the population worked in the industrial sector, which was by far the largest specialization, and “the per-capita income in Euskadi was 79 percent higher than the average in Spain” (Douglass & Zulaika 319). Around half a million immigrants came to the Basque Country from different Spanish provinces in this period due to the continuous demand for workers in the iron and steel sector, symbolized by Altos Hornos in Barakaldo and Sestao, on the Left Bank of the greater Bilbao region.

Many neighborhoods were built in great haste to accommodate the rising population, with urban planning in areas that lacked basic infrastructure, such as shops or transportation. These conditions affected the youth that was to come of age in the 1980s. As Amanda Cuesta has noted, “far from resolving the social problems derived from mass immigration and the nature of being uprooted, these urban solutions did not do more than move them to the periphery and mask them, in what came to be known as vertical shanty towns” (qtd. in: del Val Ripollés 77). Located on the outskirts, these working-class neighborhoods became ghettos that provided little hope for the future, and later on became epicenters for drug use.

The crisis began around 1975, and by 1979 almost 150,000 people in the Basque Country were unemployed, representing around 15 percent of the population (Valverde). By this time, the sons and daughters of immigrants were integrated into the greater society, but were pessimistic about their future working lives, watching as their fathers lost their jobs. This, alongside the democratic transition, caused a state of political and economic unrest that not only affected the working class but also its future labor force.

The economic crisis escalated greatly after 1979. During the early 1980s “nearly two-thirds of the Spanish state’s youth were unemployed, a figure that was even higher in some parts of Hegoalde¹” (Watson 427). In the Basque Autonomous Community alone, “152,000 jobs were lost between 1975 and 1985, 73% of them in the industrial sector” (Gómez Uranga 50), 1985 being the worst year with 23 percent unemployment (de la Granja et. al. 233). Consequently, many young unemployed people had a lot of spare time, and this period has been described as one of *pasotismo* or an attitude of not giving “a damn about anything” (Douglass & Zulaika 440). It was within this context that Basque Radical Rock found its voice, a way to speak out against the conditions that previous generations had not experienced or had not dared to express. As Fernando del Val Ripollés aptly describes:

From these facts we can imagine a great deal about this youth, children of immigration, who grew up in isolated neighborhoods that lacked infrastructure, with little formal education and no labor opportunities, with plenty of free time and few economic resources, without any cultural offerings besides bars, billiards, discos and slot machines, which would then form part of the imaginary of social, media and film phenomena as the *quinquis*,² and of music and punk songs (77).

¹ *Hegoalde* refers to the Basque provinces in Spain.

² *Quinqui* refers to a member of a marginalized group, a synonym for a punk in its original sense, not the musical one.

Previously in the 1960s and 1970s the New Basque Song, a movement in which use of the Basque language challenged the Francoist government with highly politicized lyrics, had dominated the Basque music scene. The movement was embodied by Ez Dok Amairu, the cultural collective that aimed to regenerate Basque culture. However, following the *Caudillo's* death, the New Basque Song's version of protest songs no longer reflected the situation of Basque working-class conditions. The youth felt marginalized and "negated the idea of incorporating themselves into Basque civil society, in fact they radically opposed it" (Lahusen 266). As Douglass and Zulaika remark:

At the end of the 1970s, in the new Spanish post-Franco democracy, much of this music of cultural resistance and ideological interpellation suddenly became dated. A rebellious message with simple guitar accompaniment was no longer sufficient. A sense of crisis for the so-called new Basque song became discernible. It was a time for the influence of electric guitars and rock and roll to be felt. In the early 1980s, a new music called "Basque radical rock" took over (437).

This music did at times reflect political discourse and was embraced by the left-wing *abertzale* (patriotic) movement as a means to mobilize the masses. It was no longer generic anti-establishment protest but a representation of the needs of the people, growing unemployment, and police persecution. By taking up Anglo-American punk styles, Basque Radical Rock set out to differentiate itself and to present a new modern Basqueness that reflected this socio-political context.

The transition to democracy was shaped by the political struggles that had come before. The Basque political left, before and during the transition, was greatly fragmented and factional. Although an extensive analysis of the political parties present in this era is beyond the scope of this paper, a few points must be made with regard to the political atmosphere.

Euzkadi ta Askatasuna (ETA), or Basque Country and Freedom, had its roots in the student group Ekin, which was composed of "upper-middle-class male students from urban Spanish-speaking families in Bilbo and Donostia" in the 1950s (Watson 321). Their aim was to promote Basque culture, but they slowly integrated ideas of independence into their rhetoric. As the group grew, the Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea-Partido Nacionalista Vasco (EAJ-PNV), or the Basque Nationalist Party, which was founded on racial terms by Sabino Arana in 1895, became interested in Ekin's activities. The EAJ-PNV at the time was a clandestine party, with its government in exile after the Spanish Civil War. Ekin and EAJ-PNV's Eusko Gaztedi, or Basque Youth, united in 1956 as Eusko Gaztedi del Interior (EGI), or Basque Youth of the Interior. Although the two groups tried to enter into a dialogue, they had differing views of the Basque Country's future. By 1959, the student group had split into

ETA and EGI. “For ETA, Basqueness resided not in race but in culture and language, in an ‘ethnolinguistic perception of Basque identity’” as Jacqueline Urla has described (qtd. in: Kasmir 2002, 48). The EAJ-PNV had its roots in 19th century ethnic nationalism, as well as in fervent Catholicism, which went against ETA’s new ideology based on cultural Basqueness and a particular definition of action.

ETA was inspired by revolutions for independence in former colonies as well as Marxist ideology, and eventually took up armed struggle through *ekintza* (action or activism), at first described as “symbolic violence” (Watson 324-325). As they became more clandestine, in order to avoid the Spanish authorities, they turned to more overt violence. “By the end of 1976 20 members of ETA and 60 policemen had been killed; there were 150 Basques in prison, their sentences ranging from 24 to 128 years; another 500 were in exile in France” (Carr & Fusi 156). These numbers only grew in the subsequent decades. Of course, there were repercussions from the Spanish state, with increased policing in the Basque Country. However, society at many times sympathized with the movement that aimed to give Basques independence. According to Alfonso Pérez-Agote:

In the Basque Country, violence was normal or expected behavior. That is, the call for armed conflict did not occur just in politico-intellectual rhetoric. Rather, it was a socially accepted means (in at least some sectors of the population) of achieving legitimate (if relative) objectives such as political independence (121).

As Joseba Zulaika reveals in *Basque Violence: Metaphor and Sacrament*, violence was normalized within Basque society. He shows how the youth of Itziar (Gipuzkoa) joined ETA’s armed struggle in order to challenge the state of things. Owing to the persecution of Basques, the political atmosphere at the time of Franco’s death was compounded by violence, which in turn became the day-to-day experience of those residing in the Basque Country.

The Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Vasco, or Basque National Liberation Movement (MLNV), comprised various organizations and political parties, including ETA leaning groups. The Herri Batasuna party, or Popular Unity, founded in 1978, represented the *izquierda abertzale*, or patriotic left, alongside the Koordinadora Abertzale Sozialista, translated as the Socialist Nationalist Coordinating Council (KAS), established around 1975 (Watson 331). The KAS alliance included: “the youth formation Jarrai, the woman’s organization Egizan, the trade union LAB, the citizen’s movement association ASK, the Gestoras Pro-Amnestia who take care of ETA prisoners, and also ETA in unofficial terms” (Lahusen 264). In other words, KAS represented and organized the MLNV platform Herri Batasuna strived to implement politically.

Herri Batasuna was the political wing of the MLNV, although it did not become a political party until 1986. According to Kasmir, “its members vary in their support for socialism and for ETA’s armed tactics” (2005, 219), although their ideology rejected capitalism and sought to vindicate a more traditional Basque culture, at odds with the contemporary popular music movements of the Basque youth that were sprouting up in response to punk’s emergence on the musical scene at the end of the 1970s. At the beginning, this political party,

...hastened to show their disenchantment with them [punk groups], arguing that they did not sing in Basque, that they transmitted anti-system messages and incited self-destruction, and their aesthetic and musical style came from an Anglo-Saxon drug-addicted environment (Mota Zurdo & Segura Gandarias 56).

But, as Zulaika points out, “by 1984 ETA’s political party [Herri Batasuna] was organizing concerts with rock and punk groups as a means to recruit sympathizers” (2014, 77). In 1985, with their *Martxa eta Borroka* campaign, Herri Batasuna embraced youth culture through music, with the “linking of punk to radical nationalism” (Kasmir 2002, 56). They used the label “Basque Radical Rock,” coined by their own newspaper *Egin*, to help gather support from the disenchanted youth by putting on concerts and tours.

As noted, Herri Batasuna at first hesitated to ally themselves with Basque Radical Rock because of its association with drugs. As Roberto Moso explains, the fragmented left “considered in unison that drugs were a weapon of capitalism used to alleviate juvenile revolutionary energy, although of course, that did not affect alcohol, which in addition to being part of our assumed customs, also produced interesting cash balances at their respective venues” (49). From the late 70s on, drug culture took root in the Basque Country. “With the opening of the Deusto Canal, many European ships from Africa entered with marihuana and hashish” says Javier Arnaiz (qtd. in: Gröh 401). Marijuana use was common in alternative music bars, but heroin became the dominant hard drug of choice.

Already in 1983, the film *El Pico*, directed by Eloy de la Iglesia, depicted the drug situation in Bilbao. The story centers on Paco and Urko, two unlikely friends, united by drug use and a hedonistic lifestyle. Paco is the son of a right-wing *Guardia Civil* (Civil Guard), while Urko’s father is a left-wing politician, fighting for Basque autonomy. As the film shows, not only were drug users from all ages and backgrounds, but also from different political groups. The need for heroin shapes the characters’ dealings and becomes integral to their lives. As Elena López Aguirre, rock journalist and ex-guitarist of the group Potato from Vitoria-Gasteiz, notes,

[El Pico] was discredited for being sensationalist but the film reflected quite faithfully how easy it was to become addicted to horse [heroin], and how the youth of the time quickly succumbed to the drug that transformed them into delinquents and rapidly into walking cadavers (164).

As trite as the film is, de la Iglesia was able to portray the reality so many young people faced, without giving the movie a happy ending.

All the while, the film accurately depicts the setting of Bilbao, the contamination and lack of future for the youth. It is interesting to note that this film was produced just a few years after the introduction of heroin and includes cameos by two members of the group Eskorbuto, who were in reality junkies themselves. In 1979, “the Spanish health authorities launched the campaign Drugs kill slowly, answered by graffiti that stated Doesn’t matter, we’re not in a hurry” (*ibid.* 152). Belén Mijangos reflects on the period saying that:

It has to be taken into account that there was a real desire to experience new things and to transgress the established order. We were coming out of a long dictatorship and on the streets people wanted to live the lyrics of those songs we so liked ... but we had very little real information on the effects of the majority of drugs (qtd. in: Gröh 401).

It is difficult to ascertain when and how heroin was introduced into the Basque Country. This was not just an epidemic in the North, as it also affected Spain overall. “Around 1978, there were about 6,000 addicts in the Basque Country, but to contrast, Cataluña had 10,000, but with twice the population” (López Aguirre 152). To put it into perspective, “proportionately there were as many junkies in San Sebastian as in New York” (*ibid.*). According to Germán Labrador, “the narcotic dream has the capacity to suspend the world: it does not solve its contradictions, it does not answer its enigmas, it simply erases them, it eliminates them” (qtd. in: Val Ripollés, 86). The suffering caused by the economic crisis and hopelessness of the youth was self-medicated and forgotten with heroin. It did not help that many of their punk idols were openly junkies, such as Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols, and that little was known about the effects of the drug, let alone the future advent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Some allege that the drug was introduced by the state, specifically the Fuerzas de Seguridad del Estado, in “areas where there was a more conflictive and rough youth” (Oiarzabal Donostia). The “Navajas Report,” written in 1989, seems to incriminate the state in the dissemination of heroin, especially in areas with political movements in order to subdue them (*ibid.*). Although it is difficult to say with any certainty how the drug became so widespread, it had lasting effects on the population. According to Pablo Sánchez León:

“at the end of the 90s, there were more Spaniards born in the 40s than in the 50s, this being the decade that marks the beginning of the baby-boom” (qtd. in: del Val Ripollés 87). Today, most Basques of a certain age would be able to cite the loss of a family member, friend, or acquaintance to heroin.

The historical context of the late 1970s and 80s helps to shed light on both Basque society and the emergence of Basque Radical Rock. Politics, economy, and culture were closely linked in this movement, but its expression took many forms, reflecting the differing perspectives of its members and the growing disenchantment with the status quo.

The Music Scene: Punk and Basque Radical Rock

By the late 1970s, young Basques saw that little had been done for their future through folk protest songs and their surrounding movements. Instead of a growing interest in politics, punk represented a new attitude, a do-it-yourself lifestyle. Feeling misrepresented by mainstream politics, they focused on their own realities. It is a music that reflects the angst, problems, and events of the everyday, with quotidian lyrics steeped in pessimism and revolt. Punk was a way to challenge the social order and past cultural tradition.

Punk rock can be differentiated from rock more generally by its predominance of loud, fast, and unpolished musical style as well as its basic chord structures, simple melodies, and aggressive delivery of lyrics. However, it isn't just a form or musical expression. As explained by Greil Marcus,

Punk was not a musical genre; it was a moment in time that took shape as a language anticipating its own destruction, and thus sometimes seeking it, seeking the statement of what could be said with neither words nor chords. It was not history. It was a chance to create ephemeral events that would serve as judgments on whatever came next, events that would judge all that followed wanting—that, too, was the meaning of no-future (82).

Marcus presents punk as a socio-cultural movement more than a form of music. Although punk is associated with a certain style, its attitude is what left a mark, especially so in the Basque Country.

Jose Mari Blasco and Mariano Goñi coined the term “Basque Radical Rock” in 1983 in the newspaper *Egin*. It was used to describe an anti-NATO and anti-ZEN³ concert held in Tudela (Navarre), which brought together La Polla Records, Hertzainak, Zarama, RIP, Barricada, Basura and the Canary Island band Escorbuto Crónico, “an explosive mix that was historically memorable” (Blasco 1987, 20). This umbrella term had more to do with a sense of location than a manifestation of ethnic identity. Although the groups came from the Basque Country, many of the members were the children of Spanish migrants, those who had come with the promise of jobs that were now disappearing. The lyrics of these groups are in both Spanish and Basque, even though many groups began singing in Spanish, or learned Basque to vindicate the use of the language, such as Roberto Moso of Zarama. The “Basque” in Basque Radical Rock, therefore, signifies a somewhat unified regional experience over any ethnic or language ties. In this sense, traditional Basqueness was challenged by presenting a cultural identity rather than an ancestral one.

The diverse groups encompassed under the umbrella of Basque Radical Rock came to be known through a vast network of D.I.Y. radio stations, fanzines, and record labels. The first punk fanzine was *Destruye*, starting in 1981 out of Donostia-San Sebastian by Javi Sayes. Not only did Sayes spread the word on punk groups and concerts, but he also made contact with punk groups in Cataluña (López Aguirre 157). Another pivotal glossy was *Muskaria*, which ran from 1980-1987. Started by Roge Blasco, Oscar Amézaga, and Pedro Mari Azkorra, the fanzine was dedicated exclusively to music in the Basque Country. Once, while being interviewed by Gabriela Cañas of the Spanish newspaper *El País*, Amézaga drove the interviewer from Bilbao to Santurzi, on the Left Bank, blaring Eskorbuto. As Cañas listened, she looked around at the pessimistic landscape and Amézaga noted, “Don’t you realize? Around here you can’t just start singing about the flowers. Around here, people make punk” (1986).

The newspaper *Egin*’s cultural section also helped promote the music. The rise of gaztetxes, youth squats that served as alternative cultural and social centers, also gave bands a place to perform and be heard. There were certain bars and clubs that formed a network for groups to play in, as well as outdoor concerts during festivities. Some groups even played outside of the Basque Country, in Spain and throughout Europe, such as Kortatu and Eskorbuto. Once Herri Batasuna embarked on its *Martxa eta Borroka* tour, they organized most of the concerts. As Milkelón, a cultural activist for the party, observed, “We organized festivals and we will continue doing so because it is a cultural issue that must be supported. It is a very broad popular movement, in which the anti-nuclear, the vindication of Basque and many more things coincide” (qtd. in: Cañas). *Egin* published weekly musical reviews

³ The ZEN plan (Zona Especial Norte or Special Northern Zone) was put in place by the Spanish government due to ETA’s growing acts of armed struggle and entailed increased surveillance and policing.

and concert calendars. As noted, the political *abertzale* movement may not have been keen at first to take up Basque Radical Rock under its wings, but once it realized that connecting to the youth through music could help in garnering votes, its support was full-fledged.

The term Basque Radical Rock, however, felt imposed from above by many groups, who saw it as a marketing brand, not unlike what had previously happened to punk in the U.K. with the commercialization of the music. “Paradoxically, almost no one agreed to be part of this ‘musical movement,’ which was considered a label imposed by music distributors foreign to the scene” (Iñigo Muguruza, qtd. in: Herreros and Rendueles 2004). That being said, the use of the term now helps to describe a musical scene that despite being disunited, represents a period in Basque history and music.

Before this term was marketed, however, the music festival Euskal Musika 80 helped to introduce many local groups to larger audiences. Mendioppe was a club in Itziar started by former ETA members and Joseba Zulaika, who was carrying out his field work for his dissertation of Basque violence (Zulaika 2014, 77). After mounting costs due to its establishment, the Euskal Musika contest was organized in 1980. The poster was of an *aizkolari* (wood chopper) holding an ax that gradually transformed into an electric guitar (López Aguirre 159), symbolically encapsulating the move from tradition toward modernity. For Zarama, this was their chance: “we needed a shock and destiny gave us an unbeatable one on our path,” as Roberto Moso recalls (62). The first and second place bands in each category would get the chance to record on the Euskal Musika 80 LP. Only three bands, Ziper from Legazpi, ZEN from Bilbao, and of course Zarama, competed in the rock category. At the end, ZEN and Zarama won the category and were recorded on IZ records in 1981. Zarama’s “Bildur naiz” was their first single.⁴

As mentioned previously, Roberto Moso was learning Basque as he fronted the band. In fact the group’s name, translated as garbage, was chosen out of a Basque-Spanish dictionary. “Bildur naiz” is a fine example of a student learning a language, but it also reflects the tension and angst of the youth in the Left Bank of Bilbao:

Egunaz, gabaz, arratsaldez,
Zeta eta jeep eta tanketagaitik,
ezin dut jan, hitzegin ere ez
ezin dut ezer egin, dardaratzen ari naiz eta:
Bildur naiz

⁴ It is interesting to note that Mendioppe was bombed by ETA in 1985 because of its relation to drug-trafficking and allegedly being “contaminated by foreign rock music and drugs,” going against ETA’s anti-drug and anti-foreign influence stance (López Aguirre 159).

During the day, at night, and in the afternoon,
Because of the jeeps, the and the armed vehicles,
I cannot eat nor speak.
I cannot do anything, I'm trembling and:
I'm scared

The heightened police state, embodied by the increased policing of the ZEN plan, is exemplified in this state of fear.

Another key group emerged from the Mendiopel festival. Ziper's lead singer, Iñaki Garitaonandia, better known as Gari, later became part of the group Hertzainak. Their name directly translates as "the police," a reference to the English new wave band. However, they could be thought of as the Basque version of The Clash: "rock, reggae and punk; Basque militancy and a radical stance" (Zaratiegi Armendariz). The group sang in Basque from the outset, and their lyrics were especially critical of the EAJ-PNV. However, in contrast to Zarama's lyrics, their songs used satire to critique Basque society and culture. Any analysis of Hertzainak shows how they reconfigured Basque identity by integrating Basque language and instruments with a new class- and place-based conception of being Basque.

Kasimir argues that Hertzainak's music, specifically their lyrics, challenged traditional notions of Basque identity. She argues for a "repositioning of ethnicity and gender in Basque identity," in which immigrants, or children of, "lacked ethnic features of Basqueness—lineage, language, cultural traditions," but "became Basque through other means" (1999, 180), such as music or political positioning. She contends that Hertzainak's lyrics convey resistance to Basque nativist identity and traditional political stances, especially those of the EAJ-PNV. It is their attitude that makes them punk, not their music.

In "Rockanrol Batzokian," Hertzainak takes a satirical political stance, confronting the EAJ-PNV's traditionalism and challenging concepts of Basque culture:

Txistulariek "gora ta gora: ederki jotzen zuten
ta Arzallusek kriston mitina botatzen
ta jeltkide guztiak nahiko edanak eta
pozik egongo ziren
zeren Hertzainak heldu ziren eta denok jarri ziren
dantzari rokanrol batzokian!

The txistulariek played the "Gora ta gora"
And Arzallus threw a hell of a meeting

And all the *jelkides* would be drunk
And happy
Because Hertzainak arrived and they all started
To dance rock'n'roll in the *batzoki*!

The *batzokiak* are EAJ-PNV social clubs in almost every Basque town. Hertzainak imagines the *jelkides*, or party members, getting drunk and being happy listening to Hertzainak's songs with Arzallus, the then head of the party, giving a political meeting. *Txistulariek* are Basque flute players, while "Gora ta gora" is a very traditional (that is, old fashioned) patriotic song. As Kasmir puts it: "by undermining these objects, the song positions Hertzainak to unmake Basqueness" (1999, 183). Hertzainak reduced the importance of "ethnic-based conceptions of identity, by creating new modes of being Basque that drew forms and styles from an international youth subculture, and by situating the production of Basqueness in new, nonethnically marked, liminal spaces," (ibid.) contesting not only traditional Basqueness but presenting a new diverse idea of what the Basque Country could be.

Several attempts have been made to map variations of Basque rock music at this time. Christian Lahusen outlines three groupings along political lines: the anarchic, the political, and the *abertzale* projects, each symbolized, respectively, by Eskorbuto, La Polla Records, and Kortatu. Punk music can be seen a vehicle to present these different political messages. In Basque Radical Rock's case, the anarchic is tied to "opposition to all types of social means" (Lahusen 269). This categorization of bands has its roots on the Left Bank of Bilbao, and the music is chaotic, forgoing ideologies in order to attack social norms.

Eskorbuto embodied the live fast, die young mindset of punk in the Basque Country, and their influence is still felt to this day. Comprised of children of immigrants, the group formed on the Left Bank in Santurtzi in 1980. Coming of age at a period of crisis, they followed their "anti-todo" (anti-everything) motto with what they dubbed *eskizofrenia* rock till the end. The need for relief or escape led two of its members into the world of heroin, ending their lives a mere ten years after starting the group.

Eskorbuto criticized all sides in their music. Although their social context was marked by violence and police brutality aimed at the Basque Country, they also had their qualms against Basque society. After their arrest at a concert in Madrid in 1983 for "slander against the Security Corps of the State," in other words eulogizing terrorism (Blasco 1987, 17), they reached out to Gestoras Pro-Amnistía, the ETA prisoner support group, but received no response. This incident marks a break in Eskorbuto's music, especially with the release of their debut EP *Zona Especial Norte*, which included tracks such as "A la mierda el País Vasco" (To hell with the Basque Country), which alludes to the lack of support by the

MLNV. Before this, they attacked the country (Spain) with lyrics such as “spit on the flag” or “damn country.” They felt that they had stood up for the Basque people with nothing in return and although they later distanced themselves from any political agenda, their end came due to their own motto of “anti-everything” that united them against the world, but also against themselves.

Second, according to Lahusen, political groups “distinguish themselves from this first position by giving emphasis to a combative attitude explicitly defined in political terms” (269). They sought to raise consciousness and mobilization to a certain extent, without allegiance to any political party. This is exemplified by La Polla Records, a group that “at that time seemed 100% alien” (Moso 62) and were “provoking rockers, with British-style mohawks, who spat out punk anthems of ludic criticism” (Zaratiegi Armendariz). Their message was not mobilization but political awareness, as exemplified in “No Somos Nada,” and their songs still resonate today, not only in the Basque Country but within groups of socially- and class-minded individuals.

Last, the nationalist project “placed more stress both on the national question and on open alliance with sectors of the *abertzale* movement” (Lahusen 269). Kortatu openly allied with the *abertzale* movement, forming part of *Jarrai*, KAS’s youth wing, and taking part in *Martxa eta Borroka*. Fermin Muguruza, the singer, believed music could be used as a weapon to provoke national change (qtd. in: Martxoak 18 Kultur Elkarte 92). In 1986 a Madrid journalist remarked: “Kortatu is, for many, not only a musical group; it is also a flag. Rarely does its songs divert from the Basque problem” (Cañas). Kortatu at first sang in Spanish but later disbanded and became *Negu Gorriak* in 1990, a group that used Basque exclusively.

Lahusen, like Kasmir, equates Basque Radical Rock with punk, and goes on to analyze the ways this music’s discourse converged with those of political mobilization within the Basque nationalist movement during the transition. His definition of punk has less to do with the music than with its “programme,” (265) as he puts it. Lahusen’s argument depends on the following dialectic: “punks” take on a radical discourse, making it part of their identity beyond questions of ethnicity and place. Political groups initially resist this representation, blaming it on imperialist American projections of identity contrary to the Basque struggle. This causes punks to further challenge notions of identity, making their project more radical. Once political groups, namely *Herri Batasuna*, realize the potential of using this subculture as a means to gain votes, they recognize the identity, for their own political aims. This is the moment of mutual recognition. Groups that then recognize the other’s political message no longer have to struggle for recognition, internalizing punk concepts, still present in Basque society. Punk values appeal to a wider audience. The coining of the term “Basque Radical Rock” further shows how this movement was accepted:

by giving it a name, it was ascribed a meaning. Basque Radical Rock therefore became part of the political discourse on the part of society even though only some groups, such as Kortatu, actually wanted to be part of this political project.

This struggle for recognition then had its effects on Basque identity. Jacqueline Urla, for instance, also questions the use of the word punk: “Indeed, to call them ‘punk,’ as some authors do, is problematic at best” (174) when referring to Negu Gorriak but also to the movement in general. Urla goes on to discuss the way Negu Gorriak cultivated “political awareness and cultural pride” using “these resources [D.I.Y. and punk] to fashion a new image of a militant Basque nation that was simultaneously transcultural, hybrid, and media driven” (171). Although Negu Gorriak was formed late in the Basque Radical Rock movement (1990), Urla’s analysis continues in the line of previous discussions on the reconfiguration of Basqueness in the 1980s. “Negu Gorriak is an example of how young people are engaged in a dynamic conversation about tradition, exploring and defining for themselves what it means to be Basque in the present” (173). Negu Gorriak extended the Basque question into a global context, something Basque Radical Rock had not quite succeeded in, while also providing Basque nationalism with cultural capital and the charismatic front man Fermin Muguruza, who continues fighting to this day.

When Kortatu reconfigured as Negu Gorriak, they made the conscious choice of using Basque and aligning themselves with other minority struggles, deeming themselves “Afro-Basques” in solidarity. By using “music as a tool of consciousness raising and counterinformation” (177) combined with a D.I.Y. attitude, Negu Gorriak was able to create and disseminate a hybridized notion of Basqueness inextricably linked to political aims. Through a punk attitude, they were able to deconstruct Basque identity through a new national consciousness, mixing traditional Basque symbols, such as language, within class-based rhetoric.

At the same time, David Mota Zurdo and Eneko Segura Gandarias show that Basque punk was not just a movement linked to the *izquierda abertzale*, through an analysis of lyrics by Eskorbuto, La Polla Records, R.I.P., and Cicatriz. Instead of focusing on political aspects, they see Basque Radical Rock as a counterculture that was taken advantage of by political movements. By focusing on punk groups, they show how

the majority of the songs by these bands, because of their great political content, have been inserted into the so-called Basque conflict and because they placed a great emphasis on the every-day life of Euskadi. However, for some of the protagonists, this label ended the vitality of punk (62).

Their work shows how the music of the era was a social movement as well as a rejection of certain political ideologies, linking history to a more in-depth analysis of lyrics and punk groups' messages.

Basque Radical Rock incorporated different musical styles under one umbrella term. The lyrics reflected an anti-system rhetoric, that of the Spanish state and monarchy, the army and police, and even the church. It expressed the disenchantment of Basque youth with the state of things, especially the economic crisis and the decline of the industrial job sector.

Jakue Pascual, who perhaps inspired Lahusen's analysis, also looks at the ways punk affected society and categorized the messages as follows: "The social and ironic critique of La Polla Records, the anti-todo of Eskorbuto, the vindication of the national fact by Kortatu and the Basque situation and utopian aspects of Hertzainak" sum up the period (35). Although these groups were surrounded by the commercialization of the term Basque Radical Rock, their music represented different aspects of a new culture, a new Basqueness that has survived and is still challenged by the youth.

Conclusion

The persistence of Basque Radical Rock demonstrates its broader importance and effect on Basque culture and identity. Music can be analyzed as a vehicle for change and should be studied, alongside history, in order to better understand cultural production and societal transformation. People still listen to the music, the punk aesthetic is everywhere, and the attitude is one that defines Basque people. Perhaps Basque musicians from the 80s were radical, but today, expressing Basqueness is the norm, and Basque Radical Rock paved the way.

As I searched for sources, I was recommended a novelized biography of Josu Expósito by Beñat Arginzoniz, *Pasión y muerte de Josu Expósito*. Arginzoniz's writing is poetic at all times, while presenting vignettes of Josu's final days as he reminisces on his childhood and what Eskorbuto meant to him. The fact that people are still fascinated by his music is impressive, considering Eskorbuto's short lifespan. In my mother's village, Quintana Martín Galdinez, in northern Burgos, there is a giant graffiti of the word "Eskorbuto" next to the communal fountain. Throughout the Basque Country, Eskorbuto remains present. Josu, as Arginzoniz describes, was a voice for a generation, misunderstood at times, but good at heart. Roberto Moso addresses Josu and Juanma, another member of the group, in his own book on Basque Radical rock:

Now Josu and Juanma's cadavers rest next to those of my dead family ... The gravedigger in Kabiezes once told me that your tomb is visited profusely by tribes that come from incredible limits. Your legend grows every day like those of so many dead rockers and I hope, confide or simple dream, that one day we will see each other 'beyond the cemetery' (60).

Eskorbuto is just one example of the influence of Basque Radical Rock. They represent the music and attitude, as well as the end of so many lives cut short. Perhaps this is why they continue to form part of the Basque collective culture of the past.

The sociologist and expert on Basque youth movements Jakue Pascual was interviewed by the newspaper GARA in 2010 and asked to define this movement. His answer sums up the main elements of the period:

The three main elements are punk, the Basque question from an anti-repressive view, and the understanding that the relationships between groups in society have to be more direct and horizontal. There was a deep economic crisis that led us to understand that there was no future for us and the "anyone can do it" of punk was perfect. In that way numerous groups were created that were a form of expression, like the fanzines and pirate radio stations. We felt Basque and the ZEN plan dictated that all young people were suspects, which made us understand the Basque question in an anti-repressive way. In addition, we came from a transition in which we participated through grassroots groups such as the antinuclear committees, where the relations were within an assembly model, like the *batzarre*, and community work, or *auzolan* (qtd. in: Altuna).

The repression of the 1980s no longer exists, but the spirit of the epoch remains. Relationships have changed as has society, and music is a vehicle for understanding this turn in Basque history and culture.

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