SSOAR

Open Access Repository
www.ssoar.info

Basque '68 in Light of Cultural Nationalism and Critical Utopia

Azurmendi-Arrue, Haritz; Garmendia Castaños, Alba

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:
Azurmendi-Arrue, H., & Garmendia Castaños, A. (2019). Basque '68 in Light of Cultural Nationalism and Critical Utopia. *Studies in Arts and Humanities*, *5*(1), 77-97. https://doi.org/10.18193/sah.v5i1.157

Nutzungsbedingungen:
Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY-NC-ND Lizenz (Namensnennung-Nicht-kommerziell-Keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier:
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.de

Terms of use:
This document is made available under a CC BY-NC-ND Licence (Attribution-Non Comercial-NoDerivatives). For more Information see:
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0

gesis
Leibniz-Institut für Sozialwissenschaften

Mitglied der Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

Studies in Arts and Humanities **VOL**05/**ISSUE**01/2019
ARTICLE | sahjournal.com

Basque '68 in Light of Cultural Nationalism and Critical Utopia

Haritz Azurmendi-Arrue
Postgraduate
University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU)
Leioa, Spain

Alba Garmendia Castaños
Postgraduate
University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU)
Donostia / San Sebastián, Spain

© Haritz Azurmendi-Arrue & Alba Garmendia Castaños. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/.

Abstract

In enlightened or utilitarian reasoning, nationalism is considered a reactionary and irrational belief in an invented tradition. Utopian imaginary, for its part, is cast into the background together with escapist fantasy or useless science fiction. This paper will look at alternative theories that challenge these interpretations. In this new light, utopianism serves as a critique of the status quo and an impulse against it – Ernst Bloch's principle of hope and Tom Moylan's 'critical utopia' are our compass in this regard. On the other hand, as argued by John Hutchinson, cultural nationalism is interpreted as a desire to modernise a community through cultural praxis that is not subordinated to state-building projects.

These theories are the framework for revision of the Basque '68. As far as nationalism is concerned, this period has been interpreted from a political perspective, with the foundation of the armed separatist organization Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) and demands for independence as the key features. The new framework, however, allows us to consider cultural praxis as a way to critically recreate the community through new utopian imaginaries. Therefore, the Basque '68 keeps the nation's imaginary from being subordinated to statist politics and becomes an ambiguous yet open-ended movement in search of the (n)ever-true Heimat.

Keywords: Critical utopia; Cultural nationalism; Praxis; Heimat

Introduction

> With Thomas More the wishland was still ready, on a distant island, but I am not there. On the other hand, when it is transported into the future, not only am I not there, but utopia itself is also not with itself. This island does not even exist. But it is not something like nonsense or absolute fancy; rather it is not *yet* in the sense of a possibility; *that* it could be there if we

> could only do something for it. Not only if we travel there, but *in that* we travel there the island utopia arises out of the sea of the possible – utopia, but with new contents.
>
> Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*

Utopia is a sixteenth-century neologism, a pun that has since generated a vast literature. Our approach to it is not, however, in agreement with the commonly accepted idea of utopia figured as a perfect and static place. Utopia is instead an ambiguous no-place in which an engaged social praxis can be rooted.

Just as we find with utopianism, nationalism is also a controversial concept that became widespread in the nineteenth century. Since then, nationalism has been related to nation-state building or to totalitarian tendencies, especially after the Great War and the rise of Nazism and Fascism. Nevertheless, our claim is that nationalism is something other than a means to justify a dictatorial regime or a political (meaning statist) project. In the present article, we are focusing on the 'new contents' of utopia and nationalism and, consequently, on the concept of praxis they entail. They are not necessarily blueprints, but they can involve open-ended perspectives. The open-ended panorama is analysed via a case study of Basque '68, a cultural and political Basque movement which emerged from a dictatorial context in Francoist Spain. We believe that universalist and abstract demands for freedom, justice, equality and so on can transform the world only when made concrete. It makes sense to contrast universal values to concrete reality when they are put into practice, but they are also abstract desires held at a distance from actual change. The Basque case study is obviously not the ideal form that those demands should take; but we consider that it serves as an example of critical utopianism and cultural nationalism, as it presents a paradigmatic example of political and cultural activism still richly nurtured by utopian longings.

The article makes constant – explicit and implicit – references to sovereignty. This link between nationalism and the nation-state is immediate; indeed, nationalist movements often explicitly seek national sovereignty. Nation-states are also based on an imaginary social contract that legitimises the power of the state. However – and undoubtedly linked to the 'imaginary' character of that contract – sovereignty is also the hidden star concept of utopia. Phillip E. Wegner's analysis of *Utopia* shows this very clearly: 'The sovereign has no place in Utopia precisely because she, he, or it, in the form of national sovereignty, is to be found everywhere and in everyone.':[1] the very best Commonwealth of Utopia equals the very best nation-state. This modern notion of sovereignty means that society is composed of a unitary mass with a single, unique identity. This is, however, a distorted reflection of reality. Societies and nations are plural and porous. How is sovereignty to be understood in such a society? How should society itself be addressed? Is there an alternative between the unitary-communitarian approach and the pluralistic-individualist one? We do not pretend that this article will provide the reader with an answer. Instead, we intend to give a concrete example, hoping that re-creations of *Heimat* will point towards potential answers.[2] The interest of critical utopianism and cultural nationalism lies in the following: while Tom Moylan's conception of utopia links the personal to the political, John Hutchinson's view of nationalism releases the nation from nation-state limit(ation)s. In this way, utopianism and nationalism become valuable tools for rethinking the personal within the communitarian and vice versa.

These issues are addressed in three parts. Firstly, we consider the modern paradigm of utopia and nationalism as the place where distorted critiques of both concepts meet. Secondly,

[1] Phillip E. Wegner, *Imaginary Communities. Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 52.

[2] We have chosen the concept of *Heimat* [homeland] taking into account its undeniable reference to Ernst Bloch but also because of its interesting connotations with nationalism.

our understanding of critical utopianism and cultural nationalism is examined and synthesised in the concept of *Heimat*. Thirdly, we discuss the critical period spanning the 1960s and '80s in the Basque context, which we refer to as the 'Basque '68'. In the midst of Francoist dictatorship and severe censorship, the violence done to the Basque language and culture invoked feelings of shared loss. Instead of taking shelter in escapist or fantastic utopian worlds, however, the Basque community managed to pose an alternative to Francoism: to surpass the totalitarian reality by engaging actively in the creation of a new and better society.

Commonwealth: the place where nation and utopia meet

> The image in the original frontispiece of Leviathan, which Hobbes himself commissioned, shows the body of the king as constituted by the bodies of all the male subjects of the English nation – an elegant and ingenious depiction of the unity among the people, the nation, and the sovereign.
>
> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Assembly*

Anthony D. Smith claims that the modern paradigm of nation is a framework of ideas developed during the second half of the twentieth century. He argues that modernist scholars have common assumptions about the relatively recent emergence of nations or their link to processes of modernisation.[3] We could say that modernists have two main approaches. On the one hand, regarding the ideological doctrine of nationalism, theorists emphasise the irrational and romantic conception of the nation which was formed during the first years of the nineteenth century—Elie Kedourie's scholarship is a well-known example of this thesis. On the other hand, we have the sociological approach espoused by Ernest Gellner or Eric Hobsbawm, where nations are understood as the outcome of other historical and sociological forces like industrialisation and modern capitalism.[4] However, in both cases cultural praxis is subordinated to an external main goal.

For Kedourie, the nationalist doctrine 'divides humanity into separate and distinct nations, claims that such nations must constitute sovereign states, and asserts that the members of a nation reach freedom and fulfilment by cultivating the peculiar identity of their own nation and by sinking their own persons in the greater whole of the nation.'[5] Kedourie argues that this idea of freedom and fulfilment, by subsuming individuals to an essentialist and mythical idea of nation, results in abandoning the rational praxis of the individual, sacrificing it to a prefigured totality. Moreover, it leads to a political practice that is not intended to meet the needs of the individual, but to build a world that is enclosed in separated nation-states. Consequently, a new worldview arises, proposing a utopian and harmonious world in which every nation would cultivate its diverse inner identity without foreign interference. However, since the world is 'inextricably mixed',[6] the nationalist doctrine fails to provide an achievable political goal, causing endless conflict with its blueprint nationalist praxis.

If Kedourie blames nationalism for many of the political conflicts of the last two centuries, Ernest Gellner argues that it is a historical 'necessity'[7] of industrial society. Along

[3] Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 21–22.

[4] Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson, 1966); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983); Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[5] Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 73.

[6] Kedourie, 79.

[7] For the problematic of 'necessity' in Gellner's theory see: Hudson Meadwell. 'Nationalism Chez Gellner'. *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 4 (2012): 563–82.

the same lines as the 'invented tradition' thesis,[8] Gellner considers national cultures as new social constructions. Nationalists create the myth of 'nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny'.[9] The nationalist movement invents the nation, manipulating previous cultures or inventing new ones. However, Gellner pays little attention to the process of configuring the specific culture and ideology of the nation. His interest in nationalism lies in the social conditions that permit its appearance in history. These conditions are based on the principles of universalist reason that underlie the industrial society: orderliness, efficiency, and a 'universal conceptual currency, so to speak, for the general characterisation of things'.[10] In this rationalisation of the social world, the nation-state becomes the main institution that can fulfil the needs of the industrial society. The cultural praxis of nationalists accordingly creates new national identities, with the institutionalisation of that rational spirit leading to the new political form of a nation-state. The resulting national culture is not a reproduction of old folklore, but a high, universal and standardised culture.[11] Although it is meant to be embedded in ancient cultural roots, this appeal to folklore is only a rhetorical resource of the new nationalist elite.

As an exception within this modernist trend, we can consider the case of Benedict Anderson and his concept of nation as an 'imagined community'. His use of the term 'invention' highlights his status of exception. It is commonplace in modernist critiques of nationalism to relate invention to negative ideas, such as manipulation or falsity, but Anderson's viewpoint is quite different; he connects invention with imagination, which he defines as a basic process in 'all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact'.[12] Consequently, he understands that nationalism draws on cultural imagination as a fundamental part of the nation building process. For Anderson, a nation is a new, modern type of community. But as in other modernist approaches, it is essentially linked to the state-building project: the process of imagination is held by the political nationalists; culture is subordinated to the political nation – the nation-state – and does not belong to an autonomous subject *per se*.

Nonetheless, as Hutchinson argues, conventional modernist theories suggest that the use of ethnic symbols in nationalist initiatives 'is for instrumental or decorative rather than substantive purposes.'[13] Culture itself – and hence the process of cultural (re)creation of the national idea – is subordinated to a higher purpose. Kedourie's theory, conversely, sees cultural praxis as an outcome of a simulated national essence. If nationalists claim a unique and genuine national identity, Kedourie shows it to be nonexistent: the invention of national culture is an artificial cultural process, limited to the reproduction of false national essence and robbing individuals of all autonomy. For his part, Gellner dismisses the importance of the concrete ideological and cultural composition of the national idea, since it is a historical contingency. The real historical necessity is the construction of a formal nation-state; the configuration of national identity is subject to that necessity, irrespective of the subjective goals of the nationalists themselves. Whatever our assessment of the cultural praxis possible within this theoretical landscape, what links Kedourie's approach to Gellner's is the idea that nationalists create a utopian and predefined image of the nation – an image that can be traced back to Thomas More himself.

[8] Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[9] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 48–49.
[10] Gellner, 20–21.
[11] Gellner, 125.
[12] Benedict R. O. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. ed (London ; New York: Verso, 2006), 6.
[13] John Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict* (Thousand Oaks, California; London: SAGE, 2005), 2.

Wegner follows the trail of the nation-state as far back as the early sixteenth century.[14] *Utopia* (1516), which inaugurated the utopian genre, was first published for a world in transition and addressed this tumultuous period by referring to (a non-existent) space. Fear of the American Other and anxiety over the agitated historical moment itself, which included not only the beginning of the Protestant Reformation but also the broader transition from feudalism to modernity, was contrasted with the harmonious and peaceful Utopia, an imaginary place located between the two continents that remained a European – better, English – reference. In this perfect land, uneasiness concerning the Other and worries over peaceful coexistence were resolved: Utopia was conceived as an island nation where communal identity could be defined by shared cultural space – language, clothing, customs, etc. – and where coexistence was naturally perfect. Consequently, 'what we see suddenly exploding forth in More's work is a radically new and deeply spatialised kind of political, social, and cultural formation – that of the modern nation-state.'[15] According to this view, More's utopia serves as a nowhere from which the nation-state can be imagined and interrogated—although the modernist interpretations of nationalism mentioned above treat utopia as an invented (hence unreal, hence impossible) and predefined (hence teleological) conception of the nation.

To this extent, we reach the conventional approach to utopia. The anti-utopian trend usually identifies the utopian dream with nationalist and totalitarian threats. According to this conception, the past is romantically idealized and any attempt to return to the lost national community necessarily entails a teleological conception of history. The impossibility of achieving the goal degenerates the *a priori* desirable world into a totalitarian present that sacrifices itself in the name of the future.[16] Various and varied have been the interpretations and verdicts on utopia; in any case, three main characteristics can be outlined in the modernist context to which we are referring. First, utopia presents an-other society. Estrangement is therefore one of its defining features. The otherworldly no-place is, as Louis Marin notes,[17] in-between space and time, distanced from known reality. As a result, utopia allows us to limitlessly imagine space – if preferred, community or nation-state – and to constantly contemplate its potentialities. Nonetheless, utopia is a double-sided mirror; it reflects the ideal place inspiring its realisation and/or it mirrors the perfect place from which one does not want to or cannot return.[18] Secondly, utopia entails a holistic view. 'The idea of totality and equilibrium' is for Lewis Mumford a positive idea due to the fact that it implies a harmony between the personal and communitarian life as well as between science and the '*idolum* or the

---

[14] Wegner, *Imaginary Communities*, xxii.

[15] Wegner, 49. Book II of *Utopia* opens: 'Instead Utopus, who gave his name to the island by conquest (...) and who raised its brutish and uncultivated inhabitants to such a level of civilization and humanity that they now outshine virtually all other nations, having gained victory at his very first landing, caused a channel fifteen miles wide to be excavated at the end of the peninsula joined to the mainland, so surrounding it with the sea.' [Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Dominic Baker-Smith (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 57–58.] Note, on the one hand, the historical contingency of Utopus, the personification of the nation, in the very same terms as in Gellner – a historical force leading civilization. On the other hand, the quote makes reference both to constructed borders and to the existence of 'other nations', which means that the no-place is actually surrounded by other places and peoples.

[16] Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies* is perhaps as well-known as polemic in this sense.

[17] In Wegner, *Imaginary Communities*, 34. Marin was referring to More's literary work and to its in-between character: spatially – between Europe and the Americas – and temporally – between the feudal society and emerging modernity.We borrow Wegner's translation of Marin's 'entre-deux' space as 'in-between' space.

[18] Ruth Levitas, *Utopia as Method. The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 218. Lewis Mumford also points in this direction when he distinguishes utopias of reconstruction from escape utopias in *Historia de las Utopías*, trans. Diego Luis Sanromán (Logroño: Pepitas de calabaza, 2013). See also Ernst Bloch's pictures of wishful images in the mirror in *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Place, and Paul Knight, vol. I (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), 337–447.

world of ideas.'[19] In other words, utopias discuss the means as well as the ends; the material world *and* the intangible field of values. Finally, we submit the delicate and uncertain realm of perfectibility as the third characteristic of utopia. In Darko Suvin's widespread definition, a utopia is organised 'according to a more perfect principle than in the author's community',[20] but the modernist conception of utopia is still characterised as a static place, universally considered perfect[21] – remember Gellner's universal culture. In the best-case scenario, utopia presents the best imaginable society *today*; in the worst, the 'best' place *forever*. However desirable it may appear, our view on the perfect place is, at most, sceptical: we consider that the otherworldly perfect and static blueprint for utopia is not compatible with a committed and open-ended utopian praxis.

As far as the conventional conception is concerned, utopia has one main interpretation. Utopia 'represents a static and, in the most literal sense, reactionary stance', the death of progress and politics.[22] For that matter, even in the case where perfection is not taken for granted, utopia's holistic quality is criticised in regards to the fact that it predefines the totality of the future society. Like the modernist version of nationalism, utopia serves as the higher purpose subordinating cultural praxes, whether in the irrational and romantic sense (remember Kedourie and Popper, respectively) or in their rational interpretation as historical forces leading to progress (Gellner). In other words, change is only accepted if and when it is directed towards the pre-established imaginary community.

The modern paradigm conceives of utopian and nationalist imaginaries as an invented and capricious *summum bonum* [the highest good]. According to this standard interpretation, the realization of each system will either remain in the realm of fantasy and have no social effect, or, in the case of attempted social change, will necessarily embrace teleology and force as means to an end.[23] The problem with this position is that it denies the possibility of other analyses regarding social change – although it criticises the static and idealistic conception of nation or utopia, it is unable to go beyond this narrow understanding of transformation, and is therefore unable to comprehend any other role which cultural praxis and the shared imaginary can play.

Before we proceed to the next part, we would like to focus our attention on an apparent contradiction. The modernist paradigm values the nation-state without question while utopia, which supposedly nurtured the nationalist imaginary in the beginning of its consolidation, is now denounced as an irrational dream or a totalitarian danger (remember Wegner's interpretation of More's *Utopia*). The gist of the matter remains within the *status quo* and its managers. The bourgeois establishment of the nation-state made use of a utopian vision of the nationalist imaginary as long as it was useful for accessing and consolidating power. Once utopian revolution gave way to an ideological state of affairs, the hegemonic class was at such a level of social status that it could both mould the historical narrative and transform the future

---

[19]Mumford, *Historia de las Utopías*, 16, 25. See also chapters 5-6.

[20]Darko Suvin, 'Defining the Literary Genre of Utopia: Some Historical Semantics, Some Genology (Sic), a Proposal and a Plea', *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 6, no. 2 (1973): 132.

[21]Ralf Dahrendorf, 'Out of Utopia: Toward a Reorientation of Sociological Analysis', *American Journal of Sociology* 64, no. 2 (1958): 115–27.

[22] Angelika Bammer, *Partial Visions. Feminism and Utopianism in the 1970s* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Lucy Sargisson, *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism*, Women and Politics (London: Routledge, 1996).

[23]Gellner himself, although far from nationalist positions, has been accused of having a too functionalist approach in his theory. See: Damian Tambini, 'Explaining Monoculturalism: Beyond Gellner's Theory of Nationalism', *Critical Review* 10, no. 2 (1996): 251–70.

of the state.[24] As Franz Hinkelammert and Michael Billig have shown,[25] however, utopian and nationalist mentalities survive in the twenty-first century, albeit sometimes in occult and unnoticed forms. In a sense, we live in the *status quo* utopia: the best possible society is defined by the managerial class as the one we, privileged 'Westerners', inhabit. Utopia and nationalism are said to threaten this paradise. Meanwhile, the earth resembles hell for any unprivileged participant in our hegemony.

"We should dream!" Imagine if we could re-create...

> The image in the original frontispiece of Leviathan, which Hobbes himself commissioned, shows the body of the king as constituted by the bodies of all the male subjects of the English nation –an elegant and ingenious depiction of the unity among the people, the nation, and the sovereign. *Imagine if we could re-create that image now with radically heterogeneous raced and gendered bodies in all their singularity, moreover bodies in motion, encountering one another, speaking different tongues, but nonetheless able to cooperate in both shared and conflicting relations*.
>
> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Assembly*

The modern paradigm maintains the legitimacy and security of universal truth; like Minerva's owl, knowledge remains hidden until reason finds it. In this scenario, the ostensibly-free individual has nothing to say and cultural praxis is nonexistent.[26] In this section we offer a different interpretation: although utopia and nationalism seem to imply conflict, their conceptual potentialities have to be considered from an open-ended perspective. Our analysis will focus on Tom Moylan's concept of the 'critical utopia' and John Hutchinson's position on cultural nationalism. Both authors stress the necessity of open-ended perspectives in their respective fields of study. When considered together, they offer us an interesting point of view regarding the role cultural-political praxis can play in our societies.

By abandoning two common, misleading critiques of utopia and nationalism – namely, that the systems are teleological and static – we will reach a common defence of a committed praxis. In the first place, cultural nationalism and critical utopia are not responsible for teleological movements.[27] Historical time is not linear and progressive for utopian thinkers, but 'rounded' *per se.*[28] This means that no past, present or future movement is ever conceived as

[24]On the one hand, by 'utopian' and 'ideological' we are referring here to Karl Mannheim's differentiation between the utopian as tending to the alteration of the *status quo* and the ideological as the maintenance of it. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954). On the other hand, George Orwell's dystopian novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* is one well-known example of the link between the invention of history and the maintenance of the *status quo*.

[25]Franz J. Hinkelammert, *Crítica de La Razón Utópica* (Bilbo: Desclée de Brouwer, 2002); Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: SAGE, 1995).

[26]Azurmendi asserts how *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the history of the rationality of Europe – how the absolute rational and scientific State-control identifies society and State, with no other place for the individual. The individual is a mere gear inside the State. The State knows the truth; the individual wanders in subjectivity. Joxe Azurmendi, '1984: Reality Exists in the Human Mind. George Orwell, Idazle Enpeinatua', *Jakin*, no. 32 (1984): 94–100.

[27] Tom Moylan, *Demand the Impossible. Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), 26; Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict*, 149. The latter says as follows: 'I have argued that we must reject top down and teleological explanations that perceive nation-formation as a process in which elites steadily incorporate ever-more extensive elements of a population into a mass unitary and sovereign state.'

[28] John Hutchinson, 'Re-Interpreting Cultural Nationalism', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 45, no. 3 (1999): 394. Manuel Vasco explains the idea of progress in the philosopher Ernst Bloch as follows: 'The idea of progress defined by Bloch transcends the lineal outline and understands the world as a directional *poly-rhythmic* complex, devoid of socio-cultural dominance, determinism and reductionism.' Manuel Vasco, 'Sistema Abierto y Posibilidad Teleo-Lógica: Intento Por Entender La Utopía Blochiana Desde La Coherencia

transient or subordinated to a 'higher' nationalist or utopian aim. The static quality of perfection is disregarded, and conflict is brought to the forefront. Hutchinson asserts that ‘the promise of the redress of all grievances after independence’ is no longer tenable, but that the goal of cultural nationalism should be ‘the defence and activation of the historical community.’[29] In a similar way, Moylan's critical utopias do not aim to describe or achieve the Promised Land: instead, these fictions stress the ambiguity of utopia through the political quest of a main character, which is usually left unresolved.[30] Moylan's oft-quoted definition of the subgenre is as follows:

> A central concern in the critical utopia is the awareness of the limitations of the utopian tradition, so that these texts reject utopia as blueprint while preserving it as a dream. Furthermore, the novels dwell on the conflict between the originary world and the utopian society opposed to it so that the process of social change is more directly articulated. Finally, the novels focus on the continuing presence of difference and imperfection within utopian society itself and thus render more recognizable and dynamic alternatives.[31]

Furthermore, Moylan refers to critical utopias as part of an ‘ongoing cultural revolution’ and states that ‘[a]s the concept of utopia is rejected as too limiting and subject to compromise and cooperation, the open form of the new utopia becomes a subversive new content in its own right.’[32] With this objective, Moylan recalls Hutchinson’s 'cultural nationalists'. These are usually men of letters and moral innovators,[33] committed to critical reinterpretation of traditional elements in order to transform the actual community. In this way, tradition is no longer a normative historical force, but a constantly renewed memory.

This process-centred and open-ended character, however, does not mean that past, present or future explanations appear out of the blue. Vincent Geoghegan addresses the role of memory in the utopian imaginary. In his view, ‘hopes and anticipations will play an important role in the invention, distortion, selection, and framing of memory’, just as ‘past memories will have a constitutive role in the forging of my present and future perceptions.’[34] Moreover, individual memories interact with a ‘collective’ memory – of course, the link with historical fact would be only ‘tangential’ and ‘class, ethnicity, gender, etc. would clearly tend to differentiate and preclude any simplistic abstraction such as “national memory”’.[35] That conception of plural memories, however, offers a wide variety of perspectives, enriching the utopian imaginary and avoiding a discriminating approach to nationhood.

In second place, then, these perspectives advocate change and process against static conceptions of time and space. They are not ‘archaising’ or ‘centralist’ but spontaneous movements constructed from below.[36] Considering this, we should introduce Bloch’s ontology. Bloch postulates that reality is an open, indeterminate, and partial process, and that its potentiality is unknown.[37] The substance of both utopia and nationalism is likewise open-

Interna Del Sistema Abierto y Desde Los Principios Que Lo Animan’ (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 1990), 236. (Our translation).

[29] Hutchinson, ‘Re-Interpreting Cultural Nationalism’, 398–99.

[30] Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*, 43–45. Note that Moylan analyses literary utopias.

[31] Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*, 10.

[32] Bammer, *Partial Visions*, 128–29; Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*, 50.

[33] Hutchinson, ‘Re-Interpreting Cultural Nationalism’, 402.

[34] Vincent Geoghegan, ‘Remembering the Future’, in *Not Yet. Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*, ed. Jamie O. Daniel and Tom Moylan (London: Verso, 1997), 17.

[35] Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*, 21. The simplistic view of the national memory is referring to the modernist interpretation of nationalism indicated above.

[36] Hutchinson, ‘Re-Interpreting Cultural Nationalism’, 393, 408.

[37] In *Aesthetics and Politics* it is explained as follows: ‘For Bloch, (…) this history was the *Erbe*, a reservoir in which nothing was ever simply or definitively ‘past’, less a system of precepts than a sum of possibilities.’

ended. Utopian content can no longer be considered harmonious and static, but must be expressive of 'oppositional thought' and 'critical mass'.[38] The literary works analysed by Moylan therefore underline the ambiguous and conflictive character of utopia – always critical of the *status quo* – and highlight the necessity of human action for social transformation. In the same way, the aim of cultural nationalism is not to reinstate past traditions but to ensure that a living community is able to critically re-interpret and update traditional memories.

Hence, we come to understand the centrality of the subject in praxis both in critical utopia and in cultural nationalism. There are two aspects to consider: subject and praxis. The individual is no longer the object of a blueprint nation-utopia but the subject and centre of it. Given that critical utopias pay special attention to the protagonist and their political quest, the description of the perfectionist utopia is irrelevant if its principles cannot be called into question.[39] With respect to cultural nationalism, community is the subject at the centre: a community is not objectified for the realisation of a state but serves as 'a living tradition which is continually recreated to meet the needs and perspectives of each generation.'[40] Likewise, the subject of critical utopias tends to be 'not dominant, white, heterosexual, chauvinist males but female, gay, non-white, and generally operating collectively.'[41] Hutchinson's idea of the nation as a zone of conflict, a symbolic space where hegemonic symbols are contested by cultural revivalists (younger generations, subordinated groups, etc.), can be seen as an assessment of this critical capacity for cultural praxis. In fact, opposition to the *status quo* and the alternative open-ended utopia arise from an unbearable subordinated position. Both Moylan and Hutchinson stress the centrality of the changing historical context for the development of these movements.[42] The novelty of this perspective is that voices which were previously silenced are raised – incidentally, remember Geoghegan's optimism regarding the plurality of these accounts.[43]

When the individual or the community become the subject, their free acts are the ones that define the future. This concurs with Bloch's conception of reality and with the impossibility of teleology, in the sense that there is no historical necessity that will guide action – it is action itself that shapes time and space, utopia and nation. But let us be aware of the consequences: paving one's own path is not concomitant with progressive or revolutionary politics; likewise nationalism can result in reactionary action, or utopia in dystopia. Bloch's solution to this was *docta spes* or 'comprehended hope' together with 'militant optimism'.[44] Mere passive hope would lead to fantastic and escapist dreaming – or to the 'consumer paradise', as Moylan says – but a comprehended hope is conscious of its impending

Theodor Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and politics*, trans. Ronald Taylor (London: Verso, 1980), 13–14. Moylan underlines as well the open character of utopias and the non-necessary realization of the portrayed societies in Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*, 49–50. Besides Bloch and Moylan, Ruth Levitas has deeply analysed that utopia in process in her Levitas, *Utopia as Method*.

[38]Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*, 10. Consult as well chapters 2-7 concerning the analysis of each literary utopia.

[39]Moylan, 43–44. In fact, the critique of the utopian society is a central aspect of the critical utopia.

[40]Hutchinson, 'Re-Interpreting Cultural Nationalism', 399. Hutchinson advises the reader on distinctions between the 'constructed' idea of community and the 'spontaneous or organic order'. Hutchinson, 398.

[41]Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*, 45.

[42]'(...) [I]s specially suited to transitional moments such as our own ', says Moylan referring to the 'long 70s' (Moylan, 42.) and 'at times of social crisis', says Hutchinson ('Re-Interpreting Cultural Nationalism', 402.)

[43] For example: 'These memories provide much of the raw material for the vital utopian dimension of their politics. To the extent that these memories reveal shared values and experiences, the basis is established for the assertion of historical universals. It thus opens the door for a utopianism which is grounded in the historically evolving memories of groups of individuals.' Geoghegan, 'Remembering the Future', 31.

[44]Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1996, I:7, 198–205. Ruth Levitas, 'Educated Hope: Ernst Bloch on Abstract and Concrete Utopia', in *Not Yet. Reconsidering Ernst Bloch* (London: Verso, 1997), 65–79.

disappointment. Most importantly, it requires active engagement.[45] In other words, the actions of the subject should be inspired by militant optimism in the form of the everyday, grounded praxis that constitutes the search for utopia. Bearing in mind that his is an unforeseeable conception of the future, Bloch ends *The Principle of Hope* this way:

> But the root of history is the working, creating human being who reshapes and overhauls the given facts. Once he has grasped himself and established what is his, without expropriation and alienation, in real democracy, there arises in the world something which shines into the childhood of all and in which no one has yet been: homeland [*Heimat*].[46]

Heimat, then, is the desired and strived-for utopia: not a superficial will, but a committed political and cultural praxis; not a predefined and concluded nation-state, but constantly renewed purposes in process. Together with cultural nationalism, *Heimat* becomes, for us,[47] a conglomerate of memories, hopes and anticipations of community, in-between the has-been historical community and the not yet utopia.[48] Summarising what has been said up to now, our conception of *Heimat* (1) is not a higher aim where the present is dependent on future, but an open-ended and ambiguous utopia always in process; (2) involves collective memory as well as hopes and anticipations for the future that are not prescriptions of the system, but explanations which enrich the imaginary; and (3) is made real – though never completed – if and only when there is a conscious subject in praxis.

This subject in praxis grounds *Heimat* in a specific time and place, not forgetting to distance itself from universal solutions and escapist fantasies. The act of accounting not only for praxis, but also for the subjective aspect of history, is what distinguishes the modern and abstract Minerva from the concrete experience of creating *Heimat*. In that creation process, the colour spectrum of each community and individual comes into view and therefore becomes the battleground for power relations and ideological clashes. That conflict and the concomitant – and endless – process of 'solving' it reveals the hopes and fears of the subjects. The analysis of a historically located praxis may offer a deeper understanding of the various imaginaries that make up *Heimat,* because, besides the literary or symbolic interest that they may also have, concrete examples chase away universalist-abstract and teleological ghosts.

Basque '68: From Heimweh [nostalgia] to Heimat

The origin of Basque nationalism is commonly set in the late nineteenth century, when Sabino Arana Goiri published his book, *Bizkaya por su independencia* (1892) [Biscay for its Independence] and three years later founded the Basque Nationalist Party. The emergence of modern nationalism in the Basque Country is usually linked to the increasing centralism of the Spanish state, following the end of the Carlist Wars in 1876 and the abolition of the *Fueros.* Basque nationalism is also related to the rapid industrialisation process that took place in some areas, resulting in the large-scale immigration of Spanish workers and a threat to the rural and traditional Basque world. The historian Ludger Mees points out that Goiri invented a 'huge

[45] Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*, 7. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1996, I:3–4, 246–49. On the disappointment of hope, see Bloch, '¿Puede Frustrarse La Esperanza?', in *Doce Textos Fundamentales de La Ética Del Siglo XX*, ed. Carlos Gómez (Madrid: Alianza, 2002), 165–73.

[46] Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight, vol. III (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1986), 1376.

[47] We have taken the liberty to paraphrase Bloch and adjust the concept to our case. The concept gains special relevance for its symbolism both in the national and the utopian imaginaries and it serves as a powerful bond for both fields of study, which means that the concept we are discussing from now on grows away from Bloch's.

[48] The philosophy behind 'the not yet' can be traced in Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1996, I:114–78.

symbolic microcosm that facilitated the shape and the consolidation of nationalist identity.'[49] He believed that the uniqueness of the Basque people was based on racial difference and that they conserved a pure and unique culture, especially in rural areas.[50] Goiri's national idea was an exclusive, essentialist and archaising one constructed in nostalgic reaction to modernity and the corresponding loss of Basque cultural purity. This, he argued, could only be recovered in an independent state.

However, as Ludger Mees has observed, this invention did not come *ex nihilo*: Goiri's ideas were linked to the Carlist trend.[51] During the nineteenth century, considerable cultural movement led to an authentic Basque renaissance. By the start of the twentieth century, a great number of artists, writers and other intellectuals were engaged in the *Euskal Pizkundea,* a cultural movement similar to the revivalists presented by Hutchinson. Jacqueline Urla claims that 'the folkloric revival created the social networks and symbolic repertoire from which Basque nationalists drew their image of Basque culture, *harnessing these, however, to a distinct political ambition*.'[52] While the folklorists were worried about the practical decline of Basque language and culture, Arana Goiri's political nationalism considered their activity to be purely symbolic, similar to Kedourie's portrayal of nationalists. All the same, Franco's *coup d'état* and consequent dictatorship ended any chance for dynamic exchanges between cultural and political interpretations.

Urla's distinction between folkloric revivalists and political nationalists is far from mainstream. The usual interpretation is closer to Miroslav Hroch's periodic viewpoint, where the creation of national identity takes place in the early, apolitical phase; is politicised afterwards by the nationalist elite; and subsequently becomes a mass movement.[53] This linear conception of nationalism, linking the nationalist position to an original core identity, fails to address the pluralistic and dynamic character of the Basque politico-cultural renaissance. The linear concept attaches projects such as *Eusko Ikaskuntza* [Basque Studies Society] and *Euskaltzaindia* [Basque Language Academy], both founded in 1918, to the subsequent nationalist project, and consequently, to its essentialist concept of the state. We do not consider culturalists and nationalists to be opposed groups in confrontation, since many people were active in both projects. What we want to state is that both movements should be considered autonomously, each one (as some scholars have already claimed) having its own distinct goals.[54] If this distinction is not taken into account, we could be tempted to explain Basque nationalism according to racist, exclusive and mythical origins that contaminate every aspect

[49] Ludger Mees, *Nationalism, Violence and Democracy: The Basque Clash of Identities* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 15.

[50] See the 'Invention of Basque nationalism' in Cameron Watson, *Modern Basque History: Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Reno: Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, 2003), 177–88.

[51] Mees, *Nationalism, Violence and Democracy: The Basque Clash of Identities*, 9–10.

[52] Jacqueline Urla, *Reclaiming Basque: Language, Nation, and Cultural Activism* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2012), 32.

[53] Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups Among the Smaller European Nations*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000). See Hutchinson's critique in Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict*, 115–16: 'The dominant modernist tendency is to view national formation in linear – even teleological – terms in which there is a shift from an ideological nationalism of elites to the routinised identities of sovereign national states as rival class, regional and religious identities are incorporated from above into solidary mass nations. There is, in other words, a shift from the ideological programmes of nationalist elites to the banal identities of settled national states.'

[54] Urla, *Reclaiming Basque: Language, Nation, and Cultural Activism*, 39, on the Basque case; Joep Leerssen, 'Nationalism and the Cultivation of Culture', *Nations and Nationalism* 12, no. 4 (2006): 559–78, for a theoretical approach.

of it. We can find an example of this in Hobsbawm's interpretation of ETA:[55] for him, the allegedly revolutionary '60s group ultimately had to be denounced as xenophobic because of the racist origins of its founder's nationalism.[56]

As Julen Zabalo claims, however, there have been deep transformations in Basque nationalist discourse and identity:[57] Goiri's xenophobic conception of nation was deeply contested as early as the 1960s. Zabalo's understanding of this transformation is situated within the modernist paradigm, stressing the political (statist) nature of nationalism. Once again, this paradigm casts culture and language as symbols that strengthen the political articulation of nationhood. Zabalo suggests that Basque nationalism has gone through different phases, with race defining only its conceptual origins. When the post-Civil War generation started to reclaim a linguistic idea of the Basque nation, this conception offered a way to integrate non-native-speakers in the nationalist project. Zabalo also argues that a new transformation is happening today: elements more subjective than language, such as territory and will, have come to substitute for language itself.[58] The evolutionary interpretation of Basque nationalism points out some of its crucial transformations and addresses the shift that happened in the '60s with the emergence of ETA. While it fails to consider the subjective side of culture and cultural praxis, viewing these factors as simple instruments of progress, its inherent sense of linguistic and cultural nationalism relies on an objective definition of nation—which could itself be interpreted as an invented utopian element.

Our hypothesis is that applying concepts of critical utopianism and cultural nationalism to Basque '68 will give rise to new insights. This perspective helps to articulate the plural and conflicting positions within and around ETA: these were not simply tactical or strategic differences to gain political independence, but different 'idea-worlds'[59] that led to diverse praxis. Most of the research into radical Basque nationalism and its effects have focused on the articulation of the new revolutionary (political) subject, its connections with Marxism and the establishment of inclusive symbols. However, the recreation of 'Basqueness' did not only happen within (and from) the political sphere.

The cultural field also experienced a dramatic turn, regarding both references and praxis. Joxe Azurmendi, one of the most influential philosophers of the contemporary Basque Country, could be considered an advocate of the cultural nationalism of the '70s. His ideas about the political sense of culture are clearly exposed in *Espainolak eta Euskaldunak* [The Spanish and the Basques],[60] in a way that powerfully echoes John Hutchinson's work. First, he challenged the idea that there is only a political problem in the Basque Country, since even a 'free Euskadi' – i.e., an independent Basque state – would not be enough by itself to keep a Basque cultural community alive.[61] He was afraid that if the cultural *status quo* of the Basque society was not transformed, Basque speakers would always be seen as a minority, subjects-

---

[55] ETA is the acronym for *Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna* [Euskadi and Liberty]. The name *Euzkadi* is a neologism created by Sabino Arana regarding the territory of the Basque nation. ETA, for its part, was a leftist and separatist organization founded in 1959 by a group of students critical of the moderate trends within Basque nationalism. After 1968 it became an armed group. It announced a definitive cessation of armed activity in 2011 and, finally, was dissolved in 2018. A brief history of the group can be found in Imanol Murua Uria, *Ending ETA's Armed Campaign: How and Why the Basque Armed Group Abandoned Violence*, 2017.

[56] Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 140.

[57] Julen Zabalo, *Abertzaleak Eta Ezkertiarrak* (Donostia: Elkarlanean, 2000).

[58] Julen Zabalo and Onintza Odriozola, 'The Importance of Historical Context: A New Discourse on the Nation in Basque Nationalism?', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 23, no. 2 (2017): 134–54.

[59] Hutchinson, 'Re-Interpreting Cultural Nationalism', 399.

[60] Joxe Azurmendi, *Espainolak Eta Euskaldunak* (Donostia: Elkar, 1992). Although the book was published in the early '90s, it is known that the original manuscript was written by mid '70s.

[61] Azurmendi, 576–77.

on-the-edge even in an independent state.[62] His solution was to take the opposite position. He saw culture as the way to rebuild a community that had been fragmented by Spanish state-building and by the negligence of Basque elites themselves, but culture was not an objective and static identity, established once and forever. He advocated a committed communitarian praxis that would recreate a vibrant community: nationality is not shown by means of rigorous folkloric or historical analysis, but by acting as a nation, through praxis.[63] That is how he understands culture. In his words:

> The cultural activity of today has the same political meaning. Obviously, it does not only mean to represent national culture, it means, to a certain extent, to create it. This nation has become haggard by foreigners as much as by us. Nobody will regard us as a nation simply because we are said to have some curious customs or special Laws.[64]

By ironically mentioning 'special customs and laws', Azurmendi is rejecting the nostalgic view of an objective Basque identity, based on presumed unique traits. He is instead asking for a committed collective subject. As Urla notes, 'it is not just that Basqueness had become more centered on language and culture, but that the conception of language itself was being rethought among advocates from a heritage to a practice.'[65] In this new performative understanding, community is not rebuilt by restoring a rural, pure or ideal Basqueness; indeed, the intention is for Basque to become an urban, modern language that would be suitable for both everyday – industrial – situations and for modern artistic expressions; not a nostalgic and closed return to a fading past but an open-ended utopia in process. This deepened linguistic and cultural revivalism is expressed in the desire of Lizardi, a prominent symbolist poet from the *Euskal Pizkundea*: 'Baina nik, hizkuntza larrekoa/ nahi haunat ere noranahikoa [But I want you, pasture language / for everywhere].'

This change in the concept of language, from objective-identitarian to subjective-cultural, appears in a very certain context. The revivalism of the late nineteenth century came under the influence of contemporary Romanticism; but in the subsequent renaissance of the sixties, seventies, and eighties, the references were quite different. Anticolonial thought was present not only in politico-military debates, but also in cultural ones. Ibon Sarasola and Arantza Urretabizkaia, two young writers, translated Frantz Fanon's *Pour la révolution africaine* [Toward the African Revolution] in 1972. Albert Memmi's *Portrait du Colonisé précédé de Portrait du Colonisateur* [The Coloniser and the Colonised] was also translated into Basque in 1974 by Txillardegi.[66] The European New Left was also slowly emerging in the Basque context.[67] In addition, female voices started to rise up in traditionally male spheres such as politics, with the first female ETA members,[68] culture, with a new generation of Basque-language writers (Amaia Lasa, Arantza Urretabizkaia, Mariasun Landa, etc.), and new musical movements (Lourdes Iriondo).

In this context of seeking and re-elaborating new subjects, cultural activists started to develop a community-based praxis which differs from statist political struggle and casts aside

---

[62] Ireland was the example to avoid, since in the new Irish State the English language was still predominant.

[63] Azurmendi, *Espainolak Eta Euskaldunak*, 578.

[64] Azurmendi, 580. (Our translation).

[65] Urla, *Reclaiming Basque: Language, Nation, and Cultural Activism*, 52.

[66] Federiko Krutwig's *Vasconia. Estudio Dialéctico de una Nacionalidad* set the Basque Country as a colonized territory by the Spanish and French empires and, consequently, took as referents the works on revolutionary positions coming from the Third World. Iñaki Aldekoa, *68ko belaunaldia. Politika, Kultura eta Beste Mamu Batzuk* (Donostia: Utriusque Vasconiae, 2015), 23–24.

[67] Aldekoa, 95; Joan Mari Torrealdai, *Iraultzaz* (Oñati: Editorial Franciscana Aránzazu, 1973); Xabier Mendiguren, *Europako Ezker Berria* (Bilbo: Ediciones Mensajero, 1972).

[68] Carrie Hamilton, *Women and ETA: The Gender Politics of Radical Basque Nationalism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

the idea of sacrifice central to ETA's activity.[69] Although many cultural activists may have been supporters of political independence and armed struggle, their attachment to community led to the establishment of writing groups, journals, newspapers, music groups, etc. Their communitarian activity was not aimed at prioritising an independent Basque state – it instead empowered and modernised community through cultural praxis.

This spirit is, to a large extent, behind the artistic explosion that occurred during the period we are considering. A drive to create a contemporary Basque aesthetics can be found in many cultural movements that are now considered essential to the Basque '68 generation. Many editorials, new journals, and even a summer university were established with the aim of creating strategic institutions to modernise Basque culture. Of course, not all participants understood concepts such as Basqueness, community or nation in the same sense and, as the following example illustrates, this would lead to intense debates. As we have seen, however, Hutchinson's theory of cultural nationalism and Moylan's conception of critical utopia consider conflict an essential part of political praxis; the project of modernising a culture that was thought to be central to the community unites this diverse group of writers, journalists, philosophers and other cultural activists.

It is not a surprise, then, to see that Azurmendi finishes his book by stressing the political and community-making aspect of culture, in a way that is reminiscent of cultural nationalism:

> It is that precisely, which is our cultural praxis: people making, nation building. The recreation of community. We have to go back, to a Renaissance that did not happen to be: rather than to a Renaissance *of* the Basque Language, towards a Renaissance *in* Basque language. To the discovery of ourselves and to liberty.[70]

The concept of Renaissance is not mentioned in vain. Throughout his book, Azurmendi distinguishes two trends in sixteenth-century Basque Country. He defines writers that defended the antiquity, nobility and purity of the Basque language to a Spanish public in Spanish texts as 'Basque Apologists'. As an alternative, he presents the Basque Writers, people that wrote in the Basque language. They were mainly members of the low clergy whose work was intended for Basque-speaking people. Azurmendi presents these two trends to illustrate the difference between a language used for the identity purposes of a class, considering it as an object, and a language used to express the whole lifestyle of the community. The former is no more than a medal of nobility; the latter an endless project based on commitment and praxis, with the aim of modernising culture, opening new branches within language, and transcending the static-objective essence.

In addition, the sense of history in Azurmendi's quote is far from a nostalgic return to a golden age. It is a glance at the not yet, 'the means to ground the future in the past'[71] or, in our view, a claim for the enrichment of the *Heimat* imaginary. In reclaiming the spirit of the Basque Writers, Azurmendi is not asking for a greater amount of religious and peasant-based texts; he is remembering the claim by Bernard Etxepare in his poem 'Kontrapas' (1545), which appeared in the first printed book in Euskara: 'Euskara, jalgi hadi plazara [Basque, go out into the square/street].' It is no mistake that Xabier Lete, one of the best-known singers of the sixties musical revival, sang a version of Etxepare's 'Kontrapas', as did Oskorri, a folk group from the

[69]Joseba Zulaika has analysed the sacrificial sense of ETA's evolution into armed action: 'ETA's new revolutionary discourse spoke of readiness to sacrifice one's life for the country.' Joseba Zulaika, *That Old Bilbao Moon: The Passion and Resurrection of a City* (Reno: Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, 2014), 56.

[70] Azurmendi, *Espainolak Eta Euskaldunak*, 580–81. (Our translation).

[71]Geoghegan, 'Remembering the Future', 31.

seventies formed in the urban and mainly Spanish-speaking city of Bilbao. Worlds apart gather in search of a renewed community.

Performing new imaginaries

Lete and Oskorri are only two examples of the wider artistic explosion in the Basque 1960s and '70s that spread throughout music, theatre, and art.[72] In this section there are two main reasons why we will be focusing on literature. First, literary utopia is Moylan's field of study. The four critical utopias he chooses to analyse are literary works that 'can be read as metaphorical displacements', underlying not the particularities of each but 'the very *act* of imagining them.'[73] The decisions made by the protagonists are not of course blueprints for us, but images that point towards personal-hence-political issues to reflect upon.[74] Second, and intimately linked to the first, the performativity of language enhances the function of literature and points towards the not yet.[75] Euskara may be the unique common denominator of the Basque '68, the preceding cultural Renaissance and subsequent postmodern trends. This does not mean that cultural nationalism's foremost feature is language, at least not in its narrow sense. In a broader sense, however, Euskara is the means by which *Heimat* is performed and, simultaneously, the endless end of it.

We have already pointed out that the literary works of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were influenced by Romanticism and could be labelled as countryside literature, although it would be too shallow to reduce *Euskal Pizkundea* to an expression of Arana's political nationalism. The sense of cultural praxis at the time was meant to keep the Basque cultural community alive, but its motives and stereotypes deepened the rural-Basque/urban-Spanish dichotomy. Accordingly, Mari Jose Olaziregi presents the costumbrist novels of Domingo Agirre as a clear example of rural stereotypes; *Kresala* (1906) [Saltwater] and *Garoa* (1912) [The Fern] are stories that illustrate traditional ways of life, the former based in a town of *arrantzales* (fishermen) and the latter in a rural area.[76] Without entering into a conceptual debate, we may say that utopian worlds have long been linked to a lost rural idyll. Bloch, for instance, refers to 'the wish for escape' that conducts us towards Arcadia in contrast to any utopia grounded in the present.[77] This countryside literature is therefore closely linked to the concept of Arcadia: a nostalgic looking back to a homeland which is lost or in the process of being lost, perverted by modernising pretensions. Hard and arduous peasant work is pleasant and delightful for the romantic and pastoral Basque men of letters, while the emerging modern city leads to the inevitable decay of Basque language, (religious) tradition and, in short, identity. Needless to say, this describes a static and reactionary utopia.

The story behind *Euskaldunak*, which would have become the Basque national poem, is characteristic of the literary history in the first half of the twentieth century. Although it was finished before 1935, in the style of the countryside literature mentioned above, the Spanish Civil War stopped it from being published. Meanwhile the poet, Nikolas Ormaetxea Orixe, was

[72]See Pako Aristi, *Euskal Kantagintza Berria. 1961-1985* (Donostia: Erein, 1985) on music; on theatre, Idoia Gereñu, 'Jarrai (1959-1968), Abangoardiako Euskal Teatroaren Ikur' (Universidad Carlos III, 2016); and on plastic arts, Luxio Ugarte, *La Reconstrucción de La Identidad Cultural Vasca: Oteiza-Chillida* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1996).
[73]Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*, 203, 39.
[74]The 'personal is political' claim is explicitly addressed by Moylan, xviii, 196.
[75]See Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*.
[76] Mari Jose Olaziregi, *Basque Literary History* (Reno: Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, 2012), 145–46.
[77] Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, I:314–15.

first imprisoned and then forced into exile.[78] He was able to publish his poem in 1950 and returned to the Basque Country four years later. The younger generation, however, was no longer interested in Orixe's idealised peasantry. Costumbrism had been replaced by existential literature, which at the time symbolised a meaningful progressive alternative within the reactionary atmosphere of Francoism. In 1957, for instance, Txillardegi published *Leturiaren egunkari ezkutua* [Leturia's Hidden Diary], which is considered the first existential novel in Basque and a true reflection of the anxiety and rebelliousness of Basque youth.[79] Jon Mirande, a Paris-born writer, wrote *Haur besoetakoa* [The Goddaughter]: a morally transgressive novel about the relationship between an old man and his goddaughter that was written in 1959, although not published until 1970.[80] By the 1970s, with the politicisation of society, Basque literature had already moved on to social issues. Orixe was now revisited critically by Azurmendi, who praised his talent but condemned his anti-modern response to an endangered culture.[81] Euskara was by now onboard the vehicle that was smuggling new European social and artistic trends into the Basque mainstream. Literary works no longer portrayed the traditional stereotyped way of life; they addressed actual and controversial issues such as abortion or ETA's armed struggle.[82]

In fact, the literary world resembled its own effervescent historical context. First but not foremost, political conflict was in the newspaper headlines, and a close relationship between some writers and this sphere of political activity constituted one group of cultural activists. A separate cultural nationalism, distanced from explicit political activity, was also present and defined a second group. In addition, a third movement came to be formed around a critical approach to the previous two. These turbulent years of the 1970s challenge the lineal conception of history: the Basque romantic and countryside man of letters did not turn his writing into a (political) nationalist literature, while nationalist writers did not become advocates of cosmopolitan writings. In fact, the striking feature of the literature of the seventies is not in accordance with revolutionary nationalism but a wider debate about it; debates outside Basque borders surrounding the nation's autonomy are a well-known example.[83] Therefore, the '68 phenomenon was as plural as the debates that emerged about literature.

Beñat Sarasola has summarised one of these disputes, between Azurmendi and Bernardo Atxaga. As Sarasola argues, Azurmendi ends up restricting the autonomy of art and literature when he advocates a cultural praxis that recreates community.[84] Fearing an avant-garde literature that would lack the involvement of ordinary people, he asks for a mass literature that will integrate the arts with entertainment. Atxaga criticises this position, stating that mass literature cannot enhance critical consciousness, and accuses Azurmendi of subordinating art to nationalism. Modelling an alternative position, Atxaga refuses all engagement with nationalism.

It may be meaningful to consider this disagreement from a generational point of view. Azurmendi stepped into the literary scene as a critic in the beginning of the sixties, exchanging earlier costumbrist and countryside literature for a performative cultural nationalism. Atxaga,

---

[78] Gorka Aulestia, *The Basque Poetic Tradition*, trans. Linda White (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 65–98.

[79] Aldekoa, *68ko belaunaldia*, 35.

[80] Olaziregi, *Basque Literary History*, 154–55.

[81] Azurmendi published two books called 'What do we have against Orixe?' and 'What do we have in favor of Orixe?': Joxe Azurmendi, *Zer Dugu Orixeren Kontra?* (Oñati: Editorial Franciscana Aránzazu, 1976); Joxe Azurmendi, *Zer Dugu Orixeren Alde?* (Oñati: Editorial Franciscana Aránzazu, 1977).

[82] Olaziregi, *Basque Literary History*, 156–57.

[83] Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and politics*.

[84] Beñat Sarasola, 'Bernardo Atxaga y Su Defensa de La Autonomía de La Literatura', *Castilla. Estudios de Literatura*, no. 8 (2017): 1–26.

ten years younger, was critical of nationalist inclinations and answered to the coming times: his book of poems *Etiopia* was published in 1978, while the '68 explosion was drawing its final breaths. The death of the dictator Franco in 1975 gave way to the Spanish Transition and the establishment of regional institutions in the Basque territories. Little by little, Western standards were adopted while the dreams of an-other world started to vanish.

Nevertheless, Atxaga was also seeking a renewal of the Basque language and proclaiming the social function of literature.[85] His refusal of nationalist themes and his defence of avant-garde literature may seem to reject any relationship to national community, but his commitment to it was not so far from Azurmendi's. His position with respect to theatre, for example, must be taken into account. For Atxaga, Basque theatre should be 'National, Popular and Revolutionary'. The National character of theatre is key, because 'the meaning we give to this concept brings the other two along with it'.[86]

Without a doubt, the way each author understood nationalist commitment may entail conflict, as Sarasola has clearly explained. But this antagonism approaches resolution when the cultural community is addressed. While the two authors share neither a revolutionary line or an explicit defence of the nation, both emphasise the importance of Basque (culture and language) for the reconstruction of community. Atxaga's criticism of Azurmendi warns of the danger of top-down attitudes when reclaiming nationhood: cultural nationalism would lose the strength of its open-ended character if subordinated to a centralized clamour for 'new homelands'.[87] Azurmendi's 'homelands', however, do not fit the modern paradigm of utopia: his plan is not a blueprint idea of homeland, a fixed identity or a homogenous nation. He is instead asking for a wider cultural system, one that will acknowledge many and various subjects and create many and various contents. Atxaga's *Etiopia*, on the other hand, paradigmatically negates the modern blueprint utopia and demands an-other place for Basque culture. Lourdes Otaegi Imaz analyses *Etiopia* by asserting that the sarcastic reference to utopia in the title means that 'unfortunately, ideal utopias have failed and we have reached consumer society instead,' but there is also the 'adoption of a post-utopian attitude of resistance.' Imaz finishes her article asserting the critique of postmodernism in the book, but not through despair or resignation: 'Basque literature and society have to give expression to their own utopia ... in their own language and from their denied, excluded and invincible character.'[88] The discord between these two personalities from the Basque cultural world should not be dismissed, and emphasis should also be given to their relation.

Chasing away ghosts: Basque '68 beyond closed and static interpretations

We have challenged the modern paradigm of utopia and nationalism. We hope to have set aside their categorisation as fixed ideas of the past, present and future of a community, whose main

[85]Maria Lourdes Otaegi, 'Distopia Eta Paradisua Euskal Hirian: Bernardo Atxagaren Etiopia Makrotestuaren Irakurketa Semiotikorako Hausnarketa Kritikoak', *Lapurdum*, no. 17 (2013): 117, 124–25, 130.

[86]Atxaga's quote from Sarasola, 'Bernardo Atxaga y Su Defensa de La Autonomía de La Literatura', 10. (Our translation).

[87]Reference to Azurmendi's next quote: 'Saying 'no' is not mere denial, but a courageous affirmation to the free search for new paths. The freedom of the homeland [Aberri] is sought; but freedom needs a social project. (...) If we want a homeland, we do not want a museum or a factory. A homeland of justice is what we want. In the postwar period –Camus says once and again– the wish is not to return to the pre-war times, even less to a dark Middle Age arcadia. (...) 'New homelands' are wished, a new world of justice and solidarity.' Joxe Azurmendi, *Oraingo Gazte Eroak: Gogoetak ETAren Sorrera Inguruko Kultur Giroaz Eta Gaurkoaz* (Irun: Luma, 1998), 57. (Our translation).

[88]Otaegi, 'Distopia Eta Paradisua Euskal Hirian', 155, 158, 167. (Our translation).

consequence is, on the one hand, the sacrifice of the present in the name of ideal castles in the air and, on the other, the assimilation of the other into a traditional/historical identity. Conflict may be a necessary part of all communities, and therefore an unavoidable part of utopia and nationalism. The discord expressed in the cultural realm permits us to talk about cultural – and not political – nationalism as much as about critical – and not perfect – utopia.

Now that we have commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of ‘68, looking back at it can shed some light on our critical present. We live in a consumer society sold as a consumer paradise, a tolerant and cosmopolitan world ruled by progressively more extreme right-wing governments. In a closer context, the dissolution of ETA and the crisis of the Spanish state (from the 15M movements to the Catalan *procés*), as well as the *Euskal Hirigune Elkargoa* (*Communauté d'agglomération du Pays Basque*, in French), are good examples of the start of a new chapter. However, conflict remains unresolved and debates are still taking place. In the Basque framework, *Heimat*-related issues are spreading in a considerably open and intersectional way. It is not by chance that two renowned examples of the Basque ‘68, the cultural journal *Jakin* (founded 1956) and *Udako Euskal Unibertsitatea* (UEU), the Basque summer university (established 1973), organise an annual conference and publication on these themes. The last topics addressed were: Euskara, state building and nation building (2015); the self-determination of culture (2016); an intersectional approach to language, gender, class and origin (2017); utopianism (2018) and ongoing courses on Basqueness and feminism (2019).[89]

We are convinced that notions of cultural nationalism and critical utopia add an interesting viewpoint from which to achieve fuller comprehension of the Basque ‘68 as a plural and diverse phenomenon. The nationalism of Azurmendi does not imply a predefined idea of nation, and Atxaga's critique maintains a conception of engagement to the community. The debate between them is a good example of the necessary conflict in an open-ended perspective of time and space. Because 1968 is not a prior stage to surpass, neither is it an irrational dream to be forgotten, nor a new Arcadia. Looking back at it in detail, one may encounter a committed yet open-ended praxis, full of (comprehended) hope. Basque ’68 has become an inspiring and enriching example of the leading role culture can have as a social transformer, as well as another moment in the construction of the (n)ever true *Heimat*.

References

Adorno, Theodor, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, and Georg Lukács. *Aesthetics and politics*. Translated by Ronald Taylor. London: Verso, 1980.

Aldekoa, Iñaki. *68ko belaunaldia. Politika, Kultura eta Beste Mamu Batzuk*. Donostia: Utriusque Vasconiae, 2015.

Anderson, Benedict R. O. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London ; New York: Verso, 2006.

Aristi, Pako. *Euskal Kantagintza Berria. 1961-1985*. Donostia: Erein, 1985.

Aulestia, Gorka. *The Basque Poetic Tradition*. Translated by Linda White. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000.

Azurmendi, Joxe. ‘1984: Reality Exists in the Human Mind. George Orwell, Idazle Enpeinatua’. *Jakin* 32 (1984): 87–103.

———. *Espainolak Eta Euskaldunak*. Donostia: Elkar, 1992.

[89] Check the numbers 208, 215-216, 221-222 and 227-228 in *Jakin*.

———. *Oraingo Gazte Eroak: Gogoetak ETAren Sorrera Inguruko Kultur Giroaz Eta Gaurkoaz*. Irun: Luma, 1998.

———. *Zer Dugu Orixeren Alde?* Oñati: Editorial Franciscana Aránzazu, 1977.

———. *Zer Dugu Orixeren Kontra?* Oñati: Editorial Franciscana Aránzazu, 1976.

Bammer, Angelika. *Partial Visions. Feminism and Utopianism in the 1970s*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Billig, Michael. *Banal Nationalism*. London: SAGE, 1995.

Bloch, Ernst. '¿Puede Frustrarse La Esperanza?' In *Doce Textos Fundamentales de La Ética Del Siglo XX*, edited by Carlos Gómez, 165–73. Madrid: Alianza, 2002.

———. *The Principle of Hope*. Translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight. Vol. III. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1986.

———. *The Principle of Hope*. Translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Place, and Paul Knight. Vol. I. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996.

———. *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature. Selected Essays*. Translated by Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: The MIT Press, 1996.

Dahrendorf, Ralf. 'Out of Utopia: Toward a Reorientation of Sociological Analysis'. *American Journal of Sociology* 64, no. 2 (1958): 115–27.

Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983.

Geoghegan, Vincent. 'Remembering the Future'. In *Not Yet. Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*, edited by Jamie O. Daniel and Tom Moylan, 15–32. London: Verso, 1997.

Gereñu, Idoia. 'Jarrai (1959-1968), Abangoardiako Euskal Teatroaren Ikur'. Universidad Carlos III, 2016.

Hamilton, Carrie. *Women and ETA: The Gender Politics of Radical Basque Nationalism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.

Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Assembly*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Hinkelammert, Franz J. *Crítica de La Razón Utópica*. Bilbo: Desclée de Brouwer, 2002.

Hobsbawm, Eric J. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Hobsbawm, Eric J., and Terence Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Hroch, Miroslav. *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups Among the Smaller European Nations*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Hutchinson, John. *Nations as Zones of Conflict*. Thousand Oaks, California; London: SAGE, 2005.

———. 'Re-Interpreting Cultural Nationalism'. *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 45, no. 3 (1999): 392–409.

Kedourie, Elie. *Nationalism*. London: Hutchinson, 1966.

Leerssen, Joep. 'Nationalism and the Cultivation of Culture'. *Nations and Nationalism* 12, no. 4 (2006): 559–78.

Levitas, Ruth. 'Educated Hope: Ernst Bloch on Abstract and Concrete Utopia'. In *Not Yet. Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*, 65–79. London: Verso, 1997.

———. *Utopia as Method. The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society*. Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Mannheim, Karl. *Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to Sociology of Knowledge*. Translated by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954.

Meadwell, Hudson. 'Nationalism Chez Gellner'. *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 4 (2012): 563–82.

Mees, Ludger. *Nationalism, Violence and Democracy: The Basque Clash of Identities*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Mendiguren, Xabier. *Europako Ezker Berria*. Bilbo: Ediciones Mensajero, 1972.

More, Thomas. *Utopia*. Translated by Dominic Baker-Smith. London: Penguin Books, 2012.

Moylan, Tom. *Demand the Impossible. Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2014.

Mumford, Lewis. *Historia de las Utopías*. Translated by Diego Luis Sanromán. Logroño: Pepitas de calabaza, 2013.

Murua Uria, Imanol. *Ending ETA's Armed Campaign: How and Why the Basque Armed Group Abandoned Violence*, 2017.

Olaziregi, Mari Jose. *Basque Literary History*. Reno: Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, 2012.

Otaegi, Maria Lourdes. 'Distopia Eta Paradisua Euskal Hirian: Bernardo Atxagaren Etiopia Makrotestuaren Irakurketa Semiotikorako Hausnarketa Kritikoak'. *Lapurdum*, no. 17 (2013): 109–73.

Sarasola, Beñat. 'Bernardo Atxaga y Su Defensa de La Autonomía de La Literatura'. *Castilla. Estudios de Literatura*, no. 8 (2017): 1–26.

Sargisson, Lucy. *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism. Women and Politics*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Smith, Anthony D. *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*. London; New York: Routledge, 1998.

Suvin, Darko. 'Defining the Literary Genre of Utopia: Some Historical Semantics, Some Genology (Sic), a Proposal and a Plea'. *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 6, no. 2 (1973): 121–45.

Tambini, Damian. 'Explaining Monoculturalism: Beyond Gellner's Theory of Nationalism'. *Critical Review* 10, no. 2 (1996): 251–70.

Torrealdai, Joan Mari. *Iraultzaz*. Oñati: Editorial Franciscana Aránzazu, 1973.

Ugarte, Luxio. *La Reconstrucción de La Identidad Cultural Vasca: Oteiza-Chillida*. Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1996.

Urla, Jacqueline. *Reclaiming Basque: Language, Nation, and Cultural Activism*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2012.

Vasco, Manuel. 'Sistema Abierto y Posibilidad Teleo-Lógica: Intento Por Entender La Utopía Blochiana Desde La Coherencia Interna Del Sistema Abierto y Desde Los Principios Que Lo Animan'. Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 1990.

Watson, Cameron. *Modern Basque History: Eighteenth Century to the Present*. Reno: Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, 2003.

Wegner, Phillip E. *Imaginary Communities. Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Zabalo, Julen. *Abertzaleak Eta Ezkertiarrak*. Donostia: Elkarlanean, 2000.

Zabalo, Julen, and Onintza Odriozola. 'The Importance of Historical Context: A New Discourse on the Nation in Basque Nationalism?' *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 23, no. 2 (2017): 134–54.

Zulaika, Joseba. *That Old Bilbao Moon: The Passion and Resurrection of a City*. Reno: Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, 2014.